

文稿 — A Powerful Change Management Tool: Four Rooms of Change

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Are you ready to enter the renewal room?

Let's face it. Our business environment has changed dramatically over the past 12 months. No-one is really prepared to predict what the coming 12-24 months will bring but one thing we can rely on is the fact that more change is surely headed our way.

The Four Rooms of Change™ is a theory that deals with change, with what happens with people and organizations in transition and with how they can influence the change process by taking responsibility for their emotions and actions. The model was developed by the Swedish psychologist, Claes Janssen, in the late 60s and early 70s as part of his groundbreaking research on the dynamics of change. The four rooms - or psychological states of mind - are Contentment, Self-Censorship & Denial, Confusion & Conflict and Inspiration & Renewal.



Four Rooms of Change™, Claes Janssen

If we think of our experience of change in terms of a journey we have to start somewhere; and that is in the 'contentment room'. Everything feels fine, we are relaxed and in control and we have no desire to change anything. Then something happens and our

external environment changes. This can happen very quickly or very slowly - either we fall through what Janssen refers to as the 'trap door' as the result of a significant event or we find ourselves gently descending over a period of time into the 'denial room'. An interesting contrast here might be between working in the traditional newspaper industry which has gradually lost market share to online media over a number of years and working in the financial services industry which experienced the collapse of Lehman Brothers virtually overnight.

Denial means that - while we may have general sense that something is different or not quite right - we are very successful at convincing ourselves that everything is okay. We may find ourselves struggling to stay positive or 'putting on a mask' to show others that we are relaxed and in control. Sooner or later we have to face reality and we enter the 'confusion room'. This is where emotions finally take over - fear, anger, sadness, self-doubt and feelings of inferiority are common. This is obviously not a good place to be and many of us make an unconscious choice to go back into denial rather than press on with our journey. But press on we must. By facing our fears and working through the confusion and conflict we can find new hope, new inspiration and a way forward. We have entered the 'renewal room'. Suddenly we have sense of 'getting it all together', we are energized and we experience the desire and find the creative resources to make things happen. Finally we are ready to complete our journey and step back into the contentment room.

While the global economy was booming we struggled with the 'business as usual' mentality within our organizations; and looking back we can now see how people had slowly slipped from the 'contentment room' to the 'denial room' – from the boardroom to the factory floor. 'Why should we change when we are meeting or exceeding all of our business objectives?' Anyone who dared suggest that the very survival of the organization might be at stake might have been laughed at or ignored. Later as we moved from boom to bust – individuals, groups and organizations found themselves in a state of confusion and chaos. Many CEOs have been either unwilling or unable to commit – at least publicly - to sales and profit targets due to the economic uncertainty. People are still afraid of what the future will bring.



The power of the Four Rooms of Change™ as a model lies both in its simplicity and in its depth. It applies to us as individuals but can also apply to teams, groups and the organization as a whole. The model reminds us that the dynamics of change are normal, healthy and – most importantly – as inevitable as the four seasons of summer, autumn, winter and spring. Organizations from all over the world – both corporate, government and not-for-profit - have successfully used the model and its associated tools to facilitate organizational transformation. Some examples include: the famous IKEA furniture company in Sweden, the Utah Transit Authority in the US and Ashridge Business School in the UK. Applications of the Four Rooms of Change are equally broad; ranging from implementing a Rational Unified Process in the software industry to eliminating

bullying behaviour in a Swedish primary school. Perhaps the most powerful learning for me has been the fact that individuals and groups within the same organization can be operating from different rooms at the same time.

Is your group or organization now ready to enter the renewal room and if so what action must you take – as a leader – to make that happen before your colleagues turn around and head back towards the perceived comfort of denial room?

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