THREE CHANGE STRATEGIES IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: DATA-BASED, HIGH ENGAGEMENT, AND GENERATIVE.

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ABSTRACT

This article categorizes organization development approaches to change management into three strategies, explains their differences, and when each might be most appropriate. It focuses on the differences between two change strategies that utilize the same methods and are associated with a Dialogic OD mindset: high engagement and generative. Brief case examples follow descriptions of the high engagement and generative change strategies. The differences in roles and activities of leaders (sponsors), change agents, and those affected by the change are identified. Propositions about when each strategy is appropriate are offered. The generative change strategy is the newest and least discussed in the change literature, and we describe essential differences that make it the most rapid and transformational catalyst for change. However, generative approaches are of limited value when high levels of interdependence or significant capital outlays require central coordination of change. In such cases, one of the other strategies is a better choice.

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This paper identifies and contrasts three different change strategies that have evolved within Organization Development. We accommodate the range of diverse methods OD practitioners use, from survey feedback to action research to appreciative inquiry and future search, noting that the unifying OD feature is engaging those who need to be part of the change in some form of inquiry (Bushe & Nagaishi, 2018; Hutton & Liefooghe, 2011). A fourth common change strategy, expert-driven, where the changes needed are identified by experts inside or outside the organization, and are implemented top-down, is excluded from this paper as being outside the scope of OD. This includes popular change management models like ADKAR, which focus mainly on helping people adapt to changes that have been prescribed by others (Galli, 2018; Hiatt, 2006)

We argue that at least three distinct strategies for organization development and change have emerged: data-based, high engagement, and generative. Data-based is the oldest strategy which emerged in the 1950's from the intent to apply scientific methods to managing organizations and change. Lewin's famous dictum "no research without action, no action without research" (Marrow, 1972, p. 90) was operationalized at the time to mean using scientifically valid data gathering to understand the team or organization before planning change. This has recently been characterized as a 'diagnostic' form of organization development, in contrast with a 'dialogic' form (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; 2015). A careful reading of Lewin, however, will find that if we substitute inquiry for research, many of his notions resonate with what Bushe and Marshak have labeled Dialogic OD (c.f., Burnes, 2020; Lehmann, 2017) offering one more reason to support their assertion that these represent "different forms of OD rather than different species of consulting and change altogether" (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, p. 359).

This paper identifies two different change strategies that are consistent with, and identified with, Dialogic OD. We call them High Engagement and Generative. The paper does not discuss OD methodologies; instead, we focus on two change mindsets from which any method might be applied. We will describe the fundamental differences between these different strategies and suggest under what circumstances, or in the face of what type of challenge, each might be most appropriate. We will

focus least on data-based, the oldest strategy and the most widely discussed. For generative change, the most recent and least described, we offer a generalized model that can be used with most methods. Any large-scale change initiative can utilize all three strategies at different times and with different groups. A recent study of 79 change projects found that most included data-based strategies but unless they also included dialogic strategies two out of three failed. 90% of the cases where leaders utilized a dialogic mindset, however, were successful (Hastings & Schwartz, 2022). That study did not differentiate between high engagement and generative strategies. We hope the distinctions in this paper will help leaders and OD practitioners broaden their approaches to OD and aid in further understanding the contingencies and possibilities for developing organizations.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE THREE CHANGE STRATEGIES

OD began primarily as a data-based form of intervention. Data-based approaches can operate from a mechanistic understanding of organizations (they are like machines where parts can be taken apart, replaced, redistributed, outsourced, and so on) and/or an organic view of organizations (they are like living organisms where the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and differentiation and integration of parts in proper relationship to the environment is required for organizational health). Data-based utilizes a diagnostic mindset (Bushe & Marshak, 2015) and can be described using a doctor-patient or medical metaphor. First you diagnose, then you change. Implementation is directive in nature.

The emergence of new and qualitatively different inquiry methods (e.g., Emery & Trist's (1973) Search Conferences, Lippitt & Schindler-Rainman's Preferred Futures (Lippitt, 1983)) in the 70s and 80s offered a shift in how the organization could engage with change, from small groups gathering data from which to plan activities, to working with large groups or whole systems to create social cohesion and energy for change (Bunker & Alban, (2006). Those utilizing what we are calling high engagement approaches to change can be operating out of an organic view of organizations, just like data-based approaches, or a socially constructed view as

popularized by appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1986) The social construction view sees organizations as products of the narratives people hold and live into and suggests that narratives need to align with an organization's vision and strategy for effective execution.

