



The Three Spheres of Change

We typically think of change primarily in terms of what's changing. No great surprise, given our brains have evolved to view change as mostly threatening (often with good reason). So it stands to reason that we have a heightened sensitivity to the changes that occur in our environment, in technology and even in the moods of the people around us. We talk about it, hypothesise about it, evangelise it and complain about it. We try and predict it, manage it and keep up with it — and we often panic about it.

However, change has multiple dimensions and, consequently, multiple impacts. If we are to adequately prepare ourselves for an 'unpredictable future' we should take a more complete view of change. Our goal in this book is to broaden our emotional palette from one of fear and panic to one of calm acceptance and even inspiration.

Through our work and research in the worlds of professional training, business strategy leadership development and innovation consulting over the past decade, we have identified three critical areas of change. These three aspects inform how well people and businesses perform in an environment of change and also identify where their focus should be applied in terms of skills, strategy and investment in both time and resources.

We call these the Three Spheres of Change.

These Three Spheres of Change, while related, tend to drive significantly different outcomes, emotional responses and approaches. If used cleverly they give you a more complete view of change and how to manage it, drive it, lead it and not feel sick about it. Remember, one of our primary goals with this book is to remove much of the hype and panic around change so we can approach it with a more balanced perspective.

THE THREE SPHERES OF CHANGE™

The Three Spheres of Change are shown in figure 1.1:

1. what's changing
2. what's unchanging
3. what needs changing.

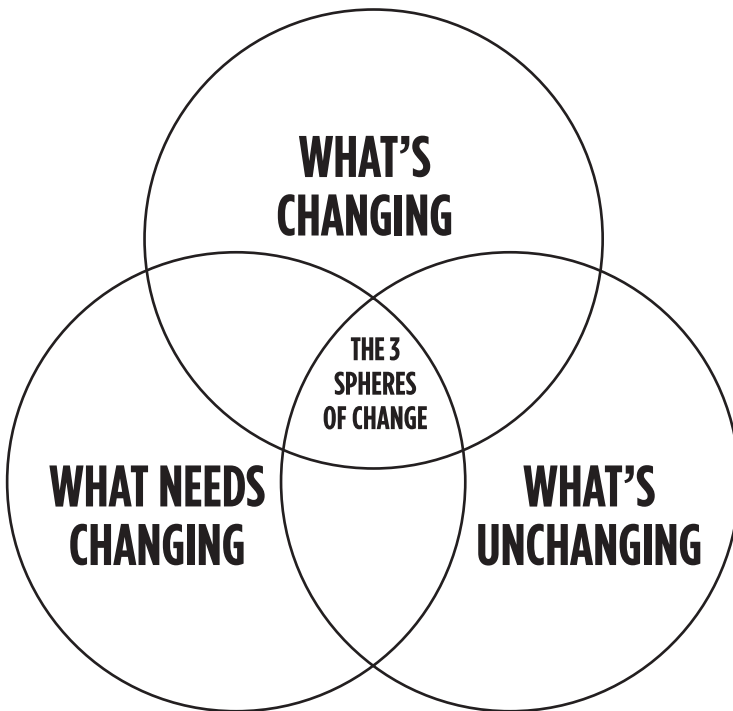


Figure 1.1 the Three Spheres of Change

THE THREE SPHERES OF CHANGE

The Three Spheres of Change are all important and should get equal attention. But they don't. Rather, some tend to get the preferential treatment and focus of a favoured child in a 1970s television sitcom.

What's changing is clearly the first and favourite child (the Marcia) and it gets the lion's share of our focus. It's bold, it's in your face and it commands attention now. It is the most reactionary sphere and when we filter our views through it, if we're not careful (and balanced by the other spheres), we can feel the need to take immediate action or else risk being left behind. This sphere drives business, technology, education and media who pump us up with worrying news about the importance of staying ahead. It is competitive.

