



From change programmes to change as a way of life ~ organisational holons enabled

Change is one of those wretched topics that has been researched to death, and where there are so many insights, conceptual models and other bits of information available, it is sometimes quite difficult to discern a simple set of working guidelines that busy line managers can apply - successfully. In this paper, we try to do the impossible and make some sense out of the complex murk, and offer some practical, do-able ideas. First, a wander through some of the murk. - there are lots of insights but not so many practical working ideas.

The nature of the beast

The first question that always comes to mind is about why change is such a big issue. It is often approached as if it is something unnatural, and hence something that needs artifice if it is to be managed well. This attitude leads directly to the assumption that change needs 'programmes', complete with projects, plans, programme boards and facilitators - and often that kiss of death, a name for the programme. If the change is major, and needed to avoid some sort of catastrophe, it may be that all the formalities are actually necessary, but that leaves on the table the question of why such a cataclysmic change was necessary in the first place.

Back in 1953, a chap called Brech edited a tome on management¹. It included this statement: "It would, in fact, not be untrue to say that change is an inevitable corollary of progressive management and perhaps even its symbol". One implication of this is that change is one of those things that is or should be a normal part of management life - as long only as the manager in question is 'progressive'.

As a sides-wipe on the Brech concept, back in 1965 the present author wrote a paper entitled 'The management of change'. Almost ever since then, groups of people in various types of organisation have been asked the question - "When did you last experience a condition in your jobs when there was no change?". No one has yet come up with one - change appears to be all-pervasive. This prompts the question - if it is so common, how come it is still a problem?

A rather more recent way of expressing the Brech insight is the concept of the resilient organisation - one in which the organisation constantly, organically and dynamically adapts to a changing environment. Which is another way of saying that if a cataclysmic change programme becomes necessary, something has clearly gone wrong - the organisation has not been adapting enough as it went along. Where we are heading is the idea that the resilient organisations does not need change programmes of any sort. Moreover, it is a key role of leadership to create a resilient organisation. Before we get on to possible actions, a review of some of the research on change will inform our thinking about how to work that particular trick.

Conditions that enable change

One way of thinking about a lack of organisational resilience, which implies a lack of natural, ongoing change, is to start with the conditions that make change possible. These are well known, and can be summarised as:

1 The principles and practice of management ~ E F L Brech ~ Longmans ~ 1953

- **The potential for change exists** - this is very much about the type of systems that are operating. For example, if they are closed systems, then they operate in an inward facing, self-sufficient mode, and are largely impervious to external signals pointing to the need for change, even though at least some of those signals may be received. If the systems are arrested, then they are blocked from external signals, and inertia rules the day. It is only if the systems are open that change becomes a natural response to external signals - the key characteristic of open systems is that there is not one, single mental model of how the world should behave, that would lead to single models of how to respond.
- **The availability of relevant, do-able solutions.** If the perception is that what is required is beyond the capacity of the person, people or organisation involved, then responses other than proactive change are more likely.
- **There must be dissonance** between the desired state and the actual state. Unless there is a degree of discomfort with the status quo, then the energy required to change it will be lacking.
- **The barriers to change** must be either small or manageable, be identified and the process of breaking them down at least started. While some of these barriers may be external - imposed resource issues; financial constraints; social norms - many are just as likely to be internal. These could include lack of skills, misplaced effort, wasted energy. These also need to be identified and broken down, bypassed or their effects compensated for, as appropriate.
- **Insights into the causes** of the current state need to exist, or be developed through rational analysis if they do not. Without this, the development and implementation of effective solutions is unlikely, and that makes consolidation of new ways of working unlikely.
- **Consolidation and support** are required to cope with the immediate and medium term aftermath of the change, if the gains made are to be retained, and established as new routines. This is especially true, if there is resistance to the change from the local environment.

Given the comment about the need for open systems, it may be noted that if the focus of attention of the people involved is internal / individual or internal / collective, then the boundaries between their system and the environment are not likely to be porous, and outside information and ideas are not likely to penetrate. It is not until the focus of attention becomes external / collective that there are the conditions for a profound exchange of information and insights between the system and the outside world. (See the notes below in the 'Communications' section on the Ken Wilbur four quadrant model for more detail).

