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Change is not an easy process for individuals and is even more complicated when trying to get whole organizations of individuals to think, act or conduct business differently than they have in the past. And when the organizational change is targeted toward the organization's culture — the core values and beliefs shared by staff — the level of complexity increases dramatically. Systems change at this level seeks to introduce what Peter Senge and his colleagues¹ refer to as "profound change," or organizational change that combines inner shifts in people's values, aspirations and behaviors with outer shifts in processes, strategies, practices and systems.

However, too often, change efforts fail because leadership institutes changes in processes, strategies, practices and systems without ever attempting to alter the thinking that produced them. To create profound change, which leads to building an organization's capacity for ongoing change, affecting these underlying beliefs and thought processes is essential. Implementing change at this level requires a thoughtful, planned approach, using numerous strategies and involving staff at all organizational levels. One of these strategies is training, which is exactly what the Maryland correctional system is using as its tool to create culture change throughout the department.

Providing Direction and Focus

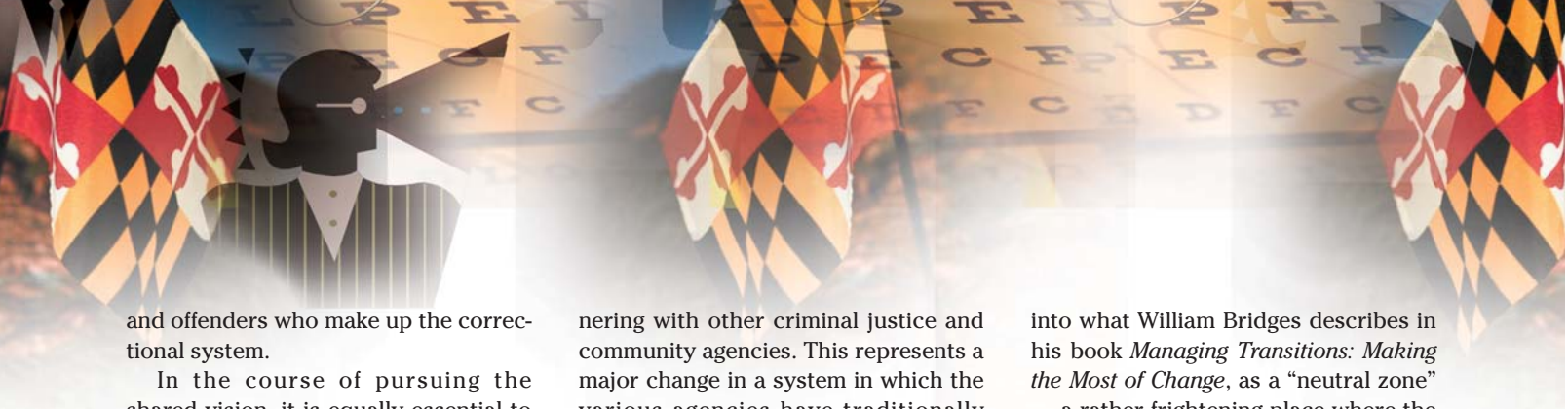
According to John P. Kotter's 1996 book, *Leading Change*, an essential starting point for successful change initiatives is leadership's articulation of a clear and compelling vision. The vision of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services is virtually to put itself out of business by ensuring that every offender who comes through the system receives the treatment, educational/vocational and transitional services that he or she needs to reenter society as a productive, law-abiding citizen, never again to return to the correctional system. Obviously, this is not likely to happen, but that is the nature of vision — a picture of an ideal future.

Far too often, vision statements are exercises conducted at strategic planning sessions that result in a lofty statement that is filed away or even perhaps hung on the wall, but generally quickly forgotten. The challenge faced by leadership is how to use the vision to create a sense of urgency for the changes required for that vision to be realized. Vision statements are powerful when they are communicated clearly and regularly, serving as the basis for all of the actions taken in an organization. In essence, a clear vision provides direction and focus and establishes a tension between current reality and the idealized future, explained author Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline*. It is this tension that serves to promote growth and development in an organization, as opposed to the inertia that results in complacency and an attachment to the status quo. Systems require a healthy disequilibrium to change and that results in a level of discomfort. Although this disequilibrium is necessary to produce productive change in practice, it is often uncomfortable for the staff



A RENEWED FOCUS ON MISSION AND VISION:

MARYLAND'S STRATEGY FOR
CREATING CULTURE CHANGE



and offenders who make up the correctional system.

In the course of pursuing the shared vision, it is equally essential to ensure that the mission is being met on a daily basis. It is important that the mission be succinct and clear, so that every employee, whether employed as support, medical, food service, education, information technology, training or custody staff, is able to understand the mission and how that employee supports that mission. This is essential if the vision and mission are to become meaningful to each employee. According to Jim Collins and Jerry Porras,² organizations that perform the best are those where every employee knows, understands and buys into the organizational mission.

