

THE SKILLING OF VET CHANGE AGENTS

Findings from an evaluation
of 11 change agents
who were supported by
Reframing the Future
and funded through the
Australian National Training
Authority in 2003



John Mitchell

March 2004

© 2004 Australian National Training Authority

This work has been produced with the assistance of funding provided by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). Copyright for this document vests with ANTA. ANTA will allow free use of the material so long as ANTA's interest is acknowledged and the use is not for profit.

First published March 2004

Author: John Mitchell, John Mitchell & Associates

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in publication data

Australian National Training Authority - Reframing the Future

The Skilling of VET Change Agents

ISBN 0-9750606-6-X

331.25920994

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and those consulted and do not necessarily reflect the views of ANTA. ANTA does not give any warranty or accept any liability in relation to the content of the work.

Further information:

Australian National Training Authority
Level 5 321 Exhibition Street
GPO Box 5347BB
Melbourne Vic 3001

Telephone: 03 9630 9800
Fax: 03 9630 9888

ANTA website: www.anta.gov.au

Table of Contents

■ Executive Summary	5
CHAPTER 1	
■ Why are internal change agents needed in VET?	11
CHAPTER 2	
■ What diagnostic models for change agency are available?	21
CHAPTER 3	
■ What process ('how to') models for change agency are available?	29
CHAPTER 4	
■ What other skills and knowledge are needed by internal change agents?	37
CHAPTER 5	
■ What are the potential benefits and limitations of internal change agents?	45
CHAPTER 6	
■ Can a VET practitioner learn to be an internal change agent?	53
APPENDIX 1	
■ Profiles of the 2003 Change Agents – in their own words	61
APPENDIX 2	
■ Research methods	69
■ References	71

- **The term ‘change agent’** refers to anyone involved in initiating or implementing change, whether or not they have an official job title recognising that responsibility (Buchanan and Badham 2000, p.4). This report documents how a group of eleven VET practitioners were able to acquire extensive skills and knowledge as change agents, after participating in a six-month-long structured program of guided practice.

The report indicates that it is important that more vocational education and training (VET) practitioners develop expertise as change agents to meet many of the challenges presented by a demand-driven national training system. However, the change agent role is complex and not to be under-estimated, as change agents need the skills and agility to adopt a range of roles which could include being opportunists, diplomats and networkers. Change agents need an advanced range of skills and knowledge – as well as a high level of judgement, courage and sensitivity – to effectively assist the change process. Change agents also need to be reflective and insightful while coping with resistance, apathy, exuberance or turmoil.

■ **Focus of evaluation**

The report presents findings from the evaluation of eleven VET professionals who were funded to operate as change agents in the VET sector in Australia in 2003, in a pilot activity conducted by the Reframing the Future program. Snapshots of the change agents’ projects are provided in Appendix 1.

Reframing the Future is the national staff development and change management program funded through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). Reframing the Future is designed to support the implementation of a national training system that is industry-led, demand-driven and consistently of a high quality.

The focus of the evaluation is on six key questions – drawn from the literature – and which provide the chapter headings in the report:

- Why are internal change agents needed in VET?
- What diagnostic models for change agency are available?
- What process models for change agency are available?
- What other skills and knowledge are needed by internal change agents?
- What are the potential benefits and limitations of internal change agents?
- Can a VET practitioner learn to be a change agent?

■ **Methods**

This research was undertaken from July 2003 to February 2004 by John Mitchell from John Mitchell & Associates, consultant to Reframing the Future. The field research was undertaken with the assistance of the National Project Director of Reframing the Future, Susan Young.

The research methods included observations at national forums convened for the change agents at the start of the project, at the mid-way point and at the conclusion; reviews of the participants' action plans, mid-term progress reports and final reports; three telephone interviews with each participant; and facilitation and monitoring of two web forums. A fuller discussion on the methods used in this study is set out in Appendix 2.

■ **Internal versus external change agents**

This research focuses on internal change agents who are staff members of VET organisations and who operate as change agents within their own organisations. However, the sub-program also caters for 'external' change agents who might be employed by a VET organisation such as an Industry Skills Council or systemic groups such as the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) or TAFE Directors' Australia (TDA). The sub-program is not focused on 'external' change agents who might be engaged on assignments for VET organisations, but are employees of consulting firms, although the appropriate uses of such change agents are acknowledged.

■ **Major findings**

This report addresses a number of key issues in the literature on change agency and relates them to VET. For example, there is some debate in the literature about whether it is better for one person or a group to take the responsibility for change. There is also debate between those who believe that any manager or staff member can be a change agent and those who see the role as a specialist one. This report addresses these debates in relation to VET. There is a lack of literature on the legitimacy or efficacy of internal change agents working inside of RTOs and this report attempts to fill some of that gap.

