



How change is changing – a generational lens

From 10.00am to 4.30pm on Wednesday 30th November, 2022

"We find ourselves facing wave upon wave of tumultuous and unanticipated change events, each one demanding rapid learning, resilient adaptability, and enormous leaps of faith and commitment"

Leadership in Action, Center for Creative Leadership.

This Conversation will be an action enquiry into the nature of 'change' – or rather how we view it as leaders, particularly from a generational lens. We will take some time before the Conversation to explore and question our own assumptions that underlie how we are experiencing and interpreting 'change' today, talking to people who may see the world very differently to ourselves. During the conversation we will then seek to challenge each other and creatively explore whether there are different ways of viewing and understanding 'change' that may liberate us to lead in more fruitful and creative ways.

The quote above, made before the pandemic and all that has followed, says so much about what it feels like to be in leadership in these times. But maybe it also says so much about the assumptions that underpin our attitudes to change? Most notably the assumption of stability. If we start with an assumption that there is no inherent stability, then does the notion of 'change' take on a very different dynamic?

Most of our current leadership population were born and raised in the post war period - an historically unique period stability in our social and economic institutions, characterised most clearly by notions of 'career' and assumptions about anticipating, planning, strategising and 'managing change'. How deeply rooted are these assumptions in our mindsets, how may they be limiting us and can we ever free ourselves from them?



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Is this period of history already at an end? We do not need to look far to see deep chaos-inducing forces once more predominant in our world, most notably the speed of information flows, the resurgence of a less constrained, neo-liberal capitalism, the impact of climate change, new technology, mass migration. Sociologically we face the questioning of everything and the rejection of what once seemed incontestable norms in aspects of culture, science, spirituality and gender. Institutionally we are experiencing the creaking of once stable structures whether in health, government, education, social care, religion or even the family.

Most of us in leadership seem to be experiencing this directly at a micro level in a sense of overwhelm and constant reactivity, with no space to breathe or think. *'The annihilation of space by time'* as David Harvey famously characterised it in his book on postmodernity. The risk is of an escalating loss of belief in human agency. If we as leaders feel constantly on the back foot, what agency do those without such power possibly have? And if there are so few guarantees of outer stability, how do we find inner stability - a place from which to lead?

Is there a different way, something new emerging? What happens when we pause to examine our own assumptions about what 'leadership' and 'management' really mean in today's context. What is the 'new wisdom' of post-millennium generations, who are growing up with instability as normal, with radically different hopes and expectations of what the future will hold? What do they have to teach us?

We hope this will be a lively and stimulating conversation, opening us up to new possibilities, hopefully from a range of different sources, perspectives and provocations that we will each bring along to it!



Agenda

By its nature there is no established wisdom in this Conversation, so we will be inviting everyone who signs up to conduct their own small piece of 'action research' into the topic by canvassing views and insights from people in your own networks, particularly those from younger age groups or with radically different perspectives and experiences of 'change'. Prior to the conversation we will provide you with some thoughts and tips on how to go about this.

The Conversation will follow the traditional flow, following three key stages:

- **This is Me** – taking stock of where we find ourselves currently in relation to this theme and the questions that are arising
- **Tell Us More** – enquiring more deeply into our learning and insights as we probe into this experience
- **Yes I can, Yes I will** – turning wisdom and insight into intention and practice

"This is me"

We begin by sharing what it was that drew us to this Conversation and then sharing the highlights of our own enquiry into the question '**is change changing?**' What surprised us when we looked more closely at this question, what veils have been lifted, maybe, for how we approach change in our own systems and what excites us about the seeds of possibility.

As we share our stories we will find some key themes emerging amongst us – some simple practicalities to notice and share but also maybe the beginnings of a deeper or different knowing we are accessing here.



"Tell Us More"

This takes us towards the end of the morning into the second phase of the discussion, which will then inform our thinking over a break for lunch and a reflective walk. In this phase we will really seek to surface, examine and challenge our own assumptions about how we view change personally as well as how we seek to handle it as leaders. Is there a whole new way of looking at it that can be both liberating for us and releasing/empowering for those we work with?

This is where the unique quality of the Fellowship we hope will come into its own as we allow ourselves to challenge and be challenged in ways we may not have anticipated. What are the radical possibilities that this may open up? Where are there powerful insights emerging that warrant further, deeper enquiry. Is the whole notion of 'leading change' an anachronism? What questions do we need to be asking of ourselves and others? How do we ask these questions in a way that unlocks generativity and intelligence, rather than fear and self-protection?

Following our reflection and presencing in this enquiry, sharing the deeper knowing of heart and gut as well as head, we will move into the closing phase the Conversation ...

"Yes I can!"

Here we crystalise the insights from our wisdom into our own intentions and commitments as leaders. What do we want to take forward in our practice, or further enquiry? What is becoming clear to us in terms of practical changes we need to make:

- Where and how we want to change the change conversation in our own organisations...
- How we are sensing the mood for this in others and how we seek to awaken new insights and perspectives in those around us..
- Any specific interventions or conversations we know we need to initiate on our return.



Timings: Wednesday 30th November, 2022

1000	Arrivals, refreshments and introductions
1015	Introduction to the Guiding Principles and then on to Stage One: <i>This is me!</i> We break into small groups and share aspects of our personal enquiry
1045	We develop the Conversation and begin to pull out some of the patterns and connections in our sharing. What is our discerning of the core themes/seams being opened up? What are the possibilities and implications emerging?
1130	Tea and Coffee break
1150	We move into the second phase of the Conversation: <i>Tell us more.</i> We take some of the core insights identified above and work these in more depth/challenge with respect to our roles as leaders in change. This involves us accessing the deeper knowledge that lies beneath our experience.
1300	Break for lunch and personal reflection, usually a walk, alone or in pairs. What is really speaking to us in this? Where can we make a difference?
1400	Back together as one group, we draw out the key outcomes of our lunchtime discussions and the deeper significance of these for our stance as leaders.
1445	Moving into the third phase: <i>Yes I can!</i> we prepare for our final round of small groups, after which we invite each of you to sharpen up your personal resolves in changing conversations.
1500	Tea and Coffee Break
1520	We work on helping each other sharpen our commitments and intentions and develop a personal practice to help sustain our intentions going forwards.
1615	Closing words and insights, finishing the Conversation promptly at 4.30pm