Generative approaches to change, the most recent, have emerged both from large group OD methods and from developments outside OD like agile and co-design which not only engage stakeholders in proposing changes but rely on them self-initiating action, trying out more than one possible "solution"

	What it is	When to use it	Role of leaders	Role of change agents	Also known as
Data Based	Use data analysis and expertise to decide on the correct solution or innovation and implement	When the situation requires only one solution can be chosen and information and expertise can be used to identify the best solution. Planned change of process and structures in relatively stable environment.	To select appropriate expert. To ensure good data for problem definition. To ensure compliance with recommendations by organization. Kotter has filled this in	**Project Manager**: Uses leader's authority to get information from the system and assistance with problem definition, solution identification and implementation	Dive approach to change Diagnostic OD
High Engagement	Engage stakeholders in proposing solutions or innovations to senior leadership who implement	When the situation requires coordinated implementation of solutions, and the acceptance and alignment of stakeholders is more important or useful than application of expertise	To energize, activate and orient system to the challenge. To garner ideas for change and buy-in to oversee and coordinate implementation of top-down solutions	**Host:** Organizes and leads sessions with organizational groups to achieve engagement, idea generation, alignment. Ferries information between groups and cheerleads for change	Participative Master approach Could be Diagnostic or Dialogic
Generative	Engage stakeholders in acting on self-generated solutions or innovations (pilots) and learn as you go	When the situation is so complex that it is impossible to know what solution will work without testing it out, where many different solutions can be tried at the same time, and stakeholder motivation to change is critical. Organizational Transformation. Culture Change. Turbulent environment	To create the conditions for change to emerge. To disturb the system sufficiently while holding spaces for new patterns of interaction and organization to emerge. To learn from pilot projects, nurture and embed successful pilots	**Disruptor:** Identifies narratives and processes that need disruption. Co-designs generative change events. Ensures structures and processes in place to learn from pilots	Emergent Agile Dialogic OD

TABLE 1 THREE ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT CHANGE STRATEGIES

in what can be described as an experimental approach to change (Bushe, 2020; Marshak & Bushe, 2018). Those who utilize generative change operate from a social construction view and/or a complex adaptive systems view of organizations (e.g., Holman, 2010). A complexity view emphasizes the self-organizing properties of organizations and the ongoing emergence of adaptive responses to situations that are not planned but are the product of many people interacting as interdependent actors over time. Table 1 provides an overview of the distinctions we will make in the rest of this article.

Following Marshak (2010), we note that these methods have arisen along with changes in the

theoretical orientations OD practitioners use. All three change strategies are in use today. Table 2 identifies when the theoretical background behind each strategy entered into OD thinking and practice and their overlaps. We briefly describe the data-based strategy and then describe high engagement and generative approaches in more detail. We believe there is less understanding of the differences between high engagement and generative strategies among practitioners and almost no discussion of the differences in the OD literature. We will focus on what differentiates these two strategies, the roles leaders and change agents play in each strategy, and when each is likely to be most appropriate.

Change Strategy	Data Based			
		High Engagement		
			Generative	
Source of Ideas	Engineer Sciences (1900s on)	Biological Sciences (1960s on)	Social Construction (1980s on)	Complexity Science (1990s on)
Organizations are	determinate, closed systems	contingent, open systems	culturally laden, networks of relationships	complex adaptive systems
Focus on	efficiency, plans, structure, productivity	alignment, adaptation, congruence, fit	meaning-making, narratives, preferred futures	self-organization, emergence, generativity

TABLE 2 THEORETICAL BASES OF OD OVER TIME

DATA-BASED CHANGE

Organization Development initially emerged as a data-based approach to change, often described as action research (Coghlan, 2012; Lewin, 1948; Lippitt, Watson & Wesley, 1958). Inherent in this approach is the assumption that applying scientific and engineering methods with a behavioral science twist will result in properly targeted changes. Participatory action research seeks to involve those who will have to change in all phases of the research process, thereby increasing ownership and commitment to the changes. In practice, however, this happens by identifying representatives of the various stakeholders who participate in small groups that undertake the research and propose the actions.

