

Leading Change that Sticks

Creating and implementing sustainable change
in local government



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A Snapshot

Local government is big business. In Victoria alone, local government provides local leadership, governance and services for 79 municipalities, employing over 47,000 people¹.

Local government is complex. \$7.99 billion in annual revenue (Victoria) funds more than 100 different services to local communities.

Local communities have a sense of ownership, in the past, the present and the future of their Council. 624 democratically elected councilors are striving to make the community a better place over their term, and not always pulling in the same direction.

This level of reach, scale and complexity can make implementing sustainable change even more challenging.

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Fearless Leadership:

Leading Change that Sticks

“Up to 70% of all change initiatives fail”
(Blanchard, 2010)²

We are on the brink of the fourth industrial revolution, according to Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum³. There three reasons why this is a distinct fourth revolution, and not a continuation of the third industrial revolution (IT, electronics, automated production): velocity, scope and systems impact.

This revolution is bringing with it unprecedented change and complexity, and it's evolving at an exponential rather than a linear pace.

And that's just our broader external environment! What about changes within local government?

With this level of change, how will you respond? With up to 70% of organisational change initiatives failing, what will be your edge?

Change generates uncertainty. Uncertainty generates a threat response in the brain. Things can go rapidly downhill from there, as focus shifts from organisational purpose and towards personal survival! Creativity and resourcefulness decrease, silo walls solidify and individual, team and organizational resilience drops.

Leading change in a local government context can be challenging. Consider the following:

1. The sector is undergoing significant change. Many people are not accustomed to—or skilled in— change
2. Expectations from the community are rising on both service delivery and customer focus, and yet with rate capping revenue is declining in real terms.
3. The stakes are high in implementing change response. An innovative and agile response is needed and the current organizational culture is not sufficiently adaptable.
4. In the midst of all this you may begin to question your ability—and the ability of your leaders—to lead long term, sustainable change and secure your Council's future.

These factors may not be true for you, but they are true for many of my local government clients.

Ability is not the issue; it's taking a new approach to leading change, one that is underpinned by normalizing change and understanding **change profiles, and this paper will help you.**

Understanding change at the below conscious level is the little known key to success. Knowing and acting from your own **change profile** is the key to leading sustainable change. When you know and lead from your own **change profile**, you can be resilient in the face of change, and lead others through change that sticks.

By reading this Fearless Leadership: **Leading Change that Sticks** paper you will:

- learn what brain science tells us about the difficulties related to change
- develop an understanding of key drivers in leading sustainable change
- consider your own flexibility surrounding change
- understand what it takes to **lead change that sticks**
- identify the next steps to take.

Firstly, we will explore what neuroscience tells us about why change is so hard. We will then consider the role of execution in successful change, and finally, take a brief journey into **change profiles**.

What's the change you want? What will success look like? Who is your audience?

Why is change so hard? What does brain science tells us?

“Your brain is approximately 2–3% of your body weight, and its operation consumes 20–25% of your daily calorie intake”
(Markham, 2014)⁴



The brain is an expensive device to operate, and it influences everything we do.

We are wired for repetitive thinking, and we assume a high level of certainty in our everyday lives.

Creating certainty reduces the energy drain on the brain's prefrontal cortex—the 'executive centre' of the brain. If it were necessary to assess every option and make decisions about everything (an absence of certainty), by morning teatime, your brain would be exhausted.

Change, by its very nature is ambiguous and uncertain

Ambiguity—the absence of certainty—generates a danger response increasing activity in the *anterior cingulate cortex (ACC)*—the part of our brain that detects errors.

Consider a local council where the leadership has been stable for many years. The CEO retires and a new CEO is appointed. At the same time, there is a change in two executive positions. The CEO instigates a wide reaching organizational review, with the intention of restructuring to better align organizational structure with current Council Plan.

After years of stability, leaders are not well skilled in leading change, and are experiencing the uncertainty as a threat, jockeying for positioning in the new environment. Mid-level managers and coordinators are distancing themselves from the changes.

With patchy communication, predominately focused on the critical need for change, and how wonderful the new world will be, operational staff are finding it very hard to determine the direction and stay motivated and resilient.

