

FROM and TO

A CHANGE MAKES THINGS DIFFERENT

Jane Northcote

{ *from the book 'Making Change Happen'* }

FROM AND TO: A CHANGE MAKES THINGS DIFFERENT

To make change happen we need to decide what needs to change, and we must state this in a way that gets results.

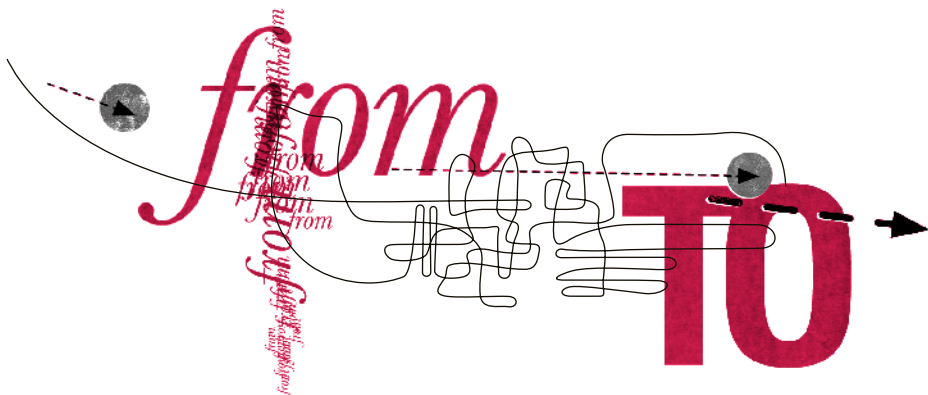
- Articulate the change in terms of *from* and *to*
- Keep it small and specific
- Explain what people will *do* differently

First, we must know what is meant by *a change*.

A change makes things different. Look around to see how things are now—after the change, they will be different. There must be a *from* and there must be a *to* and they must be noticeably different from each other. If you want a change you can't keep everything the same.

If you can state the *from* and the *to*, you can get co-ordinated action and make change happen. If you leave it vague, something might happen, or it might not.

Here is an example from a division of a petrochemicals company. They supply bulky liquids and powders in barrels and containers. Their clear expression of *from* and *to* produced action for this company.



A STORY ABOUT PRICING

Sales people complained that it was “impossible to get a price out of pricing”. Customers often called the service centre trying to understand their invoices. Some of the larger customers noticed that different sales people offered different deals, and used this fact to drive down prices. Sales people were rewarded on revenue, and they’d been doing fine. However, the management team of the division were rewarded on profit, and profit had been a bit low recently.

To address all this, and mainly with the intention of driving up profit, the management team created a task force of sales people, service centre staff and people from the Pricing Department. This task force gathered data and proposed changes. They wanted to introduce standardisation into the pricing process, and they wanted the sales people to sell the more profitable products and services.

The task force expressed the change in terms of *from* and *to*.

from [*today*]

Over 50% of the purchase orders processed by our Cheltenham service centre contain prices which are not on the published price list.

Sales people track only revenue. They sell as much as possible of every product, whatever its profitability.

to [*future*]

100% of purchase orders correspond to the published price list. No special cases, no special deals, no exceptions.

Sales people balance revenue and profit.

Of course that provoked an explosion of questions, such as: “How are we going to do that?” But the task force held firm and obtained agreement about the change they wanted to achieve. Meanwhile they, and others, were already finding solutions, and articulating other changes that made this possible:

from [*today*]

The price list covers only our products. Services, such as delivery to quayside, or special customer labelling, are priced by the sales person as part of the sales negotiation.

Sales people have to phone the pricing centre to get the prices.

Sales people don't know the product profitability.

to [*future*]

Every product and every service has a standard price on the price list.

The price list is on the sales people's laptops, updated daily by downloads.

Profit information is available to salespeople.

When they heard these descriptions the management team could see what they must do.

THE CLEAR EXPRESSION OF *from* AND *to* PRODUCES ACTION

In the story above, the clear articulation of the *from* and *to* provoked an outcry, but it also produced action. Things *did* change.

The task force would have got nowhere if they had rested with a general statement: "*Our mission is to improve the pricing process*". They would have provoked no outcry, but also made no progress, if they had obscured their intention with management-speak:

"Our customer-centric change programme will facilitate the interaction between the sales people, the customers, and the pricing centre".

Such cautious statements might be necessary to get an initiative started, but they don't make change happen.

WHEN ARTICULATING *FROM* AND *TO*, KEEP IT SMALL AND SPECIFIC

When articulating your change, it helps to keep it limited in scope. If you don't feel bold enough to specify what is going to happen to the whole division, then state what's going to happen in, say, Manchester. You can restrict your scope to purchases under £250, or to desktops that are directly connected to your server. *Be clear about a small part of the change, rather than vague about a wide scope.* After all, if you can specify it for Manchester, you can do so for other areas. If you can be specific about your objective for purchases under £250, you can later address larger orders.

Many change initiatives flounder because they are too big. People are more likely to understand what you are talking about if you keep it limited. If you talk about the whole company, people feel it's all rather abstract and few will engage. If you talk about Manchester, it is real.

STATE WHAT PEOPLE WILL *DO* DIFFERENTLY

Business results are visible and tangible. In the business world, if we want a change to happen, we want a difference we can detect. Awareness is not enough. Buy-in is not enough. These are invisible—they are attributes of people's minds.

- *If people are aware, what will they **DO** differently?
If they are bought-in, how would we know?*
- *What will we **SEE** them doing as a result of their awareness or buy-in?
What will we **HEAR** them say?*
- *What will they **CREATE**, **REMOVE**, or **CHANGE** as a result of
their awareness?*

WHAT WILL PEOPLE NOT BE DOING THAT THEY ARE DOING NOW?
from [*today*] WHAT WILL HAVE STOPPED? *to* [*future*]

..... IF I TOOK A VIDEO NOW AND A VIDEO AFTERWARDS,
WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD I SEE OR HEAR?

..... WHAT WILL THERE BE MORE OF OR LESS OF? HOW MUCH MORE OR LESS?

..... WHAT WILL THIS CHANGE CREATE THAT ISN'T THERE ALREADY?

HOW WILL I KNOW THAT IT'S THERE?

..... WHAT WILL THIS CHANGE REMOVE THAT'S THERE NOW?

HOW WILL I KNOW THAT IT HAS GONE?

from [*today*] *to* [*future*]

• • • *a note from the author*

Thank you for your interest in this free paper. I welcome your comments, feedback, stories and suggestions – please write and draw on the paper and send it back to me, or contact me by email or phone. If you would like further copies of the paper please email me.

This is an extract from my book, *Making Change Happen: Implementing Business Change - A Practical Guide*. You can order this via Amazon.

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