None of this is new, but the question that is still left on the table is that, so often, these conditions only exist when the organisation is 'in extremis'. And that is the point at which a cataclysmic change is required - enter the dreaded change programme! As a passing thought, the timing of this type of change programme - after an 'in extremis' position has been reached - may be one reason why their track record is so poor - 75% to 100% failures, depending on which piece of research you read.

So we still need a way of creating the conditions for change, that mean we will be able to avoid the need for another, wrenching change programme.

Reactions to imposed change

Before we move on to change as a way of life, and why that condition is less common than desirable, a quick summary of how people and organisations react to change imposed on them is noted below, as it provides insights into the nature of the challenge.

In the first case, there are the negative reactions to imposed change, which quite often, if prolonged, lead to one of those cataclysmic change programmes ...

1 Denial

Here the initial reaction is that either the change does not apply to us, our business or even our industry - or, if it does, then the 'sensible' way to react is other than that implied as needed by the signals entering the system from the outside world. Denial may be manifested as doing nothing, or it may be simply being very busy doing something else - head in the sand and hoping the problem will go away, as the ostrich is alleged to behave.

2 Anger and Blame

When threats become real, fright often turns to anger. This visceral reaction results in people 'lashing out' at the supposed enemy, blaming them for the threat, with accusations of unfairness, bias or special pleading.

"The only reason we have to change is that you / they won't face up to your / their own need to change, and are trying to make us pick up the tab for your / their own failure."

"You / they are cheating and breaking the rules, and covering that up, and that means you / they have an unfair advantage over us."

3 Superficial Change

Often the response generated is a cosmetic change - it is not wise to be seen to be doing nothing, when momentous events are happening all around. But the response may be peripheral, and may be one of displacement - targeting something other than the real issue to take pressure off where the real change is needed.

For example, here is the reaction of one person to budget cuts in the public sector, in the middle of the public sector spending crisis of 2010. "We have lots of useless ministries and management jobs that could be cut," says one worker. "But they always cut the same things: public sector pay and pensions. The same people always end up paying." That happened to be said by a lady in Madrid, but it could just as easily have been Rome, London or Athens.

Where bureaucracies get top heavy, as they have in all four countries, the decision power about people and other resources is always held by the bureaucrats, and they are seldom enthusiastic about cutting their own jobs - however clear the need or however widely understood that need might be. Moreover, subtle approaches to displacement activities can mean that the people in question can still hold the morally high ground.

'Not cutting front line service jobs' can literally be true, but the numbers come down anyway. All that is necessary to do is stop recruiting, and the numbers of police officers, nurses, firemen and other operational employees who retire from or otherwise leave their jobs every month will do the trick nicely. And then there are those capital and maintenance investments that can be cut, so that budget reductions are achieved, while keeping the bureaucratic decision makers comfortably in place.

These three negative reactions to change are often presented as three distinct, time-related responses to change, but they can also be conditions which, in a turbulent world, are more or less constant. They are certainly all characteristics of change-disabled organisations. For change-enabled organisations - those that we have labelled resilient - there are also three common mind sets, that again are ongoing.

1 Curiosity

Organisations that have open, porous systems are bombarded by incoming signals indicating that the world is alive with change. Instead of ignoring them, all are examined for possible relevance - where that is found a process of interpretation and prioritisation occurs. If priority is high, either the information goes on the strategic agenda, or it stimulates immediate, opportunistic reaction or both. Dialogue across the organisation is common, as is innovation in the reactions implemented.

2 Questioning Assumptions

Some people call it double loop learning; others kaleidoscope thinking. The latter analogy has one nice aspect - it is about the way that different pieces of apparently non-connected information can come together to form new patterns. It is this search for meaning represented as new patterns in the environment that drive an endless quest for adaptation that can generate some advantage to the system as a whole.