That makes it quite different from high engagement strategies that involve as many people as possible.

Nadler's (1977) classic book on "Data-Based Interventions" defines the OD challenge as one of how to collect and analyze data in a way that produces energy (commitment, motivation) and direction for all involved. Virtually every OD textbook written in the past 70 years emphasizes this strategy, and some would define OD within the confines of this strategy.

Even something as difficult to define and measure as culture has advocates of data-based strategies. Early cultural change models such as Johnson's (1992) Cultural Web and Peterson and Waterman's (1982) McKinsey 7S model can be seen as fitting into this

category as data about the organization is gathered and then mapped onto the model in a quantitative way. Similarly, Schein's cultural change model (Schein and Schein, 2019) asserts that "In the planning and implementation of culture change what seems to matter most is how thoroughly the system is analyzed and mapped …" (p.31), though Schein's notion of culture is quite at odds with popular data-based culture change models like Cameron and Quinn's (2011) competing values survey of organizational culture. Whether data-based approaches can produce culture change is hotly contested (cf, Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2016), and more recent cultural change models reflect a more social constructionist-based understanding of culture, such as the work of Wines and Hamilton (2008) who highlight the importance of stories to cultural stability and change in organizations. Many authors whose work is consistent with a dialogic mindset argue that their approaches are more likely to result in real culture change (e.g., Miller, Biggs and Katz, 2022). The dialogic mindset places great emphasis on working with narratives in organizations and creating or co-creating more adaptive, beneficial, future-focused narratives that facilitate changes in behavior from the shifts created in how people think and the social relationships among organizational members (Bushe and Marshak, 2009, 2014).

Data-based approaches to change may be most appropriate when

- There is a lack of understanding of the problem or challenge the team or organization is facing.
- Collecting and analyzing data will allow people to understand what needs to be done.
- There is a belief in the need to provide evidence that will convince others of the need to change.
- The challenge is a complicated (as opposed to complex) problem (per Snowden and Boone, 2007).
- Those leading the change believe there is a need to establish "what is true."

HIGH ENGAGEMENT CHANGE

WHAT IS IT

A high engagement change strategy has the clear objective of involving all those affected by a leader-initiated change by inviting them to contribute to aspects of the design of the change and/or change process, but not so much the ultimate vision or goals of the change. This strategy aims to utilize the wisdom of stakeholders and generate *commitment* to an intended change rather than just ensuring compliance with directions given. This aligns well with step 5 in Kotter's change model, 'empowering employees to act on the vision'. Many existing large group methods can be mobilized to achieve this high engagement. Some of the better known are Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008), Open Space (Owen, 1997), World Café (Brown and Issacs, 2005), and the cultural story approach of Wines and Hamilton (2008). These approaches share various similarities.

They are participative. People are actively engaged in various delegated and controlled aspects of the change. Different groups can be working on aspects of the change simultaneously rather than the change plan being implemented in a strictly linear fashion. Someone observing a high engagement event would see lots of groups of people actively working in different arenas concurrently.

They can be empowering. To the extent that an engagement strategy will give participants influence over some aspects of the change, the organization opens itself up to the benefits of creating a sense of ownership while accessing the collective intelligence of the whole organization and enhancing the organization's social capital (Baker and Dutton, 2009).

They work with the psychology of people. Active involvement in shaping a change is key to reducing resistance to change and creating commitment to a change. High engagement also can create high-quality connections (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003) between people characterized by their intense, trusting, and energetic nature. High energy networks are associated with motivation and action (Baker, Cross, and Wooten, 2003). By activating these positive aspects of group, individual and social psychology, high engagement events help people bring the best of themselves to the challenge in collaboration with others.

High engagement processes focus on the positive future people want to create instead of what is wrong or needs fixing. Extensive research has

confirmed the importance of positive affect in enhancing people's ability to work together and be creative when confronted with opportunities or problems (Lewis, 2011; 2016). These approaches also positively affect the sense of hope and optimism of those participating (Ludema, Wilmot and Srivastva, 1997).