RESTART Philosophy

Pursuit of the vision and mission for corrections in Maryland has demanded a major shift in organizational culture to a more positive and open environment with less emphasis on external control and more focus on creating internal motivation for change in the inmate population. The overall initiative to change the system is called RESTART — Re-entry and Enforcement Services Targeting Addictions, Rehabilitation and Treatment. The RESTART philosophy emphasizes the importance of structuring the system so as to conform to the body of knowledge that has developed in the area of what constitutes sound correctional practices.³ The basic elements include valid and consistent screening and assessment, and case management designed to provide the treatment, educational/vocational and transitional services most likely to result in inmates' successful reentry and reduced recidivism. The philosophy encourages high levels of collaboration among the various agencies within the department to ensure a seamless transition of offenders from pretrial through incarceration, to community supervision as well as increased part-

nering with other criminal justice and community agencies. This represents a major change in a system in which the various agencies have traditionally functioned somewhat independently, often creating their own silos.

Within the Maryland institutions, numerous changes in policies, practices and personnel have been implemented to create the change in culture needed to support the RESTART philosophy. This has involved making adjustments in some of the basic operations, such as the process for conducting counts and an adjustment in the amount of out-of-cell time to allow inmates to attend programs and work. Additional program services have been made available, including a cognitive restructuring model aimed at equipping inmates with the skills required to develop more pro-social behaviors based on altering their thought patterns. The goal has been to increase safety and prepare inmates for release by reducing idleness and providing the support they need for successful reentry. This goal can only be obtained in an environment that is based on respect and communication, certainly not in one based on fear.

Embracing Change

Perhaps the greatest challenge in attempting to change the institutional culture has been in helping staff understand and embrace these changes. Regardless of whether a change is for the better, a certain level of discomfort for those affected always accompanies it. The change itself, whether it is a new policy, a new boss or a different role, does not create this discomfort. Rather, it is the internal psychological process that individuals undergo when faced with changes in their external environment. This process is one of letting go of the old way of doing business in order to adopt a new model. So change begins with an ending, a letting go of an old, familiar way of doing business. This ending is followed by entry

into what William Bridges describes in his book *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, as a "neutral zone" — a rather frightening place where the old way is no longer valid and the new is not yet adopted. It is in this neutral zone that individuals facing change confront their fear of the unknown, an unsettling state for most people.

Yet it is the very creation of such an internal crisis that opens the door to allow in the profound change needed to change organizations. For it is in these periods in a person's life in which that individual is most open to the critical reflection required for what one of the foremost experts in adult education, Jack Mezirow, has called "transformative learning."⁴ When adults are required to reflect on their basic assumptions, they are most open to re-evaluating and remaking their lives. It is through this process that training may be an invaluable resource in altering the values and beliefs that can lead to profound change in individuals and consequently in the organizational culture. The issues for training then become timing and structure. For training to be an effective change strategy, it must happen at the exact time individuals are least attached to their former belief systems and needs to be structured to provide trainees with new ways of perceiving and understanding their world.

Communications Management Team Training

In Maryland, training is recognized as an essential resource in facilitating the sought-after culture change. Last year, a new division was created within the department for the purpose of consolidating and integrating the training function. The Professional Development and Training Division was established in the Office of the Secretary, reporting to the deputy secretary for operations. Placement of this division at the secretary level was intended to ensure that the division's activities



remain closely aligned with the mission, vision and guiding principles of the department. The creation of the centralized training function paralleled the department's efforts to seek greater collaboration among the various agencies. As agencies had traditionally functioned in somewhat isolated silos, so also had training become rather fragmented and agency-driven. The new organization of training would allow for greater collaboration and reduced redundancy in training efforts, increased efficiency and better use of scarce resources. Various training programs have been conducted to assist in changing the organizational culture, including New Wardens' Training, New Assistant Wardens' Training, career development programs for institutional managers, and cognitive restructuring programs for correctional officers, to name a few.

The training initiative that most directly focuses on facilitating culture change in institutions is called Communications Management Team Training. This program is a joint effort between the Professional Development and Training Division and the Office of Communications. It arose from the recognition that it is not enough to merely tell staff what the vision, philosophy and guiding principles of the department are, but that there was a need to involve staff heavily in advocating for these changes. Although leadership has responsibility for establishing the vision, the only way an organization will truly move toward that vision is to create a culture in which employees at all levels "pull change" as opposed to having it pushed on them. This requires staff to develop the knowledge and skills required to implement the desired changes.⁵

Communications management teams were formed at each of the department's 18 prisons and two pretrial detention centers. The teams' co-leaders are the warden and an assistant warden, and the teams generally range from six to 12 members, repre-

senting all levels and functions and comprise staff with positive attitudes who would make good change agents. The teams are given an orientation in their region by an assistant commissioner, who explains their role in being the vehicles for communicating the department's mission, vision, guiding principles and key initiatives throughout their institution. Much thought was given to developing a process for empowering these teams with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they would need to perform this important function. This process involved some major training considerations, including:

- How to provide the teams with a "big picture" perspective of the organization's vision when they represent such a diverse cross-section;
- The need to incorporate learning in the affective domain, a much more complex yet less often attempted process than merely providing training in knowledge or psychomotor skills; and
- Creating an environment in which the teams could continue to grow and develop as opposed to a one-time training event.