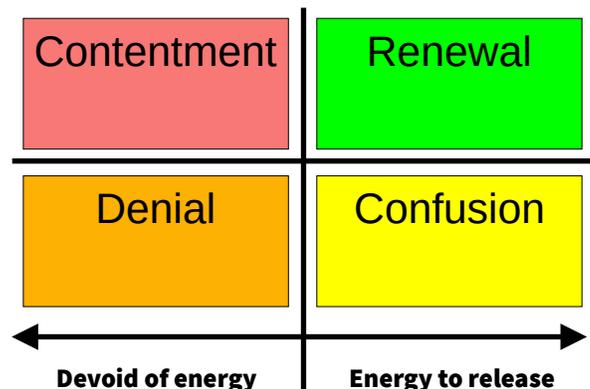
Inevitably, as the quest for learning continues, existing assumptions about how to operate are challenged, and new ways of working developed.

3 Engaging in Systemic Change

Over time, these iterative changes result in whole systems changes. They arise from failures as well as successes. All innovative change involves risks - all are a leap into the unknown. All are a source of learning - providing it is done without finger-pointing - the blame culture. The process is essentially emergent, and that requires emergent leadership, of which more below.

Another take on denial

Another interesting way of thinking about how people react to change is in the 4 room model - see the diagram to the right. This represents the 'change journey' as being a progression through four 'thinking rooms'. Again, while this may often be valid, it is also possible to consider these thinking rooms as representing more or less static conditions as well as a process. A brief summary:



Contentment - the position is one of “Don’t disturb me - everything is just fine. I’m OK.”

Denial - “It’s nothing to do with me - go somewhere else.”

Confusion - “I don’t know whether it’s all OK or not, or if it could be better. I am waiting to be convinced.”

Renewal - “This is needed - it will get us somewhere better than we are today.”

A key about the model is in the bottom line - when people intellectually and emotionally are on the left side of the diagram, there is no energy that can be tapped into, and released to develop improved products, practices and processes. Change is effectively impossible, if these mental models of the organisational world are the norm.

Fortunately, very often, the majority of people are to be found in the confusion thinking room. In which case, one way of expressing what the emergent leader has to do is to help them move up to the renewal room, at which point they will get on with what is ever required to bring about necessary changes - provided only that the conditions are appropriate, as suggested above.

But still, there are few answers on how to bring about those conditions.

The change disabled organisation - or ‘in extremis’ beckons!

An interesting piece of research in 1990 identified over 100 aspects of management practices and processes which could, if appropriate, enable organisations to live happily with change, or, if they are inappropriate, could have exactly the opposite effect. 100 items is too much for easy assimilation, so the sidebar on the right contains a short list of 15 ‘change disablers’. For brevity, just five headline topics are used for the discussion that follows:

The organisation tries to defend its market position by focusing on existing products and services
Risk aversion - analysis paralysis – failing to make business decisions until certainty beckons - often when it is too late
Managers are closed to feedback and experiential learning
Leadership is assumed to be the responsibility of, and something that only happens in, top management
The organisation mainly relies on conventional approaches for delivering products and services to mainly existing customers
Power is held tightly by a small group of people, and it may be exercised covertly
Few seem to know where the business is heading - it's a bit like wandering around, lost in the fog
Top management is out of touch with the external and internal environments – fails to anticipate and action critical issues
The mud hut syndrome is alive and well – the focus is on achieving departmental objectives, even at the expense of other departments or the organisation as a whole
Managers tend to have an inward-looking, backward-facing, short term focus on performance issues
People are not valued. They generally avoid responsibility and often only work near the norm if they are bribed (money) or threatened (fear)
Employee performance improvements generally arise through working with their managers to raise standards in applying existing job methods
Time, energy and money are mainly invested in optimising existing processes and practices for managing the organisation
The business strategy is developed by managers and communicated formally, but gets little attention from employees
Challenging existing practices is rare, and new ideas generally start from 'current thinking' and are extensions of or modifications to existing practices