What needs changing benefits from our bias towards the new and the excitement of fresh possibilities. It's wide-eyed and promise-filled. This might be considered 'the baby' (the Cindy) of the change family. Used well, this sphere is proactive. It can help you not simply react but create the changes you want to see in your business, community or world. Entrepreneurs tend to spend quite a bit of time here.

What's unchanging however, is the Jan Brady of change! It gets the least amount of attention when compared to the other two spheres, as it's quieter and less demanding. It's not as flashy as *What's changing* or as beguiling as *What needs changing*, but it is crucial if you want a full view of change. It brings much-needed perspective. It does this by taking a broader view of change. It's about human nature and our eternal needs and wants. It's perhaps the most important sphere when it comes to navigating change and preparing ourselves for the future.

This 'middle child' of change tends to overlay quite nicely the 'Not urgent but important' quadrant of Dr Stephen Covey's famous Urgent/Important Matrix, described in his self-help classic *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*. Like the 'Not urgent but important' quadrant, 'What's unchanging' doesn't seek immediate attention. However, an investment in it reduces fear and urgency and, in doing so, creates a sense of personal power and control.

Consequently, this is where we have focused most of our research and interviews for this book. There are already plenty of great books on the shelf about social trends and technological advances, and another significant

proportion of recommended reading is devoted to innovation, new skills that will be required and how to make new change stick.

Forever Skills, however, aims to articulate what is worth keeping, nurturing and deepening.

So why is change such a big deal anyway?

FUTURE FEARS

Traditionally, human beings don't do change well. In fact, our social and commercial histories are peppered with examples of resistance to change, from the Luddites protesting the rise of weaving machines in the early 1800s to the famously failed 'New Coke' experiment that almost destroyed one of the most powerful brands and businesses on the planet.

Human beings, it seems, are quite backward when it comes to moving forward.

Today, that sense of alarm is exacerbated by the overwhelming stream of 'if it bleeds it leads'—style news reporting and 'alternative facts' flooding digital technology as never before. This can lead us to second-guess what we assume to be true and, in turn, drive us to be more paranoid and fearful than we once may have been.

We've conducted surveys around this fear of change with our audiences. While it does tend to increase as the average age of the audience rises, our surveys have demonstrated that the fear is actually quite universal. In fact, a simple shift in the frame we use to describe the nature of the change (for instance, looking at change in terms of housing affordability) can elicit a sense of dread even among digitally native Millennials and Gen Z's.

But this is far more than just a social trend or an existential crisis. In *The Art of Innovation*, Apple's former chief evangelist Guy Kawasaki notes that few market leaders have been able to 'jump the curve' and maintain leadership once a technological leap has been made.

Kawasaki observes that ice farmers in the frozen north failed to make the leap to factory-based ice production, who in turn failed to make the leap to the production and distribution of home refrigerators. This pattern has been replicated in many industries in the years since.

There are a number of reasons for this, not least of which is the fact that innovation requires a willingness and ability to kill the status quo. Not easy to do when you are actually part of the status quo and it also happens to pay your salary, cover your rent, take care of your children's school fees and put food on your table.

The other, perhaps more sinister, force increasing this sense of trepidation about the future is the fact that there is a lot of money and power to be earned from fear. Entire industries thrive on this very human emotion and have little interest in dispelling fear or creating a sense of comfort about the future.

These include sectors such as insurance, politics, education, religion, the stock market, banking and even retail. Areas that in many ways play a positive role in society, but are also susceptible to using fear-based manipulation.

So if fear is often an incorrect (or unhelpful) response to the world of change, what are the alternatives?

EMBRACING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Perhaps just as distracting as future fear is the temptation offered by new opportunities.

At first blush, this seems a far less dangerous preoccupation than fear. Surely the capacity to find opportunity in change is a good thing. Of course, it can be. However, as anyone who has ever sported a mullet or worn yoga pants for anything other than a yoga class can (and should) attest, not every trend or opportunity is worth investing in.

In much the same way that we can become distracted by what's changing, we can also become enamoured with what could, or we believe *should*, change.

