



Lead Change or Change Will Lead You

By Dr Lynda Wee

“Given that we do not know with any certainty what is happening, we certainly know about what we are doing to enable us to live in uncertainty.”

Ralph Stacey

We live in an ever-changing and complex world. Yet, most enterprises react by tweaking their systems incrementally, little changes here and there. Why? Can it be that their success has become their liability? Being creatures of comfort, they prefer incremental change as it provides forward movement and hence, comfort. Maintain continuity, don't change what is working. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

While incremental change may not be a bad thing, it is also NOT always a good thing. In a world of rapid change, it is critical to identify and lead significant change. Conflict is necessary for revolution.

Effective leaders are not daunted by uncertainty. They move away from the predictable and secure because things do not stay the same. They step back, embrace the unknown, chart their own paths and assume responsibility for their visions. They pose tough questions that others are

troubled by but dare not give voice to.

To be a leader of change, consider adopting Ralph Stacey's Agreement-Certainty Matrix (refer to the diagram above). Agreement refers to the compatibility of thinking between 2 or more persons. Certainty refers to skepticism-free perfect knowledge. By mapping your projects and decisions onto the matrix, you are encouraged to reflect on the different levels of agreement and certainty. Depending on where they lie, a response is proposed.

Situation: High level of Agreement & Certainty
Response: Telling

- How do you know that things are this certain?
- Have you considered all the necessary variables?
- How do you know that there is a common perspective?

Situation: Low level of Agreement & High level of Certainty
Response: Selling

- Are you ready to change the people involved if they disagree?
- How good are you at managing

conflict?

- How persuasive are you?

Situation: High level of Agreement & Low level of Certainty
Response: Consulting

- How are you forming your judgments about the future?
- What other environmental factors might be an issue?
- Are you open to the levels of research needed?

Situation: Low level of Agreement & Certainty
Response: Innovating

- Are you ready to embrace the unknown?
- Are you ready to disrupt what you have created?
- How creative and innovative are your management practices?

Given the safe levels of agreement and certainty, spending most of your time and resources in the Telling, Selling and Consulting spaces can make you vulnerable. Do consider placing some of your projects at the **Edge of Chaos** quadrant where you need to ask inconvenient questions, think deeper to achieve breakthrough solutions and be a game-changer.