As much attention and energy is directed towards anguish and resistance about the change, as it is to Council business, making it hard for the new CEO to gain traction.

Even when we willingly embrace change, it comes at a cost. Taking on something new necessitates paving new neural pathways, and that requires energy.

Have you ever been in a meeting where people agree on a particular change, and then nothing happens? Srinivasan S Pillay⁵, author of *Your brain and business: The neuroscience of great leaders*, introduces the concept of "switch costs" to explain the difference between intention and action. For example, when you try a new way of doing something, you won't do it as easily and effectively the first time, as you would have by doing it the old way. This is the *switch cost* – the decrease in performance relative to acting as you have always done.

There is no switch cost on what you *imagine* doing (you haven't yet experienced the drop in performance from doing that new thing) so the switch cost has no impact on intended performance. This explains why it is always more enjoyable to talk about a change, rather than action one. Perhaps you can think of a recent situation where this has been true for you.

It is important to note that the *switch cost* has no impact on intended performance; therefore, it is always more pleasant to talk enthusiastically about a change than to make one!

So ... we are wired for repetitive thinking, and the brain is rewarded by certainty. Change creates ambiguity and sets off the warning light in the brain. Even when we want to make change, trying something new is likely to use more energy and, at least in the short term, result in a drop in performance.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that 70% of organizational change initiatives fail.

Where do you sit on the **Change Capability Ladder**?

“If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.”
 Lao Tzu

How do you respond to change? You will have noticed that there are many ways people respond to change – some more productive than others. And responding to change is a skill we all need to develop.

Let's explore this further

At the bottom of the Change Capability Ladder we have **resistors** who will be refusing the change. They are likely to be resisting and refusing loudly - and doing their best to enlist others to join their resistance cell.

The **fare evaders** are not actively resisting the change, they are simply avoiding it. After all, if they stay quietly focused on the work they want to do and in the way they want to do it, this change will pass.

Then we have the **passengers**. These are the 'good corporate citizens'. While they are accepting the change and will do exactly as you ask them, they will not advocate for the changes.

Change Capability Ladder

			Effort Impact
Thriving	Driver	Maximising	1:5
	Conductor	Embracing	1:2
Surviving	Passenger	Accepting	1:1
	Fare Evader	Avoiding	5:1
	Resistor	Refusing	10:1

Figure 1: Change Capability Ladder © Armour 2014

You can see that as we move up the **Change Capability Ladder**, it takes less effort to implement change for greater impact. At the bottom three levels of the ladder, people are 'surviving' but we want our people and our organisations 'thriving'.

Conductors accept fully and embrace the changes; they are actively encouraging others and bringing them along on the journey. When the majority of our people are conductors, it takes little effort to create impactful change.

At the top of the **Change Capability Ladder** we have **drivers**. These people are out to maximise the change; they are seeking other ways to leverage change activity for greater impact. (You can probably tell that we don't want the majority of our team to be drivers —that would be chaos!)

When I work with teams experiencing change, I start with the **Change Capability Ladder**, and I am always encouraged by their level of honesty in diagnosing where they currently sit on the ladder both individually, and as a team.

The **Change Capability Ladder** sparks conversations that increase awareness and release the potential for movement.

Where, on the **Change Capability Ladder** are you currently spending most of your time?
What would it take to move up the ladder?
How about your team?
And your key stakeholders?

Change that Sticks is all about execution and motivation

“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.”
Maya Angelou

There are two key drivers in achieving successful change: first is our level of **motivation** and the second is **execution**—the extent to which we are taking action.

Let's consider the different situations that occur when motivation and execution are present in varying degrees.

