

WHAT'S BELOW THE GREEN LINE

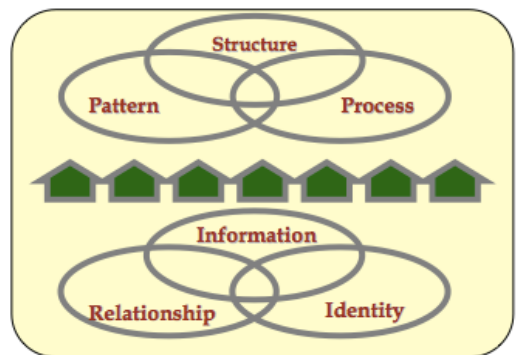
Educational change is technically simple and socially complex. A large part of the problem of educational change may be less a question of dogmatic resistance and bad intentions (although there is certainly some of both) and more a question of the difficulties related to planning and coordinating a multilevel process involving thousands of people. —Michael Fullan

Leading inevitably involves trying to effect change. Despite some of our best efforts to lead for change, and sometimes in spite of the sincere intention many of us have to change, very little significant change actually occurs! When considering bringing about change in a system, it's helpful to remember that there are both "technical" and "relational/social" aspects to the change. It's what the Fullan quote above refers to, and it's what the 6-Circle model depicts below. The 6-Circles represent all of the things leaders must pay attention to and consider when bringing change to a system. Traditionally, only the 3 circles above the green line get attention, but research has shown that only systems that simultaneously pay attention to all 6 circles are successful at initiating and sustaining meaningful change.

The hallucination is that if you develop a detailed long-term strategic plan that itemizes out every goal, objective, and action step; design explicit processes that detail out every step of the change process; change the structure of the organization... then people will willingly respond and create the desired change. —Steve Zueiback

One of the most powerful and simple whole system models is the Six Circle Model. It was originally developed by Margaret Wheatley and modified by Tim Dalmau and Richard Knowles. When Wheatley (1992) observed change processes within organizations she realized that most organizations approach change by addressing issues in one or more of the top three circles – structure, process or pattern. The "hallucination" was that if you changed the structure of the organization – assigned people to have the primary responsibility for a key initiative – the organization would then respond to the change. Additionally, the thinking was that if you designed explicit processes that detailed out every step to of a change process, people would willingly respond and create the desired change. Or, if the organization developed a detailed long-term strategic plan that itemized out every goal, objective and action step, surely the change would occur. Even though organizations were changing structures, people, processes and plans, positive change was not happening often enough.

6-CIRCLE MODEL



At this time in our history, we are in great need of processes that can help us weave ourselves back together. We've lost confidence in our great human capabilities, partly because mechanistic organizational processes have separated and divided us, and made us fearful and distrusting of one another. We need processes to help us reweave connections, to discover shared interests, to listen to one another's stories and dreams. We need processes that take advantage of our natural ability to network, to communicate when something is meaningful to us. We need processes that invite us to participate, that honor our creativity and commitment to the organization.

– Margaret Wheatley

WHAT'S BELOW THE GREEN LINE?

INFORMATION	
What is it?	What does it look like?
Information is like oxygen in a system. In its absence, people will “make it up” in an effort to keep moving forward. Access to information greatly minimizes the negative rumors that can occur within organizations.	This looks like multiple forms of two-way communication, repeating messages more than once in multiple ways, allowing opportunity to co-construct understanding and meaning rather than always being “told” or “given” information.

RELATIONSHIPS	
What is it?	What does it look like?
People need to have open relationships with the people they work with, trusted relationships that lead to commitment and powerful work getting done. Relationships occur not only between people, but between programs, departments, and organizations (think connections).	This looks like intentional time being dedicated to establishing, growing, and repairing trust. It means investing in the skills and capacities for honest and productive conversations. It means leaders model the way by extending trust first.

If you don't have trust how do you get it? Let me provide an odd-sounding answer from our motion leadership work (Fullan, 2010b). If you want to break the cycle of distrust you have to respect others 'before they have earned the right to be respected'... and then do the things that build competencies and trust over time.

-Michael Fullan

IDENTITY	
What is it?	What does it look like?
Human beings are meaning-seekers. Our actions are completely driven by our own set of values, beliefs and sense of identity. Therefore, finding meaning and value in our work motivates people to work together in organizations.	This looks like repeated opportunities for self-reflection and connecting personal beliefs and values to the mission and vision of the organization. It means being reminded of why we come to work every day, what's most important to us in our work, and finding ways to stay true to ourselves in the midst of competing commitments.

Here's what Parker Palmer has to say about "Identity."

I'm using the word heart as they did in ancient times, when it didn't merely mean the emotions, as it tends to mean today. It meant that center in the human self where everything comes together – where will and intellect and values and feeling and intuition and vision all converge. It meant the source of one's integrity.

It takes courage to lead from the heart because you're putting your own identity and integrity into the public arena. You're standing for things you believe in. You're professing values that are important to you – and in the public arena you will always draw slings and arrows for doing that. But you will also have the best chance of creating something of true and lasting value.

