

LEADING AND MANAGING COMPLEX CHANGE

Educators know that schools are a complex organism with a life of their own. To fully implement change, an understanding of the components of systemic reform requires experience, people skills, and extreme patience. Knoster (1991) in a presentation to The Association for Severely Handicap (TASH) Conference introduced a Managing Complex Change Model that has several components. Knoster suggested that when the components of *vision, consensus, skills, incentives, resources and action plan* are collectively inherent in the system, then change will likely take place. However, if any one of the components was missing, then the “Change Process” may be inhibited or may not take root.

A unique feature about Knoster’s model for change is its surgical approach. In assessing the condition and climate of an organization, this model offers a potential remedy by identifying the symptom and then restoring the missing component (link). Quite often leaders may sense what is wrong, but do not understand how to resolve or determine the root of the problem. As an example, if the change agent senses or anticipates *sabotage* as a symptom from within the organization, then the ability to work through *consensus* through collaboration is paramount. If there is a high level of *resistance*, then the leader needs to identify the *incentives* and determine what will personally motivate an individual to change. In some schools, the problems are so severe that multiple missing links have created a hostile environment that is difficult to sort through.

Although the model below may appear to be simple, it is a powerful tool to connect the symptom with the components of change. Unless a leader is able to connect with the people of the organization through empathic listening, they will never understand the emotion behind the concerns of their clients. Developing this trust through relationship building may draw out the essential missing link. Then the change process may continue to develop and help the organization arrive at the desired results.

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Vision +	Consensus +	Skills +	Incentives +	Resources +	Action Plan	= Change
	Consensus +	Skills +	Incentives +	Resources +	Action Plan	= Confusion
Vision +		Skills +	Incentives +	Resources +	Action Plan	= Sabotage
Vision +	Consensus +		Incentives +	Resources +	Action Plan	= Anxiety
Vision +	Consensus +	Skills +		Resources +	Action Plan	= Resistance
Vision +	Consensus +	Skills +	Incentives +		Action Plan	= Frustration
Vision +	Consensus +	Skills +	Incentives +	Resources +		= Treadmill

Adapted from Knoster, T. (1991) Presentation in TASH Conference. Washington, D.C.
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