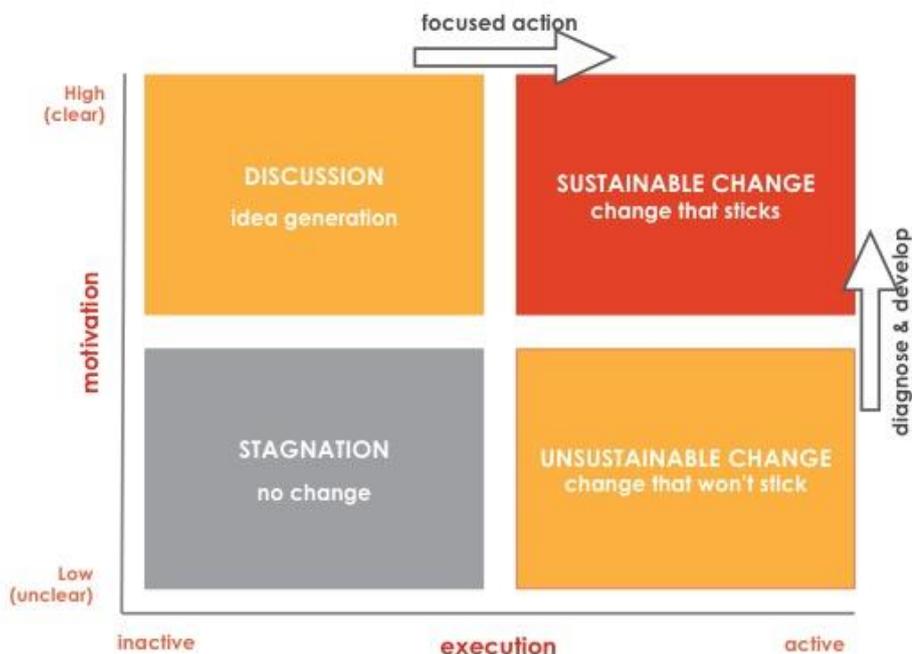


Figure 2: Leading Change Model © Armour, Blundell, Cohen 2013

Firstly, let's consider a situation where your motivation for change is low (and/or unclear); your execution is also low—you have been inactive. Not surprisingly, this leads to **stagnation**—no change happens here.

A good analogy might be getting out of bed on a Sunday morning. A lack of motivation to get out of bed combined with a failure to move your body, leads to an extended lie-in. This could be described as your 'comfort zone', and can apply to individuals, teams or whole organisations.

Let's contrast that with another scenario where your motivation is high and you are clear on why this matters to you, but you are still not taking any action—**discussion**. This space could be referred to as 'some day isle'. Some day I'll get that new job, or some day we'll make a change to how we do things around here! Wheels are

spinning. People want to change; they are talking about it; generating ideas, and yet the focused action required to make it happen has not been taken.

If you focus on execution (lots of action is happening), and yet the underlying motivation is low or unclear, you may be seeing positive changes but struggling to make the changes stick. **Unsustainable change** occurs in the absence of the required motivation. Changes are made because we 'should change' and yet the motivation required to maintain the change is not there or not understood.

When motivation is high and actively executed, **sustainable change** is achieved and we have **change that sticks**.

To enable sustainable change, you may need to take more focused action, or you may need to diagnose and develop sustainable change—or both:

- **Focused action**—being clear on what needs to happen to move yourself and others on the change journey—will increase the level of execution.
- **Diagnose and develop**—diagnosing your own change profile, and the change profile of others, and developing change flexibility—taps into the vital internal motivation that allows our positive action to be sustainable over time. To be successful, we need to know what aspect of motivation must be ignited for the change to become sustainable.

Think about a change you are facing right now.

Where are you on the Leading Change model?

Is it **focused action** that you need?

Or do you need to **diagnose your motivation** (understand your **change profile**)
and **develop your change flexibility**?

Strategies for Leading Change that Sticks

“In a world that changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.”
 Mark Zuckerberg

The strategies that we choose to increase motivation and execution will depend on the change, the people involved, and the organizational culture. The better equipped your change tool box, the more effectively you can **lead change that sticks**.

Outcome	Clarity and Focus	Shape the Path	Consistent and clear
Resilience	Personal resilience	Foster resilience in others	Organisational culture
Behaviour	Behavioral flexibility	Reward approximations	Elephant and rider
Listening	Self awareness	Decode resistance	Welcome all input
Change Appetite	Your Change Profile	Team Change Profile	Sameness Evolution Difference
	Self	Team	Message

Figure 3: Strategies for Leading Change © Armour 2014

In this White Paper we will briefly cover one key strategy, the one that can make the biggest impact on the sustainability of your changes—your **change profile**.