They ensure that those who will have to change influence the change. One widely noted deficiency in expert-driven change is that experts can be too removed from the problems they are trying to solve, with many negative consequences. A high engagement process can work with the virtues of controlling variance at source, co-evolution of shared mental maps, crowdsourcing local knowledge, and therefore producing innovations more likely to be adopted by front-line employees.

They create energy for the envisaged change. High engagement strategies attempt to move organizational members into a high activation, high alignment state that creates "productive energy" Vogel (2017). This energy emerges as people interact in settings of mutual dependence, create shared interpretations of shared events, and generate shared emotional and cognitive states (Vogel and Bruch, 2007).

The critical distinctions between the high engagement strategy and the generative strategy outlined below are:

1. All this activity happens within a relatively defined space. That is to say, an overall plan or desired outcome already exists. The challenge is how to get to that place.
2. Those decisions are implemented within the everyday organizational decision-making and authorization process. High engagement processes encourage devolved solution finding, and these are offered as proposals that are then vetted by authorities who retain decision-making power.

WHEN TO USE IT – A CASE OF HIGH ENGAGEMENT CHANGE

The high engagement strategy is best employed when the required change is already known and decided, yet the whole organization needs to be actively involved to ensure its success. In this example, the client was an international holding company with seven companies in the UK. The existing five legacy IT systems were to convert to a single state-of-the-art IT system. While for the largest of this group of organizations, this would be a huge improvement, it would involve a loss of useful unique functionality for one or more of the others. This was the most extensive implementation project the IT system providers had ever worked on and the first that demanded such a level of mutuality from the client-side organizations, who normally operated in a complex state of both reliance on each other as part suppliers and as competitors in the marketplace.

Each client organization needed to supply people from their current workforce to work on designing and refining the system to suit the varied needs of five different organizations. Everyone would need to be trained in the new system and persuaded to give up the many localized workarounds that had evolved over the years. Furthermore, to get the new system off to a good start, all the data had to be cleansed of errors before being uploaded into the new system. None of the seven organizations, particularly those that saw no benefit to this change, were keen to volunteer the necessary person-hours.

With no overall head for the seven companies, there was a leadership vacuum around the project. The largest company had employed a Prince 2 qualified project manager to facilitate the change (change agent) and had appointed one of its managers to lead the change (sponsor). However, the project manager struggled to get genuine engagement from the Managing Directors downwards. The appointed sponsor, aware that he had been handed a project that could quickly turn acrimonious, avoided stepping into the leadership space. The project manager was struggling to get anyone to commit to any action. One of us was brought in to help with 'communication.'

The OD challenge proved to be creating engagement. Rather than embrace the new IT as an opportunity to invest in a better future, many resented it as a distracting cost on production. A high engagement strategy was used to address this, using a blend of appreciative Inquiry, open space, and world café. The consultant initiated various groups and ran group events to positively affect

mindsets and propose solutions in different areas within clearly defined boundaries. The decision to implement a new system-wide IT process had been made by a powerful group outside the UK and was not up for negotiation. However, the 'how to make it work' decisions were open and could be made by people inside the UK organization. The work to make these decisions involved both the supplier and the customer.

The high engagement events were very successful. The ERP supplier noted there were many fewer difficulties at go-live than is often the case with such a large project. The high engagement approach influenced the successful operation of the new system; it added untold benefits by diverting the threatened response of resistance, foot-dragging, and resource hoarding into a much more productive use of organizational energy.

We propose that high engagement strategies are most appropriate when

- Leaders have a clear vision of the end state they seek to bring about.
- The commitment of stakeholders is essential in ensuring successful change.
- The nature of the situation and/or change makes it challenging to try different changes simultaneously – there are interdependencies or large capital requirements that require central coordination and choice of specific changes.
- Participants have real opportunities to influence significant aspects of the change – both the nature of the change and the implementation process.

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

In high engagement change, the role of the leader is to recognize that, while they have set the parameters by having a vision or end goal (e.g., selecting the ERP system), they can call on the system's collective intelligence to implement their solution successfully. To do that, they need to create system engagement and activation. Rowland and Higgs (2008), in their analysis of different approaches to organizational change, call this the 'master' approach, which they describe as the 'I trust our people to solve things with us' approach.

