



*Welcome to our latest bulletin in which we focus on leading and managing change.*

*In our lead article, my colleague and I look at the evidence indicating that the rate of change success is not improving and what leaders of change can learn from world-class performers – particularly ballet dancers.*

*Our second article looks at how thinking on change management has evolved over the past 10 years by comparing a set of change principles first published by Booz & Company in 2004 and updated in 2014.*

*Finally, we feature a popular book on managing change by Ester Cameron and Mike Green. Now in its 4<sup>th</sup> edition Making Sense of Managing Change is a comprehensive guide to the models, tools and techniques of organisational change.*

*As always, we welcome your feedback.*

*Best regards*  
[David Trafford](#)

## About Formicio

We work with people who want to improve their organisation's future.

Specifically we can help you:

**Assess** your current strategy by understanding your organisation's current trajectory and the factors driving it.

**Develop** your new strategy by defining an organisational

## What can leaders of change learn from world-class performers?

It's often quoted that some 70% of major change initiatives fail to deliver their intended objectives. If this is true, and the risk of failure so high, what can be done to increase the chances of success? In their article, *What Can Leaders of Change Learn from World-Class Performers?*, [David Trafford](#) and [Peter Boggis](#) propose that by studying performers who continually work at the very threshold of failure – for example ballet dancers – considerable lessons can be learned.

But first they examined the evidence for the poor rate of change success by looking at the evidence from a number of perspectives, which included: the churn of companies in the Fortune 500 and FTSE 100 listed companies, the success rate of mergers and acquisitions, the success rate of major transformation initiatives and the length of tenure of CEOs.

The evidence they found certainly supported the generally-held view that delivering change has a significant risk of failure. But they found the picture to be more complex, as the success (or failure) rate is dependent upon a number of factors, including whether the change is incremental or transformational, the industry sector in which it is undertaken, whether the change is within a commercial enterprise, not-for-profit organisation or government agency, and the extent to which the change is dependent upon IT. While they were not able to identify these distinctions in available research, the evidence they found overall indicates that the success rate is poor and by all accounts has not noticeably improved since John P Kotter wrote his seminal HBR article *Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail* in 1995.

So, what did they find that leaders of change could learn from world-class performers, like ballet dancers? Essentially what they – and the management of the dance companies – do to reduce the risk of failure. To read their full article, in which they describe their six lessons from ballet, click [here](#).

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## How 10 principles of change management changed between 2004 and 2014

In 2004 Booz & Company published an [article](#) describing 10 principles of change management that would 'help companies transform quickly'. In 2014 these principles were updated and [republished](#) by Strategy&. How had the principles changed over this period? What insights do these changes offer in terms of our understanding of leading change?

Firstly, the 10 principles had not fundamentally changed and cover all the major facets of change management. While some of the principles have been renamed, the significant change is one of emphasis.

Secondly, the difference of emphasis is one that reflects the shift of thinking over the past 10 years. A shift that recognises that for any change initiative to be successful, it requires the involvement of the many, not the few. The updated principles reflect the contemporary

trajectory that leads to an improved future.

**Operationalise** your strategy by creating the conditions that enable the organisation to pull itself towards its target future.

Our approach is to help our clients find solutions that work best for them, while keeping them true to their strategic intent.

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## Parting thought

“Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have – and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up.”

James Belasco 1936 –  
and Ralph Stayer 1944 –  
Authors of *Flight of the Buffalo* (1994)

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view that sustained change will only happen if those involved understand the proposed changes both intellectually and emotionally. Furthermore, they need to understand what the future holds for them in sufficient detail that they can mentally-model what their lives will be like after the change.

Thirdly, the updated principles place greater emphasis on the role of leaders, not only in terms of the importance of leadership teams thinking and acting in an aligned manner, but also ensuring that they put in place and maintain the conditions for change success. The updated principles certainly build upon what has been learned over the past 10 years. It will be interesting to see how they change further over the next 10 years.

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## Making sense of managing change

If you are new to change, then [Making Sense of Managing Change](#), a book by Ester Cameron and Mike Green, is a useful source of information as it provides a comprehensive set of models, approaches, frameworks, tools and techniques for managing change. First published in 2004, it is now in its 4<sup>th</sup> edition. The book not only gives the theory of how individuals, teams and organisations respond to change, but provides practical advice on how to go about different types of change like restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, cultural change and project- and programme-led change.

While this book, and others like it, serve a valuable purpose, they can lead the reader to believe that managing change is easier than it really is. It's a bit like buying a DIY manual and deciding to remodel your bathroom. You have in mind what you want to achieve and the steps described in the manual look straight forward – and tiling can't be that difficult, can it? But we all know that if you've not done it before, and practised the skills needed, the final outcome is unlikely to impress – that's if the job ever gets finished!

While it's important that everyone has an understanding of how to manage change, we should not underestimate how difficult and challenging it can be. As we discuss in the above article, the success rate of change remains disappointingly low and this will only improve when the capability of change management is practised, developed and perfected by more organisations. Reading this book is a good start.

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