How many effective strategies do you have available now in your change tool kit?
 How would you reinvest the energy if you were able to have greater impact with less outlay of effort in leading change?

Motivation: Change profile

“The leader with the most flexibility wins.”



Each of us has a **change profile**—the way we relate to change. It's how we think about change (perhaps unconsciously); how we communicate change to others; and how comfortable we are to change our behaviour as a result of it.

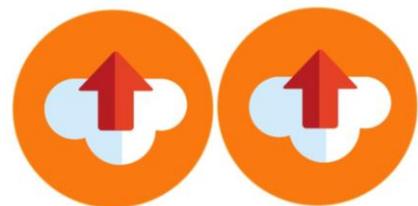
Your **change profile** is made up of three below conscious change patterns – Sameness, Evolution, and Difference. These unconscious sorting filters in your mind determine what you pay attention to in your environment, and what you filter into and out of your experience. This sorting function happens outside your conscious awareness and drives how you think, feel and act.

The extent to which these three patterns matter to you determines your **change profile**. Are you a **Stabiliser**? Perhaps you are an **Evolutionary**? Or maybe a **Revolutionary**?

Let's explore briefly the three change profiles:

Stabiliser

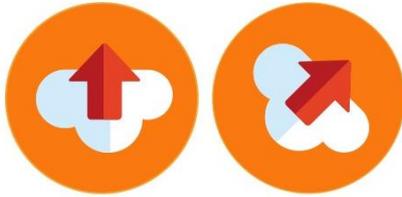
The Stabiliser has a strong preference for Sameness and will prioritise stability, security, routine and predictability by preferring to work with what is known. They will match current experience with previous experience and will focus on what is the same within their environment. A constantly changing workplace can demotivate them.



Recognise Stabilisers:

- Language: same, in common, similar, alike, predictable, known, routine, traditional, habitual.
- Probable questions: “What will stay the same? What are the similarities between our work now and our work two years ago? How do we keep things stable?”
- Considerations: Appreciates security, stability and longevity, and may be seen as change resistant.
- Time in role before losing motivation: 10+ years.

Evolutionary



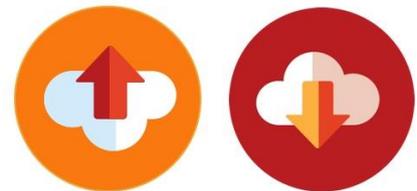
The Evolutionary has a strong preference for Evolution and seeks incremental change in their work environment. They are motivated by growth and continual improvement—in manageable increments—over time without disrupting the status quo. A rapidly changing workplace change demotivate them, as can a working environment where there are no changes.

Recognise Evolutionaries:

- Language: improvement, change for the better, similar but better, iterative, progressive, evolution, development, continuous improvement, incremental change, getting better gradually.
- Probable questions: "How can we improve this process? What small changes can we make to get a better result? Where can we tweak this system to improve performance?"
- Considerations: Their focus on continual improvement can be disconcerting for colleagues who want consistency and stability. May resist significant or frequent change.
- Time in role before losing motivation: five to seven years.

Revolutionary

Revolutionaries have a strong preference for Difference and are motivated by frequent and/or significant change in their work environment. A stable or slow-paced environment demotivates them.



Recognise Revolutionaries:

- Language: new, innovative, completely different, cutting edge, revolutionary, unprecedented, variety, unique, different, new challenge.
- Probable questions: "How could we do this differently? What's the most innovative approach we could take here? How could we create change here?"
- Considerations: Useful in environments of rapid or continual change. They can disengage with insufficient variety and may be seen as desiring change for change sake.
- Time in role before losing motivation: one to three years.

Your **change profile** is the result of your motivation for each change pattern. For example, you may be high in *Difference*, happy to work with *Evolution* and be demotivated by *Sameness*.

Are you part of the problem?

What if your own unconscious **change profile** was thwarting your intention towards personal change? As a leader, what if your own unconscious motivators surrounding change were part of the reason for change being unsustainable in your team or organisation?

Any successful change initiative requires leaders to be active in modeling and communicating the need for, and nature of, the change. Yet what happens when individual leaders, or the leadership team collectively, do not know exactly what they are modeling and communicating in relation to change?