As shown in Table 3, which is adapted from GE's workout process, which itself was adapted from Conner's (1992) model of change management, leaders must identify the change (vision) and integrate that with the organization's strategy and other changes taking place, protecting the change from upper-level conflicts. They need to provide the resources for change and align systems and processes with the change. Most sponsors do not have the time necessary to lead the day-to-day change activities and must find or engage a change agent with effective process consulting skills and the expertise in high engagement change techniques to stimulate the system towards the 'productive' energy space identified above.

THE ROLE OF CHANGE AGENTS

A change agent can be an internal consultant, someone put on temporary assignment, and sometimes an external consultant. Often, external OD consultants work with both sponsors and internal change agents. Effective change agents have to be seen as credible in the system, able to interact comfortably and gain trust with all levels of the organization. They facilitate the planning, design, and execution of engagement events, but it is not their job to persuade or make demands – that is the sponsor's role.

	Sponsor	**Implementor**	**Change Agent**
Leading Change	Identifies change	Makes change	Champions change
Creating a Need	Questions status quo encourages risk taking	Defies status quo absorbs risks	Builds case for changing status quo takes risks
Shaping a Vision	Integrates change with strategy	Makes changes to ensure fit with strategy	Translates change to be consistent with strategy
Mobilizing Commitment	Shares ownership Engages external stakeholders protects from upper-level conflicts	Owns changes informs others manages day-to-day conflicts	Accepts ownership networks with others resolves conflicts
Making Change Last	Provides resources for change integrates change initiatives	Uses resources gets results from change initiatives	Assigns resources persistently pushes change initiative
Monitoring Progress	Monitors results	Achieves results	Measures results
Changing Systems & Structures	Works to design and align systems and structures	Implements new systems and structures	Makes systems and structures practical and real

TABLE 3 ROLES OF LEADERS, CHANGE AGENTS AND IMPLEMENTORS IN HIGH ENGAGEMENT CHANGE

In our brief case study above, the external consultant worked first with the sponsor group of seven directors and others key to the project to translate the Prince 2 project talk into words and concepts understood by all, to boost their confidence as leaders about this tricky and challenging ambition, to help them create a positive story of change about this plan, and to help them take on the identity of the sponsoring group for the project (as opposed to the project manager on whom they would like to have offloaded this responsibility).

The consultant then worked with the project manager and various other groups to create the appropriate sense of ownership of different aspects of this many-tentacled project. As the implementation 'go live' pre-work progressed, different groups emerged, such as Specific Interest Groups and End User groups. The process was iterative: a further workshop for the Directors was needed as the nature of the leadership required shifted. A further grouping, led by HR that could be characterized as the Review, Celebration and Communication group, held 'punctuation point' days to create a shared understanding of elements and the big picture amongst all the various strands of activity. This is typical of the role of the OD consultant in these situations: working emergently in complexity but within a clear desired outcome and a clear understanding of what success looks like. Ideas and proposals that emerged from these events were vetted by the sponsor group, who, at times, made decisions and at other times identified the manager in the organization authorized to make the decision. The project manager kept detailed track of who was authorized to make which decisions and kept the sponsor team informed of what was taking place and, along with the consultant, where their leadership was required.

GENERATIVE CHANGE

Generative Change strategies are the most recent innovation in OD practice, and the least studied and written about. They have several similarities to High Engagement strategies. They both tend to use Large Group methods, although the generative change strategy underpins agile, properly understood, and can be observed in small group applications like design thinking. Even process mapping has been used generatively. Processes of convening and hosting (McKergow, 2020) large group events are similar. The critical difference is that instead of using group events to generate proposals for leaders to choose from, or to produce a series of carefully devolved sub-decisions and actions, generative change events are used to stimulate and launch numerous change initiatives with the intent to try things out and to 'learn as you go.

WHAT IT IS

The generative strategy has become more popular in tandem with the increasing complexity leaders face and the need for faster adaptation. Lindbloom (1959) may have been the first to identify a similar strategy. Mintzberg (1987) brought it into sharp relief with his description of 'emergent strategy'. But only recently have a lot of leaders and scholars acknowledged that the level of everyday complexity is calling for different leadership and change processes (Bushe & Marshak, 2016).

