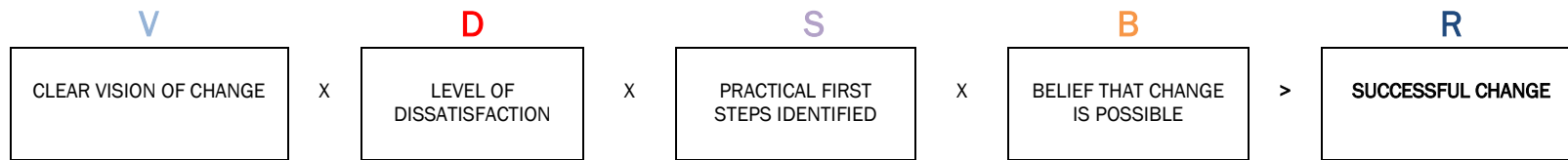
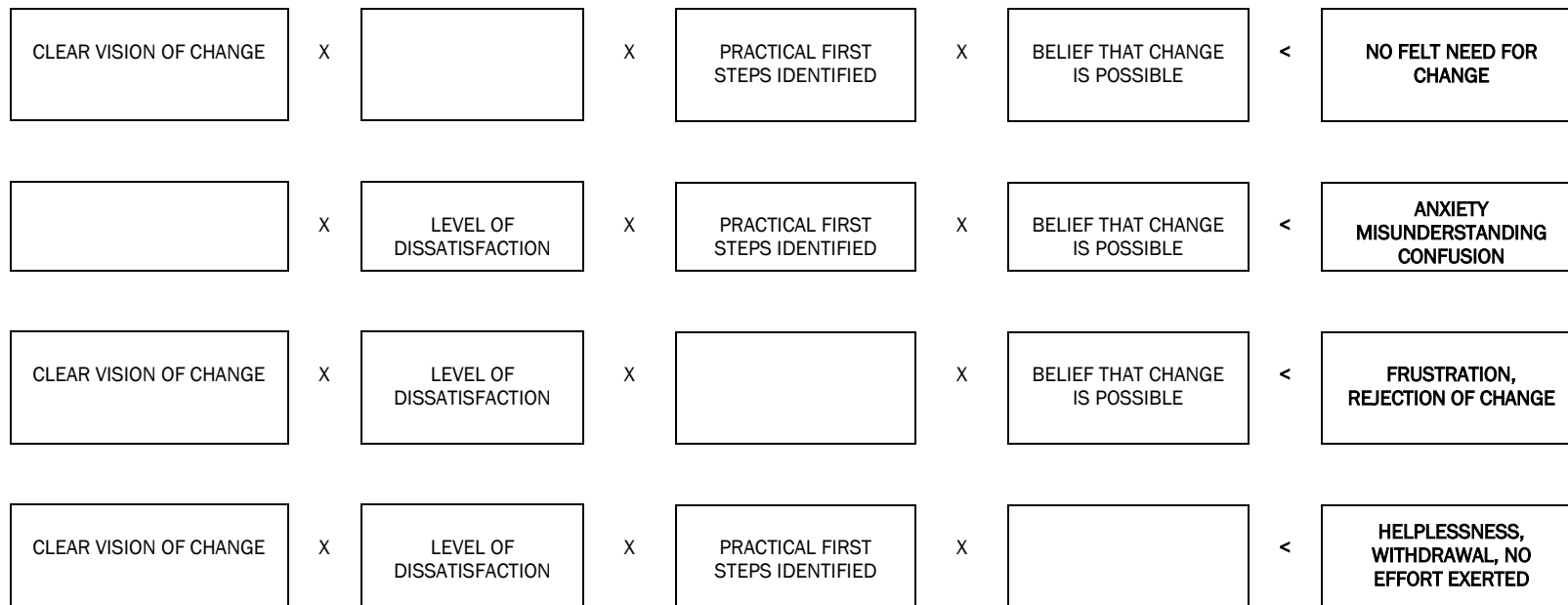


Conditions For Successful Change



Consequences if conditions not met



The Change Equation

Vision of the future

Knowing where you're heading, why you're heading there and what the positive benefits and possibilities are of making the journey, are essential components for the majority of us, if we are going to participate in change. Why would we even consider heading off towards a new or different destination, if we don't understand the need and benefits of doing so? The vast majority of us wouldn't. A significant part of the role for the leaders of change is 'painting' a compelling picture of the future, that is concrete and tangible enough for those being led to 'touch and feel' and be motivated to want to move towards.