This is partly driven by the competitive desire, which many of us share, to be the first and to shape the future in our own image.

However, as Ohio State University's Oded Shenkar suggests in his book *Copycats: How smart companies use imitation to gain a strategic edge*, being first to market is not always a recipe for success. In fact, Shenkar's research

found that as much as 97.8 per cent of the value of an innovation goes to the imitators, not the innovators. So much for being first to market!

Which is not to say that a mindset of openness to change or an awareness of opportunity is always a liability. Quite the contrary. However, in the same way that the trends, tools and technologies that are changing are not the complete picture of change, neither is the change we seek to make ourselves.

So, rather than stifling innovation and curtailing progressive strategy, what we're advocating for is a more holistic view of change where just as much focus is paid to what remains as to what we might lose or gain.

RE-THINKING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

All of this becomes particularly important when viewed through the lens of education.

This is true whether it's applied to our own personal development, the training protocols we implement with our teams, or our children's educations.

Of all the industries we've had the pleasure of working with throughout our professional careers, few incite such passionate opinion and disagreement as education. Which is not entirely surprising, as we're all the products of that industry, and it was a process that was not necessarily enjoyed by all.

This anxiety has seen a rise in trends such as helicopter parenting, increasing demands on the content of curriculums, and parents becoming more emphatic and opinionated in parent-teacher interviews.

The media regularly reports and endorses cries from parents pressing for a 'return to basics', to 'teach the three Rs' and the 'need for more STEM' (or its more recent modification, 'STEAM' — Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics).

Of course, much of this is reactionary and subject to the same trends and fashions that drive change in the worlds of business, society and government.

One of the critical reasons we wrote this book, having invested a significant portion of our lives into training leaders and teams in different industries around the world, is because playing catch-up, or trying to predict which skill will fall into or out of favour, has proven to be a largely flawed strategy.

One of the great challenges of change is that it is unpredictable. There's a reason futurists, social demographers and economists don't offer money-back guarantees.

Having observed the limits and challenges of modern education, what came through repeatedly in our research was the idea that a new conception of education, one based on self-learning, was critical for any skills we might need in the future, and that the process of education is a lifetime undertaking.

Nonetheless, as we'll explain in the coming chapters, our research also revealed that there is a set of skills, traits and capabilities — Forever Skills — that can help all of us adapt and prosper through change, while equipping us with a framework for whatever new skills might be required.

THE THREE KEY AREAS OF FOREVER SKILLS

In the interest of clarity, memorability and portability, we began to cluster the Forever Skills around three central themes.

Clustering skills, and indeed choosing the correct names for these skills, presented us with a few issues. Throughout our research we learned that what we had assumed were easily understood descriptors for certain skills varied greatly across different industries and contexts. We also wanted to create a mnemonic that was memorable and usable, but not so trivial that it devalued the thinking and collective wisdom that sat behind it.

We decided on three key groups. The first revolves around an ability to understand, strategise for and solve complicated problems. The language that emerged around this cluster includes a capacity to solve problems with different modes of thinking: creative thinking, critical thinking, insight mapping, design, strategy and situational intelligence.

FOREVER SKILLS

The second cluster that emerged centres around people skills. This includes the ability to persuade, to move others to action and engage and galvanise support for one's ideas.

Lastly, the third cluster centres on the idea of control. This includes controlling our own performance under duress, our own fear, the quality of our output, the environment (in its broadest definition) and others — in terms of consensus building, social justice and crime prevention.

All three of these clusters reveal themselves throughout our skills research, throughout the history of work and human endeavour, in our present workplaces and also in the predictions of futurists and economists about the near and distant future. Which makes them forever.

So what are the three Forever Skills clusters?

1. *Creativity*. The capacity to garner insights, invent, innovate, solve problems and be mentally agile.
2. *Communication*. The ability to engage, persuade and move others towards a shared goal.
3. *Control*. The mastery of power over self, our actions, the environment and social consensus.

Within each of these three clusters sit four crucial skills. Now to explore these 12 skills that will be evergreen.