Snowden and Boone's [2007] Cynefin decision-making framework is one of several models helping leaders manage complexity differently. Snowden and Boone argue that when it is impossible to predict the result of any action because there are too many moving parts and too many complex interdependencies, the best decision-making process is to try different things out (which they call probes) and learn as you go. Collins and Hansen's (2011) found strong support for this, which they described as "fire bullets, then cannonballs"; take many shots until you hit something, then fire the cannon. A generative change process creates the conditions for small groups of committed individuals to self-organize and act on their ideas. Launch as many pilot projects/probes as possible, monitor, nurture, scale up, and embed the successful ones. Figure 1 provides a visual model of the generative change process (Bushe, 2020). Heifetz's (1994) distinction between technical problems and adaptive challenges provides another theoretical lens for understanding the need for generative change approaches. Adaptive challenges, by definition, are complex issues that can never be solved but can be purposefully engaged in ways that have better or worse outcomes. Any solution to an adaptive challenge will, over time, lead to new challenges, and solutions that might work at one time in one organization may not work at another time or in another organization. Rather than identifying the 'right' answer to an adaptive challenge, it's more effective to engage stakeholders to rapidly implement any change that helps the organization move forward on its purpose, in a never-ending

FIGURE 1 THE GENERATIVE CHANGE MODEL
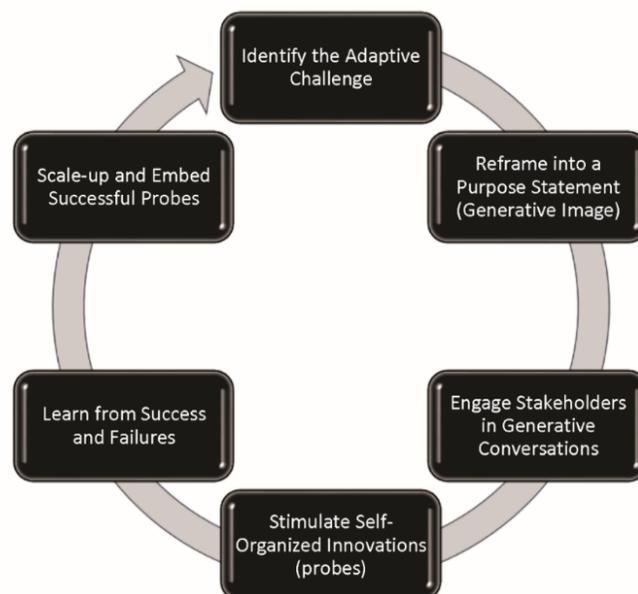
process of moving into the unknown with intention and learning as you go.

The generative change strategy appears under various labels, including agile, co-design, hackathons, emergent change, and Dialogic OD – though not every organizational change using one of those labels actually follows the generative change strategy. What particularly stands out is how rapidly significant changes can occur – change in behavior in a matter of days, real cultural change in a matter of weeks.

WHEN TO USE IT – A CASE OF GENERATIVE CHANGE

The new General Manager of a Materials Handling group of close to 200 employees responsible for securing and distributing over 5000 items to regional distribution centers scattered across a wide geographical area was faced with a very complex situation. It was challenging to ensure that the right materials were in the right place at the right time and have both their internal customers and their employees follow the procedures and processes intended to ensure that. Out-of-control processes caused daily conflict and stress for everyone.

Cynicism pervaded this old, unionized organization where employees expected to be ignored and treated poorly. The entire organization had a strong engineering-oriented culture and used numbers-driven, top-down leadership and a fear-based management style. There was little collaboration between the three main functions in the Materials Handling group, and a repetitive narrative was used to explain problems: 'upstream takes its eyes off the ball, downstream is hoarding/hiding/losing materials.'

