

Launching a Cooperative Transformational Effort

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Successful cooperative transformational efforts thrive on team energy. They are vision led, based on a total organizational perspective. These efforts demand a comprehensive implementation process and require profound leadership behaviors. The aim is to move the organizational system to a different, radical reality.

Based on my own experience and personal research, there are very specific conditions that enhance the possibility of creating and sustaining cooperative change efforts in many organizational settings. The more these conditions are present, the greater the chance for leaders and teams to succeed in mounting a cooperative response to the challenges and opportunities they face. What are the specific conditions that support cooperative change effort? 1. Imperative of change. 2. Belief that the situation can change. 3. Willingness to trust the process. 4. Active learning and practicing specific collaborative skills. 5. Willingness to focus on the organization's super ordinate goals.

6. Facilitative conveners and leaders. 7. Commitment to meaningful stakeholders' inclusion. 8. Orientation toward education, knowledge and information. 9. Skilled, cooperative project coordination. 10. Outside well-educated practitioners. 11. Time, financial and technical resources plus emotional intelligent leaders. 12. Basic trust among participants.

Let me explain these conditions a little bit more. Of all the above conditions, the most important one is the imperative for change. This is a compelling state that innovators want to move toward or an intolerable

situation in which people believe that something must be done. Participants need to understand the high cost of not doing anything, and the potential benefits of spending time and energy to create and deploy a transformational strategy.

People reach this drastic understanding point after arriving at the end of the road trying to address a situation individually and realizing that the only way to effect a decided change is by working together. Of course, they must believe that the situation can change. To teamwork, however, people must be willing to trust the process. They must have confidence and faith that the process is going to be fair and soundable. In addition, they have to believe that those affected and those with authority and resources will be fully involved. Participants must be willing to wait to discover what emerges, trusting that the organization and the teams will produce something better than what they can produce individually. This willingness must be present regularly, avoiding the temptation to return to the previous status quo.

Real cooperative behavior requires the hard work of active learning and practicing specific skills, and avoiding the re-cycling of ideas and knowledge sets. It requires the focus on the organization's or the team's super ordinate goal or vision.

Cooperative ventures need conveners with passion and access to people and resources. They also require an initial set of community, organizational or specific-issue leaders who really see the need for change. These leaders engage relevant stakeholders in solving problems collaboratively and work to build a cooperative culture. They create a constructive disequilibrium and a sense of urgency around the issues that nourish the purpose of change.

Participants must demonstrate a commitment to meaningful stakeholders' inclusion, beginning with a core planning group that incorporates those affected by the decision. They perform the ongoing and challenging work of moving beyond the "usual suspects" to ensure that a wide range of people are involved, consulted and informed throughout the process. This requires the ability to work with people of different backgrounds.

A cooperative transformational effort requires an assertive orientation toward formal education, intellectuality, knowledge and information. Changing things in a constructive manner always requires good intellectuality and good feelings at work.

A cooperative transformational diligence acknowledges and legitimates formal and informal sources of wisdom as they are spelled out in a face to face setting. It is a task of lifting up the lived experiences of affected stakeholders along side the fresh research, degree-based, or professional credentials of different contributors. Skilled project coordinators are essential to ensure that those commitments and beliefs are demonstrated in consistent action and followed through. Change efforts often fail for lack of effective monitoring or follow-through. For years, I have trained change leaders in managing relationships among people and units, in providing coaching, mentorship, engagement and motivation and in attending psychological and organizational dynamics while helping people to keep the big picture in their minds. Their aim is to always be at the service, service, and service of organization.

These undertakings are significantly strengthened when educated, knowledgeable and skilled outside consultants co-design, facilitate and help to manage the content of the transformation initiative. Researchers and

consultants help to bridge the internal and external dimensions of a cooperative effort. All of this work requires of time, financial and technical resources plus emotional intelligent leaders and facilitators for the edification of a solid foundation of institutional trust.

The practices of trust are:

- Practice what you preach.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Make decisions based on core values.
- Treat all people with courtesy and respect.
- Care about people and their well being.
- Do not use people as stepping stone for self-advancement.
- Be prepared to be vulnerable, to admit and correct mistakes.
- Be accountable and assume responsibility for your own decisions.
- Express apologies.
- Have the courage to confront and take corrective actions when there is a problem.
- Promise what you can deliver.
- Follow through on your promises.
- Exercise self control, remembering that unkind written or spoken words can cause irreparable damage to any relationship.
- Take great care to maintain and nurture friendship and work relationships.
- Clear up misunderstandings as soon as possible.
- Practice the policy of speaking truth to power.
- Give honest and constructive feedback

- Trust people first.
- Empower and validate others.
- Practice forgiveness and grace when others let you down.
- Cut corners only in clearly justifiable conditions.
- Communicate openly and with consideration.
- Dare to work and co-create with different people and never fear competing ideas.
- Earn people's trust by building a reputation for being wise and empathic.
- Dare to present God.

If people and organizations deploy these practices, the result is going to be effective cooperative action.

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