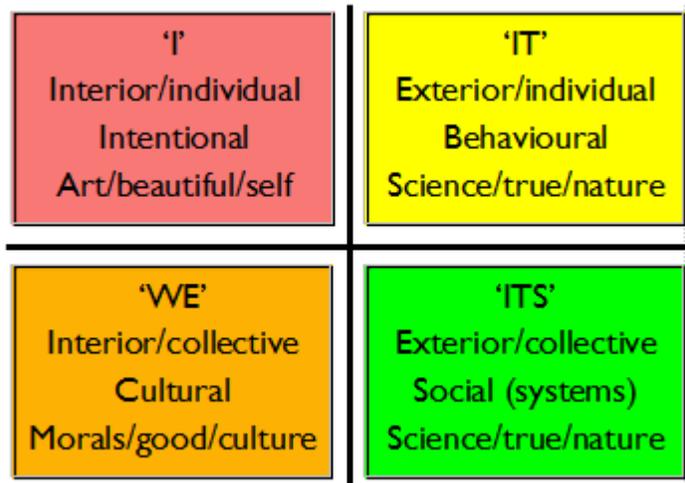
Time span of focus / decisions

Organisations that are locked into routine find change difficult to manage. All changes threaten the continuing smooth running of the machine, and that has the potential for much discomfort. Often one of the drives of this sort of routine is the large number of short-term, backward-facing numbers that are in use. If these are largely financial numbers, locked into the budget and monthly management reports, the effect is compounded. Finally, if there is a high level of downward pressure coming from management on short term numbers, then the lock-in to the 'more of the same as' routine will be complete. Moreover, the organisation is likely to be a walking demonstration of silo thinking. It might also be noted that where short-term numbers rule, there is unlikely to be any sense of direction, and that has its own concomitant depressing effect on employee motivation and engagement.

Communications

In the first consideration, if communications with the outside world are broken - the boundaries between the organisation and its external environment are anything but porous - then it will be largely unaware of the forces coming into play, that demand change. Until, of course, it is too late, the forces have become irresistible; and the inevitable cataclysmic change programme is on its way.

Using Ken Wilber's four quadrant model of interconnecting realities and consciousness, (on the right), is a useful way for thinking about the way that people and organisations view the world.



The link with the four room model is imperfect but interesting for all that. (Please note that the sequence, if there is one, is different from that of the four room model - this is indicated by the colours of the boxes).

Again, while it may be that people grow through the differing states of consciousness - from I to IT to WE and ITS, it is also true that most people exist in all the states at different times and under different circumstances. (There are also other possible sequences, and there are likely to be movements in all directions, that do not fit in to any particular pattern).

The question that arises is, stemming from the cultural norms of the organisation, what is the predominant focus of attention? If it is either form of interior, then trouble will be looming. It is only when the focus of attention shifts to external that boundaries become porous and change starts to become a normal way of life.

A second consideration concerns communications that run from operational people to the top of the organisation. If these are also broken, then the interior focus problem is likely to be exacerbated, if not set in concrete. One of the realities of organisational life is that it is operational people who are most likely to be in daily contact with the outside world, through customers and suppliers, and people in the local community. Trying to substitute formal scanning or research systems for a lack of feedback

from the ground floor is inevitably going to bring excessive delays in gathering and processing information in its train, as well as a raft of data contamination problems to boot.

Accountability

Accountability can be clear and focused on outcomes, rather than activity. But it can also be very unclear (fuzzy), and can be shared between different people and functions. If either of the two 'unclear' conditions exists, then the conditions for a change-disabled organisation are in place.

There are commonly three consequences of unclear accountability. One is a general lowering of energy levels - 'no one appears to be bothered about what I achieve, so why should I?' Another possibility is the exact opposite - an increased level of activity. This is likely to be 'busywork', however, and that adds little value to anything. The third is the 'buck-passing' routine, where more energy is devoted to demonstrating that 'poor results are someone else's fault, not mine' than in trying to improve them. The CYA report and memo reign supreme! (Cover Your Ass).

In any case, responding to a signal that change is necessary, means going through all the work needed to design and implement a change. If the result is that either there is no positive feedback, or that the positive feedback goes elsewhere, then the 'more of the same as' sounds much more attractive. Quite apart from any other consideration, doing that which has been done many times before has the big advantage of being easy.