The GM wanted to change a situation where 'not getting yelled at was a good day' for front-line employees. The management team thought getting employees and customers to follow procedures would do that, but past attempts to engage their customers in defining and agreeing to 'the rules' had not worked. The management team recognized that asking employees to increase standardization of their work processes would be unlikely to engage them in a substantial change process. Aware that employees wanted to serve their internal customers

well, they developed a "generative image" (Bushe & Storch, 2015) of creating 'stress-free customer service'. Breaking with tradition, they invited all levels of employees into a series of voluntary large group events. At each, employees were encouraged to identify and self-organize 'pilot projects' they would be willing to champion to increase stress-free customer service. A few boundaries/guardrails for what could be tried were given (e.g., could not increase headcount; had to work with the current IT system). At the end of each event, individuals and teams with an idea were encouraged to act without waiting for permission or a plan. Any pilots that met the criteria would be supported. It was emphasized that projects would be seen as experiments, that they did not have to be successful, and what was important was that they keep learning.

After the first Dialogic OD event, managers were astonished when over a dozen pilots were proposed. Shop floor workers and supervisors acted on their initiative to implement their pilots. A coalition of shop floor and regional employees proposed reducing order shipment from the central warehouse to regions from three days to one to reduce the stress of field storekeepers. The management team did not think this was possible and were suspicious about the motives for even proposing it, but they decided to follow the employees' energy and see what was possible. A two-day event was held to support this purpose. Over 19 pilots emerged, and within six weeks they accomplished one-day turnarounds. It took less than six months from the initial contact with the consultant for this profound change in organizational culture to take place, for the management team to reconceptualize their role from problem-solvers to 'problem-setters,' and for the old narrative about upstream and downstream to be replaced with 'the system is the problem' (Bushe, 2020).

By nurturing and scaling up one of the pilots that emerged from this event (putting a laptop on a cart by the receiving dock instead of written notes piling up on a clerk's desk), engaged employees kept trying new technologies and learning what worked for them. Within 18 months, The Materials Handling organization transformed from a pen and paper operation to an entirely digitized (barcodes, scanners, wireless databases updated in real-time) operation. They did this without a vision, a plan, any training, or a budget.

Imagine if that event had led to proposals for how to speed up order fulfillment. In our experience, managers would still be discussing what to do with those proposals six weeks later. Moreover, the transformation in work culture was profound. A few years later, with all the key managers promoted out of the group, Materials Handling is still known for its highly engaged workers and innovative "can-do" culture.

We propose that generative change is most appropriate when

- The change situation is a complex, adaptive challenge.
- There is scope for trying numerous concurrent approaches to achieving the purpose.
- The change purpose can be framed in a way that people intrinsically care about; particularly useful when there is a pressing issue of great concern to all stakeholders.
- Change will require changes in people's attitudes and beliefs and so requires their engagement in fostering change.
- Leaders want more rapid change than typical of top-down implementation approaches.

THE ROLE OF LEADERS

In generative change, one of the leader's (those with the authority to sponsor a change) roles is to identify the purpose they want stakeholders to work toward. Naming this may be the first task of the initial group they pull together. Purpose is different from the kind of vision necessary for data-based and high engagement change. Vision describes an endpoint – what things will be like once the change is complete. On the other hand, purpose describes what the organization is trying to do every day. Bushe (2021) offers the example of delighting customers (a purpose) with on-time delivery (a vision) and argues that while a vision offers one way to accomplish a purpose, it also constrains other potential innovations and might even be detrimental if it gets

in the way of delighting those customers who have other priorities than on-time delivery. While there are usually a closed set of actions that must be taken to work toward a vision, there are always many different ways to accomplish any purpose. As a result, using purpose rather than vision to anchor a generative change event opens up the possibilities for bottom-up innovation.

A generative change strategy requires leaders to let go in order to let come (Sharmer, 2009). Leaders frame the issue and identify the guardrails any acceptable solution must meet, but then get out of the way while encouraging self-initiated pilot projects from all stakeholders. Typically, they sponsor large group events that are designed to 1) produce conversations that will produce new ideas that people want to act on (generative conversations) and 2) help people with similar ideas and motivations find each other and commit to action. Leaders emphasize that any ideas which may help achieve the purpose and stay within the guardrails are welcome. All projects will be considered pilots – experiments to learn from – so that everyone is encouraged to see these as opportunities for learning and adapting rather than fearing failure.