Leaders need to invest in creating buy-in amongst a critical mass of the workforce in order to overcome some of the inertia or resistance to the desired change. Of course, there will undoubtedly be some early adopters who will get behind the change quickly and require little more than clarity of the destination and will be eager to engage and get on with it. However, often there is a significantly larger population of people whose reaction to change is shaped by anxiety and fear of the unknown. These people need their leaders to help them to gain clarity of the future and reduce their anxiety to a level that enables them to engage productively in the change process.

Dissatisfaction with the present

A compelling "Vision of the future", on its own, is not always enough to overcome the resistance to change. If people feel comfortable with the way things are right now, they are highly unlikely to be motivated to embark on any change journey, having no felt need to change. In order to move people out of their comfort zones, it is critical for leaders to recognise this trait and address it by taking advantage of existing dissatisfaction with the present or, if this is absent, 'creating' some.

Alongside the vision of why and how their world is changing, it is important to help people to understand what the implications are for the organisation, their clients and for themselves of them changing/not changing. This 'disturbance' in the system will create energy for change and move people out of the comfort zones. At this stage, some still may not wholly embrace the change; however they are more likely to engage with the change process when they understand the consequences of doing/not doing so.

Steps towards the "Vision of the future"

For people to perform at their best, they need to feel competent and equipped to do what is being asked of them. As leaders, it is essential to help map out what people need to do differently in the present and near to medium future, in order to move towards the desire-vision the change agenda is seeking to achieve. There are 4 key factors at play here:

1. Having clarity of the capabilities and competencies that need to be strengthened or developed is a key factor.
2. Recognising that some people will hesitate to take action or engage if they have a fear of failure or of being rejected or marginalised by the change.

3. Having the physical resources and support available to them to enable them to embark on the change.
4. Creating the processes, structures, practices and behaviours that will help them to embed the new way of being.

Belief in the destination

Those being led need to have total belief in those who are leading them through change. Seeing that their leaders are going through the change with them (a little ahead preferably) and that they are “walking the walk” and “talking the talk” is critical to the change agenda gaining traction.

Change leaders need to be able to be sensitive and responsive to the situations and experiences their people are going through. They also need to provide appropriate support and challenge to help keep people motivated and on track.

A common misconception that many leaders have is that they are expected to have all the answers and know every step of the journey they and their people are on. This is not true. Yes, the leaders must always have the destination/vision in mind, guiding their decisions and actions; however, they are not psychics!! They can no more predict what will actually happen in 3 years from now, than anyone else can. So having and showing confidence about the present, near and medium future is enough, whilst holding the vision as the destination beacon and adapting the journey as necessary along the way. The best change leaders know when and how to involve their people and keep them engaged and motivated. If there is no belief, people will feel leaderless, apathetic, withdrawn and exert no effort into the change agenda.

Resistance to change

Where there is an absence or insufficient levels of Vision, Dissatisfaction, Steps or Belief, then a significant proportion of those affected by the change are likely to resist it. Even if the vision is clear and attractive for many, if the other elements are not present in sufficient quantity, they will not fully engage. Their resistance, in most cases, is unconscious and not a deliberate digging-in of the heels in order to undermine the change. More likely, the resistance is driven from either a fear of the unknown, a fear of the personal cost of accepting the change, a fear of what might have to be lost or given up, or any combination of the above.

As a leader of change, it is essential to see resistance as an important and natural part of the human change process. Keeping the change equation front of mind in these situations is a useful lens to help guide your interventions and effectively lead people through the challenges of change.