Narrow distribution of power

With certain notable exceptions, power normally increases as the centre and top of an organisation are approached. Sadly, so does the lack of speed with which messages from the external and internal environments arrive at the point where someone has the power to take action. Since power is needed to accomplish anything, then the corollary of the inverted progressions - power and speed - means that by the time the corporation gets into motion to adapt to a change, it is generally far too late.

If we are serious about operational people being the 'sensors at the periphery of the organisation', and about wishing them to 'live the strategy', then we have to give them the power to make and implement decisions, according to the changing needs of the external environment, and in a timely fashion. A failure to do so will simply lead to cynicism and disengagement.

The risk averse organisation

A common reference is to organisations having a blame culture. This is but one, superficial manifestation of the problem - 'superficial' is used to indicate 'apparent' or 'on the surface', not 'unimportant'. There are many others, less obvious but just as serious in terms of their impact on the ability of the organisation to adapt, change and perform.

One facet of the problem is that decisions are put off until the decision-makers can be certain that their decision will be 'right'. This is a recipe for not making any decisions at all - with the possible exception of 'deferring the decision until the next meeting'. The difficulty is with the word 'right'. As the time frame of decisions moves farther into the future, and the focus of attention moves farther outside the organisation, there is less and less certainty in the information to be processed to make the decision.

Only in the very short term is there any confidence that causes and solutions can be 'known'. The move from the known is to the probable or possible - prediction becomes the norm. At this point there are no 'right' answers - only good guesses, enlightened by a clear sense of strategic direction. Beyond the medium term, all is unknowable, and even prediction breaks down. At that point, trial and error take over, driven by insight and instinct as much as analysis.

So, in the real turbulent world of the 21st century, the search for 'right' decisions is a guarantee of running hard on the spot and a change-disabled organisation.

The other critical facet of the problem is all about innovation. Few would challenge the assertion that innovation is critical for survival, before we even get to worry about competitive advantage or becoming a leader in our field. Sadly, all innovation is a leap into the unknown, and has a high risk of failure. But people need to be exposed to the risk of success, and that automatically includes the risk of failure. So, where the organisation's reaction to a developmental failure is either unknown or unpredictable - or only too well known! - don't be surprised if people keep their heads down and stick with what is familiar, comfortable and safe.

OK - so now we know what to avoid, but what is it that is supposed to be done to create the conditions in which becomes a normal way of life?

And so to leadership ...

If leadership is seen as something that only attaches to people at the top, then progressive organisational dynamics are going to be a rare beast throughout the rest of the organisation. People with ideas, and a willingness to challenge the status quo will normally be suppressed and adopt a displacement strategy - they will pursue other goals, often outside the organisation, as they satisfy their need to grow and develop. Alternatively, they will adopt the other option of flight - they will quit and take their talents elsewhere.

What is needed instead is what has been called deep leadership. This is a condition in which there are many leaders throughout the organisation, often people not in formal positions of authority or power. They may be technical specialists or have some other type of focus to their intellect - they may be very interested in customers as long term partners, or suppliers as a source of strategic alliances. Whatever is their particular interest, they will constantly seek to identify opportunities for changing practices and processes in their search for higher levels of achievement. By their nature, they will take others with them in the quest.

Given the complexity of organisations in both private and public sectors, these people will sometimes lead; other times they will be good followers, as the topics of the day shift and as new opportunities are developed. Roles may also change at different stages of different change processes. Some informal leaders will be stronger on the research and development phase; others come to the fore when it is time to gather and apply resources; yet others may be focused on developing relationships with other functions within the organisation or even other organisations in the world external to the organisation. All have their value to add, and all somehow know how they fit in.

For this to happen, a new form of leadership is required. We have called it emergent leadership.

... via emergent leadership ...

There are two ways of thinking about this label. One is that leadership, or leaders emerge; the other is that emergent leaders enable emergence. Neither is 'right', but we follow the latter, and start by explaining why the label could be regarded as a misnomer.