Leaders who know their own **change profile** are able to proactively manage their own responses to change. Leaders who recognise the change profiles of others are able to effectively communicate change and influence stakeholders.

Build your change flexibility

Build your change flexibility so you can:

- Understand and proactively manage your own responses to change.
- Recognise the change profiles of others and effectively communicate targeted change messages to influence stakeholders and lead change.

Knowing and leading flexibly from your own **change profile** is critical. It's the key to modeling and communicating sustainable change—**leading change that sticks**.

*From the simple explanations above: what is your **change profile**?*

What dynamic might this create for the change you are leading or experiencing?

*How will you build flexibility in our own **change profile**?*

*How can you better communicate with individuals and teams that don't share your **change profile**?*

Meet some of my clients

The Revolutionary learns to communicate with the Stabilisers

It's an innovative new printing solution that will revolutionise the way we work. Why won't they listen?



Colin* is an IT team leader in a metropolitan council. Colin (very high on Difference) was frustrated because he couldn't sign off a project implementing new printers across the organisation, which would "revolutionise the way we work".

The Corporate Information Unit (most of the staff had been there for over 12 years – assume strong Sameness motivation—Stabilisers) were refusing to agree to an implementation date, and Colin couldn't understand why. After all, the new printers were cutting edge.

Colin and I worked to identify what would stay the same under the new printing system (A4 paper, black and white, colour, print-on-demand). It sounds simple but Colin was so high on Difference that it took some time for him to see there was anything similar between the old and the new approaches.

Colin arranged a meeting, the next day, with the manager of the Corporate Information Unit, and highlighted for her all the ways in which the incoming solution was just like the way the team printed now. She was immediately more relaxed and agreed to implementation of the new solution that afternoon.

Colin was able to complete his project without fuss once he was able to speak the language of his stakeholders.

** Names have been changed to preserve client anonymity without distorting the essential reality of the story.*

The Evolutionary overcomes her frustration

Fueled by a strong belief that the current systems are broken, Amy* is leading a systems development program. Amy is an Evolutionary.

Her strong Evolution focus results in a relentless pursuit for improvement and constantly tweaking processes, which some people find tiring. This strong motivation for evolution also results in Amy



big risky changes are not the best way forward

being disdainful towards people who don't like change, and she struggled to influence them.

While systemic change is the purpose of her professional life, Amy was a resistant to what she saw as "big risky changes".

Understanding her change profile helped Amy to manage her own motivation and boost her resilience. Building her flexibility to highlight what will remain that same, and what will change significantly, allowed Amy to increase her ability to influence others.

The Stabilisers learn they are not broken



The Manager Aged Care and his team had worked in a constant environment for many years. A preference for the status quo had ensured very low turnover in staff, and that suited both the work and the client base.

Now with reforms in aged care, and changes within council structure, the need for change seemed to be all that was being discussed. The team

was being told to 'move on' and 'get with the program', but that wasn't helping.

Many staff were feeling demotivated and undervalued. At a personal level, some of them were beginning to behave unprofessionally, and this further compounded their stress.

Diagnosing their own change—they were Stabilisers—helped them to understand their reactions to the change. This was the first step in helping them to take responsibility for their own responses and to build resilience and change flexibility.

How many of these client stories resonated with you?

Which client is you?

Which is your boss?

Which is your most challenging team member?

Which is a key stakeholder you need to influence?

Build your ability to diagnose **change profiles** by tuning into the language and behaviour of those around you.

Where to from here?

Leading change that sticks takes more than enthusiastically explaining (or even demonstrating) the benefits of the new world!

Leading any change takes a huge amount of energy when we have teams of Resisters and Fare evaders. To **lead change that sticks** and embed sustainable change, we need to help people move up the change ladder.

The two key levers we have at our disposal are increasing execution and increasing motivation.

Diagnosing your own change profile, and understanding the change profiles of your teams and key stakeholders, and then developing your change flexibility, is a significant first step towards **leading change that sticks**.



Ready for more?