Look at history. Think for a moment about the lives of oppressed people around the world. These people have had no access to the tools of control and domination – like money, status, or political clout – to work for change. The only power they have access to is inward. But history shows time and again how people might be regarded as "weak" have used the power of the human heart. History shows how they have taken hope and vision on the one hand and anger and fury on the other to create real and massive transformation.

As people draw nearer to that place within themselves, they start to feel the painful consequences that can come from leading from their hearts. But they also see that the consequences of not doing so are even more painful. Not doing so results in leading a divided life – behaving one way on the outside while believing or affirming something completely different on the inside.

...no external punishment could possibly be greater than the punishment we impose on ourselves by conspiring in our own diminishment.

For another perspective on the "technical" and "relational" aspect of change, consider the Heath brothers' metaphor of the Elephant and the Rider when it comes to change.

From Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard by Chip and Dan Heath

Haidt (University of Virginia psychologist, author of *The Happiness Hypothesis*) says that our emotional side is an Elephant and our rational side is its Rider. Perched atop the Elephant, the Rider holds the reins and seems to be the leader. But the Rider's control is precarious because the Rider is so small relative to the Elephant. Anytime the six-ton Elephant and the Rider disagree about which direction to go, the Rider is going to lose. He's completely overmatched.

Most of us are all too familiar with situations in which our Elephant overpowers our Rider. You've experienced this if you've ever slept in, overeaten, dialed up your ex at midnight, procrastinated, tried to quit smoking and failed, skipped the gym, gotten angry and said something you regretted, abandoned your Spanish or piano lessons, refused to speak up in a meeting because you were scared, and so on. Good thing no one is keeping score.

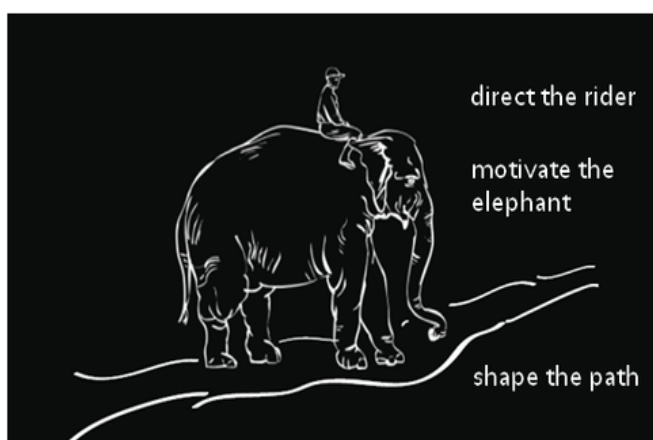
The weakness of the Elephant, our emotional and instinctive side, is clear: It's lazy and skittish, often looking for the quick payoff (ice cream cone) over the long-term payoff (being thin). When change efforts fail, it's usually the Elephant's fault, since the kinds of change we want typically involve short-term sacrifices for long-term payoffs. (We cut back on expenses today to yield a better balance sheet next year. We avoid ice cream today for a better body next year.) Changes often fail because the Rider simply can't keep the Elephant on the road long enough to reach the destination.

The Elephant's hunger for instant gratification is the opposite of the Rider's strength, which is the ability to think long-term, to plan, to think beyond the moment (all those things that your pet can't do).

But what may surprise you is that the Elephant also has enormous strengths and that the Rider has crippling weaknesses. The Elephant isn't always the bad guy. Emotion is the Elephant's turf – love and compassion and sympathy and loyalty. That fierce instinct you have to protect your kids against harm – that's the Elephant. That spine-stiffening you feel when you need to stand up for yourself – that's the Elephant.

And even more important if you're contemplating a change, the Elephant is the one who gets things done. To make progress toward a goal, whether it's noble or crass, requires the energy and drive of the Elephant. And this strength is the mirror image of the Rider's great weakness: spinning wheels. The Rider tends to overanalyze and overthink things. Chances are, you know people with Rider problems: your friend who can agonize for twenty minutes about what to eat for dinner; your colleague who can brainstorm about new ideas for hours but can't ever seem to make a decision.

If you want to change things, you've got to appeal to both. The Rider provides the planning and direction, and the Elephant provides the energy. So if you reach the Riders of your team but not the Elephants, team members will have understanding without motivation. If you reach their Elephants but not their Riders, they'll have passion without direction. In both cases, the flaws can be paralyzing. A reluctant Elephant and a wheel-spinning Rider can both ensure that nothing changes. But when Elephants and Riders move together, change can come easily.



The Heath brothers are speaking to something we already know about from brain research:

BRAIN RESEARCH:



Our emotional system is a complex and error-prone system that is quite resistant to change. Emotion is often a more powerful determinate of our behavior than our brain's logical/rational processes. -- Robert Sylwester

The brain has been observed to "shut down" when negative psychological feedback such as threat, criticism, and failure result in the defensive measure of downshifting. -- John Abbott

Downshifting is the tendency under stress to shift to a defensive mode and become less flexible and open to new information and ideas. Downshifting is the psycho-physiological response to threat, accompanied by a sense of helplessness, fatigue, fear, or anxiety. The brain learns optimally when appropriately challenged, but downshifts under perceived threat. A secure, nonthreatening environment counteracts downshifting. – Renate Caine & Geoffrey Caine

What are the "Below the Green Line" implications for our work based on this information?