Emergence is a reality in all organisations. It is not a product of management or leadership - it exists. In that sense, it is like informal networks and self-organising groups - they exist in all organisations. They cannot be managed or controlled. All attempts by management to control informal networks result in new, hidden networks developing in the place of the 'controlled variety'. Emergence is much the same. First a definition:

"Emergence is the production of global patterns of behaviour by agents in a complex system interacting according to their own local rules of behaviour, without intending the global patterns of behaviour that come about. In emergence, global patterns cannot be predicted from the local rules of behaviour that produce them. To put it another way, global patterns cannot be reduced to individual behaviour." (Ralph Stacey 1996)

Stacey goes on to say that emergence is all about conversation - *"Organisational change is the same thing as change in the pattern of talk and therefore the pattern of power relations. Creativity, novelty, and innovation are all the emergence of new patterns of talk and patterns of power relations."*

Given the definition and observation, reflection will suggest that any possibility of management creating or managing emergence in organisations is a non-runner. It is possible, however, to depress conversation to vanishing point - see the notes above on the change-disabled organisation. So, if the role of the emergent leader is all about enabling emergence through conversation, what does that mean in practice?

It is less about trying to direct and manage; it is all about creating the conditions where conversation, focused on adaptation and change, targeting improved problem-solving and performance, is enabled to be more comfortable, more open and more effective. In other words, to enable change as a way of life. Key goals of the emergent leader include:

- Creating conditions in which the connectivity between people and functions is increased. How many network connections exist between how many different people on how many different topics? These may be formal or informal network connections.
- Increasing the diversity of inputs to problem-solving and other performance development forums. How large is the range of types of people, relationships and topics on which people are transacting? Within formal structures, formal networks and informal networks?
- Improving information flows around the organisation. How substantial is the information that flows through formal structures or channels, and around the networks of relationships – both formally and informally?
- Reducing levels of contained anxiety. How much anxiety is there about the organisation and jobs within it that has no channel for release? How much is there about the consequence of 'good tries' that do not work out as hoped and intended?

- Diffusing power throughout the organisation, as distinct from it being held tightly by a small number of people, either at the top, or elsewhere as power brokers. Creating many 'bounded freedom'² opportunities for people to develop new ideas, and try them out, in safety.
- Improving the sense of direction that people have about the organisation and its goals. Not via formal strategies and long range plans, but by demonstrating that direction through the questions, decisions and other actions of top management.
- Creating a future orientation to peoples' thinking. How much do people factor future risks and opportunities into their decisions? How much energy is devoted to taking actions today to make the organisation more fit-for-purpose tomorrow - the future-proofing model?

... and on to some solutions

But what do emergent leaders actually do? It is really all given away by the last four bullet points above. What they do **not** do is issue directives and detailed, prescriptive policies and procedures. Neither do they exhort people to behave differently. Critically, they do not talk about leadership as if it is the special preserve of top management - a quality that somehow sticks to people when they get into senior roles. Also critically, they do not try to do other peoples' jobs for them, and do not keep asking questions about short-term numbers.

They do ask questions about future threats and opportunities. They ask about the longer-term implications of today's decisions and policies - about changing and not changing. They ask about who is doing what to improve quality and customer service; who is doing what to improve processes and practices; who is doing what to improve employee engagement; who is doing what to enable people to get more fun from their jobs. Here are some examples of the type of questions they ask:

- If we don't find ways of reducing the incidence of 'X' what is likely to be the outcome?
- How do we get the message across that it is OK to acknowledge the fact that there are no known solutions to complex, messy problems? That it is OK to explore new learning about complex, messy causes?
- How can we increase the connectivity between the functions / organisations / agencies involved in dealing with 'X'?
- How can we increase trust between agencies to functions / organisations / agencies to facilitate innovative problem-solving?
- How do we make it safe for people to challenge the status quo, and assumptions and how we operate?
- How do we get people to understand that it is OK to try ideas that do not succeed, as long as the experience is used to develop learning?
- What can we do that will increase the comfort of operational people in sharing information with

2 'Bounded freedom' is one way of enabling groups of people to problem solve and innovate more effectively. They apply the paradoxical idea that if our thinking is completely unbounded, many people struggle to think creatively - 'outside the square' - whereas within thinking boundaries, the opposite happens, given appropriate conditions. These include 'no recommendations'; 'no second guessing'; 'an insistence on experiential learning'.

people in other functions / organisations / agencies?