If you would like to learn more about the other strategies available to lead change that sticks, get in touch. We can talk about the **Leading Change that Sticks** program. This program will get your leaders and teams *change ready* so that your change project is successfully implemented and the anticipated business benefits are secured.

Leading Change that Sticks is also available as a keynote for your next conference or event.

Leading change that sticks takes energy and investment.

Where to from here?
What is *your* action plan to **lead change that sticks**?

What do others say about Corrinne?

Fresh new approaches

Corrinne gets the pace and the tone just right. She knows enough about local government that you can feel comfortable with her, and yet she comes from outside the sector and brings fresh new approaches. Her training is peppered with stories and activities that allow people to make the vital connections for themselves.

We have seen significant shifts in behavior and approach – both with individuals and teams - triggered by working with Corrinne.

Liana Thompson, Director Corporate Services, Baw Baw Shire Council

Help teams move past blockages

Corrinne helps individuals and teams to change by helping them to understand themselves and each other, and to see that another way is possible. She cares deeply about people and is able to deliver cold hard truth in a way that empowers individuals and teams to respond creatively.

Corrinne helps teams move past blockages in a way that creates unity, a shared sense of purpose and instils trust and openness. Her approach is authentic and refreshing. She establishes frameworks of co-creation with the team to actively participate and allows respectful dialogue in a safe space.

I have greatly appreciated the personal and leadership learnings that Corrinne has provided and highly recommend her.

Glenn Goodwin – Manager Human Resources, Moon Valley City Council

Tangible actions with measurable results

Working with Corrinne is an essential tool in the arsenal of any leader seeking to exploit their opportunity to be extraordinary! Corrinne is able to relate to a wide range of audience so that everyone gets the messages they need to hear to build resilience and change-ability. My team at Moonee Valley City Council enjoyed her high-energy approach, despite the challenges she threw at them. Our work together helped to identify our barriers and provide tangible actions with measurable results that the organisation aspired to replicate.

Dale Monk - Manager Finance and Property Services, Knox City Council

Empowering people to participate in change

At City of Knox I am leading a change process across people and technology. Having just conducted a series of change management workshops with two of my departments, I was able to observe firsthand the value and quality that Corrinne brings to the change management process.

Corrinne is authentic and brings energetic and well-researched training. I am impressed by the manner in which she engages the teams in the process, bringing them along in ways that I have not seen other consultants be able to do.

During the sessions she adapted intelligently and thoughtfully, understanding the teams level and understanding of what the process meant to them.

Corrinne has a dynamic approach to the process of change with authentic and realistic examples that made the session most entertaining and informative. After working with her, people feel empowered to participate in the change process.

Lesley Milburn, Acting Manager Information Management, Knox City Council

About Corrinne Armour

Waging a war on wasted potential, Corrinne's mission is to spark people to play their big game. Known for her provocative and yet empathetic approach, and the ability to tell it like it is, Corrinne empowers leaders and teams to embrace Fearless Leadership.

Working with Corrinne isn't for the faint hearted—It is for those who are ready to get out of their own way and fulfill their potential.

Recognised as a provoker of change and growth, Corrinne shows leaders how to release the human potential in their careers, teams and organisations. The messages of her speaking, training and coaching are grounded in the competing realities of the workplace and the challenges of being a leader.

Her clients are leaders and teams from a diverse range of industries, such as local government, finance, construction, arts and aged care. They value her energy, courage, positivity, innovative approach, and strong results focus.

Corrinne is co-author of 'Developing Direct Reports: Taking the guesswork out of leading leaders' and 'Cracking the Code for Workshop Performance'. She is author of the forthcoming 'Build not Bruise; Fearless leadership for now and the future'.

Passionate about social justice, Corrinne is on the Board of Wintringham, a Victorian company delivering aged care to homeless elderly. She has also spent two years teaching English in a refugee camp on the edge of a war-zone.

At home, she is a wife and mother to two gorgeous young girls.



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Follow

Find Corrinne on Twitter with @corrinnearmour. She tweets leadership insights that she shares with her clients, as well as useful concepts and articles relating to leadership and communication.

Endnotes and references

¹ All numbers on this page sourced for Municipal Association of Victoria and based on 2015 publication *Snapshot of Victorian Local Government*.

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