The most critical roles for leaders in generative change occur <u>after</u> generative events, after pilots are launched. Before the event takes place, leaders need to put structures and processes in place where those involved in pilots will be able to find resources and support. Just as important, for generative change to be successful, there must be ways of monitoring and nurturing what occurs after the events. That should go beyond monitoring the pilots and include looking for examples of informal changes that align with the intent and purpose of the change. These can be just as or more influential in changing beliefs, attitudes, and organizational culture. Finding ways to spotlight, celebrate and amplify desired innovations and adaptations is key to successful generative change.

Table 4 summarizes the roles of leaders, change agents, and the stakeholders who must change for change to be successful.

	Sponsor	Stakeholder	Change Agent
Ownership	Supports change Shares ownership	Makes change Owns changes	Champions change Accepts ownership
Identifying the purpose	Identifies the adaptive challenge s/he will put energy into	Engages with the generative image	Helps to reframe the adaptive challenge into a generative image
Mobilizing Engagement	Explains purpose Invites engagement	Informs others Considers engagement	Networks with others Creates engagement
Dialoguing	Sponsors new conversations Creates a safe space for differences	Participates in new conversations Speaks up and listens	Designs and facilitates new conversations Works with the energy, creates connection
Innovating	Blesses pilots Protects from upper-level conflicts	Proposes pilots Manages day-to-day conflicts	Tracks pilots Facilitates learning from conflicts
Improvising	Provides resources for change initiatives Amplifies successes, acknowledges learning from failures	Puts effort into change initiatives Reveals successes and failures	Closes the loop between sponsors and stakeholders on change initiatives Cross-fertilizes learning from successes and failures
Monitoring Progress	Celebrates results	Creates results	Identifies results
Changing Systems & Structures	Works to design and align systems and structures	Implements new systems and structures	Ensures learning loops are in place

TABLE 4: ROLES OF LEADERS, CHANGE AGENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN GENERATIVE CHANGE

The nature of the sponsor-change agent relationship is critical to the success of generative change. The sponsor has the power and authority to mandate change and allocate resources but must rely on the knowledge and skills of their change agents to use their authority effectively. The change agent will recommend what events sponsors should attend and which they can miss, how they can best provide sponsorship to people and events, the best architecture for one or more generative events, and how best to manage the structures and processes required to support changes emanating from those events.

One of the things change agents can do to increase the effectiveness of a generative change process is reframe the purpose the sponsor has chosen into a generative image (Bushe, 1998; 2013, 2020; Bushe & Storch, 2015). A generative image is a combination of words with three properties:

1. It is unusual/unfamiliar and opens up new possibilities for conversations, ideas, and actions that could not be considered before.
2. It is appealing and generates enthusiasm for people to engage and take action.
3. It is ambiguous and offers many different ways to talk and think about what it means.

In the case described above, we saw how reframing the purpose of increasing standardization to reduce the volatility of workflow to the generative image of "stress-free customer service" created a space for people from all levels and locals in a dispersed organization to come together in large group events over a six-week period to launch dozens of pilots that significantly and rapidly changed both their performance and work culture.

Change agents in a generative change process have the same hosting roles as in high engagement change strategies, but they have some additional ones. These include developing generative relationships with the key clients and planning teams in order to educate them about the nature of generative change (Averbuch, 2021; Lewis, 2021), designing large group events that will produce multiple pilot projects, ensuring that structures and processes are in place to monitor, nurture, amplify and embed successful pilots (Roehrig, Schwendenwein & Bushe, 2015), and ensure that learning is emerging, being shared, and acted on from the pilots.

SUMMARY

Just about any organization development method can be employed within these three strategies. Even survey feedback can be used primarily generatively (e.g., Bratt, 2020). Appreciative Inquiry has been used as a data-based strategy when the stories gathered during Discovery are analyzed in a disciplined way to uncover the "positive change core." AI is probably most often used in a high engagement way, and Bushe & Kassam (2005) found it was only transformational when following a generative change strategy. We hope this paper has illuminated the relationship between the various OD methods available to us and three different conceptualizations or strategies of how best to tackle a particular change challenge: data-based, high engagement, or generative. We hope this categorization will aid leaders and consultants in selecting the appropriate strategy to engage with the particular change challenges and provide researchers with a valuable model for seeing that planned change has at least three different faces, and to study it well we must take note of the different strategies being employed.

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