- What can we do that will increase the comfort of operational people in trying new ideas, which may not work perfectly first time?
- What can we do that will result in a stronger collective / external focus to our decision making?
- What can we do that will ensure that resources are more focused on service delivery and quality, and less on administrative functions?
- How can we ensure that the maximum number of people in management and support roles are adding value to service delivery and quality?

If we summarise some of the key insights reviewed above about the nature of change and what enables it, it becomes possible to see just how the emergent leader moves the organisation to be more change-enabled - it becomes more resilient. Here are the conditions that will be developed:

- The potential for change will be higher
- Many people engaging in the development and implementation of multiple, small solutions will mean that they are do-able
- New insights into the nature of experienced and expected problems will be developed
- 'More of the same as' thinking will diminish as assumptions get challenged
- Risk aversion will diminish
- The time span of decisions will increase, as will the external / collective focus of those decisions
- There will be dissonance with the current state
- Two of the key barriers to ongoing change will start to come down - there will be a better distribution of power and resources
- More information between more, and more diverse people increases curiosity about conditions, causes and opportunities
- Cross-functional problem solving will help to tackle the need for systemic change
- Accountability will be more widely diffused
- As results are generated, more and more people will move from the confusion room into that of renewal

We have one final observation to make - concerned with that reference in the title to organisational holons enabled.

Organisational holons enabled

One way of thinking about hierarchical organisations is to use the analogy of hierarchies in nature, based on the work of Arthur Koestler. (Janus:³ a summing up ~ Hutchinson ~ 1978). In this model, organisations are composed of holons. Each has a face looking down, and each has a face looking up.

3 Janus - the Roman god of doors, who hence had to face both ways

The reason for selection of the name 'holon' is that each hierarchical element acts as both a 'whole' and a 'part' – holons are sub-wholes. This gives the clue to the ability of holons to act in two quite different ways.

When acting as a whole, that is looking down in the organisation, the function of the holon is self-assertion. When acting as a part (of the whole ecosystem), that is looking up in the organisation, the function is integration.

The face turned downwards is one of independence and self-sufficiency. This is an hierarchical element that is equipped with self-regulatory devices and that has a considerable degree of autonomy or self-government. The face turned upwards is one of dependence and following rules dictated higher up in the hierarchy. There is little freedom at the interface with the 'next holon up', as integration can only work on the basis of conformance with the rule set emanating from the higher holon.

One way of expressing the role of the emergent leader is that of enabling organisational holons to act out in full their self-assertion role. The first act in this is to redefine the rules emanating from higher-level holons. Gone must be the detailed prescriptions that serve to constrain, and that have the unattainable goal of perfect efficiency, predictability, repeatability and reliability. Such prescriptions, much beloved of bureaucrats the world over, simply do not connect with the needs of developing high performing organisations in the 21st century. Neither do they enable the organisation to become more resilient.

They have to be replaced with broad guidelines that enable other holons to develop complex adaptive strategies that relate to the real world of turbulence and change.

Gone must be the reliance of lots of KPIs and other short term numbers. Incentive schemes also have to go, as do backward-facing performance management routines.

In comes a focus on outcomes, especially those that are desired for the future. In come permissions for people to experiment with innovative ideas, in the pursuit of quality and service excellence.

In short, it is about swapping regulation for self-regulation. In practice, as emergence is a reality in all organisations, whatever the attempts of people to stop it, all that is suggested is taking action that will mean that what is and what is highly valuable becomes more normal and comfortable.

All very simple really - it just takes a little courage to let go, and accept that not everything will work perfectly all the time. The alternative is the management equivalent of 'doing a Canute', and like Canute, the tide will not stop coming in. So, if you can't stop it, try surfing instead. It is much more fun and who knows, you might even win a prize!