The initial team training occurs as a three-day program spread out over a week. Each class comprises three or four teams, keeping the classes to around 35 to 40 participants. Teams from various geographical areas are brought together in a central location in order to encourage internal communications among the various regions, which generally occurs infrequently. On Monday, the first day of the training, the program begins with a welcome by the commissioner and assistant commissioners to impress upon staff how important their task is and to help create a sense of urgency for the changes on which the department has embarked and in which they will assist as change agents. The secretary presents an overview of the mission,

vision, guiding principles and key initiatives, answers questions from the audience and reinforces how significant the teams' roles are in changing the culture. The remainder of the first day of training is an intensive immersion in the programs and activities implemented throughout the system, with emphasis on the research basis and an understanding of how these programs will help the department meet its vision.

The primary goal of the first day is to ensure that team members have a firm understanding of what the department's vision is and what efforts are being undertaken to reach that vision. Teams are given an opportunity to work together to begin building a sense of team identity, which will be an essential element in carrying out their task. The day ends with preparations for the second day of training when the teams travel together to visit two institutions in neighboring Pennsylvania. Some general guidelines about what to look for during their visit are provided and travel arrangements are made. During this first training day, several of the more vocal participants expressed their doubts about the changes and, though they did not say so directly, appeared to have some trepidation about the teams' ability to influence the attitudes of other staff. They were encouraged to keep their minds open and visit the Pennsylvania prisons, not to return and create the same environments in Maryland, but merely to begin thinking about how operations could be changed for the better at home.

On the tour day, the teams split up, with two teams traveling to one of the Pennsylvania prisons and two teams to another. The assistant commissioners accompany the teams on their tours, further demonstrating the commitment of top leadership to this process. The partnership with the Pennsylvania prisons has been a most important element of this training. The Pennsylvania officials have been extremely cooperative in working with Maryland to



arrange the tours, and have been very gracious in making the staff feel welcome and providing an in-depth view of their operations. This activity was an eye opener for many of the staff who attended, as some of them had never visited another prison in Maryland, much less one in another state. The goal of the tour is to broaden the perspective of staff and motivate them to seek positive change in their institutions. The excellent working relationship with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has also served to promote the values of cooperation and the adoption of best practices.

On the third training day, the transformation in the class was remarkable. Participants had left the first day looking somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of information they were provided and the thought of the charge with which they were tasked. They returned to class on Friday, highly energized by their tour and obviously very motivated to tackle their task. The day began with a team debriefing and report on the tour experience. The remainder of the day was devoted to giving the teams some skills to begin their work together. They were given modules on managing change and building highly productive teams in the morning, and the afternoon was spent with their teams as they organized themselves to carry on the team process. The teams met to determine meeting schedules, set up communications systems among team members, discuss team norms and guidelines, and begin brainstorming how they would approach their task. The commissioner and his assistant commissioners were present at the end of the day to hear the team reports on their plans and provide positive feedback and encouragement. Each team was given a book on managing organiza-

tional change and members filled out forms so that they could be issued business cards as a vehicle for networking. Written participant evaluations and verbal comments indicated that team members left the three-day training highly energized to return to their facilities and begin their work.

Maintaining Momentum

The challenge now is how to keep the momentum that was established through the training process in motion in order to create true change, or the change that occurs when ideas and concepts are embedded in the underlying assumptions about how work is done. True change, as defined by Janice Klein's book of the same name, is when ideas become institutionalized and no longer rely on change agents to support them. The assistant commissioners, who will provide ongoing support and guidance for team activities, will visit the communications management teams regularly. An online learning community will be established to provide updates on departmental activities and allow team members to engage in online discussions, sharing successes and innovative ideas.

Plans also are being formulated to bring the teams back together at a later date for advanced training and sharing of experiences. Creating a culture of open communications is an essential part of the process begun in Maryland. Nurturing that process requires continued attention, support and resources to ensure that the teams' efforts are recognized, maintained and institutionalized within the culture of the facilities. This, in fact, constitutes the only hope of inculcating the type of culture sought in the Maryland system. There are no easy

answers, but constant attention and focus on the vision and the mission are imperative, together with the sincere belief that the rewards will be well worth the effort.

ENDNOTES

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⁵Klein, J.A. 2004. *True change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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