Why are internal change agents needed in VET?

Previous research (Mitchell 2002) indicates that significant structural and cultural changes are needed in VET organisations to support a responsive national training system and that VET practitioners functioning as internal change agents could be one way to bring about such changes.

While VET may need change agents, the role is difficult, as change agents can often face resistance and need to be passionate about and committed to the role. Not surprisingly, the eleven VET change agents in 2003 faced a range of challenges that reflect the complexity of both the sector and the national training system.

What diagnostic models for change agency are available?

Change agents need to know about different diagnostic models for change, to help identify those aspects of their organisations that need to be changed. One of the most popular diagnostic models in the VET sector has been the SWOT model for diagnosing an organisation, focusing on an organisation's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Typically, this model has both advantages and limitations.

Before learning about other diagnostic models, change agents need to become aware of the models or lenses they currently use to analyse organisations. As their projects progressed, the 2003 change agents became clearer about their existing model of how organisations work and sometimes their experiences in their projects caused them to modify their model.

What process models for change agency are available?

Change agents need to know about alternative process models of change – the how of change management – so they can manage different types of change, such as incremental or discontinuous change (Hayes 2002). The 2003 change agents used a range of different process models for managing change, from Kotter's (1996) model, to Cummings and Worley's (1997), to Stace and Dunphy's (1998), or parts of models, or their own.

Following their selection of a process model, the 2003 change agents used a variety of different interventions, from convening meetings, workshops and conferences, to mentoring project participants. They needed to exercise considerable professional judgement in selecting and timing each intervention.

The 2003 change agents demonstrated that there is no single recipe for managing change, so they deliberately designed interventions that fitted their local context. Prescriptive change management models and heavy-handed interventions have no value in the multi-dimensional VET sector.

What other skills and knowledge are needed by internal change agents?

In addition to the skills and knowledge required to diagnose what needs to be changed and knowing how to change it, the 2003 change agents demonstrated a raft of diplomatic skills, like staying quiet on occasions, for strategic purposes; using language common to the group; and speaking up when their professional judgement suggested it was the right step.

The change agents also developed sophisticated insights into the different factors that might influence a person to be resistant to change, like a fear of the unknown, group pressure and legitimate concerns about the change. The change agents also learnt that humour can be a useful aid; that planning can sometimes circumvent resistance; and that it is important to operate strategically.

The change agents indicated an understanding of how networks sometimes evolve over a number of years and how it is valuable for change agents to tap into them. Others realised that many different strategies can be used to expand or develop networks, including accessing existing frameworks such as ongoing committees or reference groups.

The experiences of the 2003 change agents confirm a finding by Scott (1999) that change in education and training is highly subjective, with a combination of values and individual motivations 'driving the way each initiative unfolds, right from the first moment a change idea is mentioned (p.24)'. Skilled change agents try to understand the values and motivations of the people with whom they are working. Skilled change agents also need to clarify their own values and motives.

What are the potential benefits and limitations of internal change agents?

Two limitations of internal change agents are that they are not always seen as legitimate in that role and they might find it difficult to remain objective. Other limitations that the 2003 change agents commented on were the temporary or fragile nature of the relationship with their client or the group they were working with; the need for them as change agents to address a real problem; and the need for them to have both competence and courage.

The potential benefits of internal change agents are significant. Importantly, the 2003 internal change agents assisted the implementation of the national training system in a variety of ways, from developing relationships between providers and industry, to focusing on critical components such as assessment, to introducing new Training Packages, to focusing providers on workplace delivery.

The 2003 change agents also ensured their projects assisted VET organisations to become more client-focused by a number of means: creating opportunities for providers and industry to mix and learn more about each other; focusing on a core client need of improved training and assessment in the workplace; and highlighting to providers the business benefits of an improved client focus.

Can a VET practitioner learn to be a change agent?

It is possible for VET practitioners to learn the theoretical skills of change agency, but they also need faith in their own abilities, and ideally a supportive organisation. The 2003 change agents demonstrated that it is possible to acquire skills and knowledge of a change agent, but it needs to be emphasised that the eleven participants had some pre-existing skills and knowledge that were relevant to the role.

The capabilities of all the participants improved during the 2003 sub-program and a common experience was their development of increased consciousness about their ability to function effectively as change agents. And with consciousness came confidence.

The learning of the 2003 change agents was aided by immersion in a structured program which included interaction with other change agents. The structured sub-program also challenged them to consider new ideas. Being encouraged to focus on themselves as change agents was also helpful to their learning.

All of the change agents benefited from comparing the theory of change with their own experiences as change agents. A comment by one of the 2003 change agents neatly summarises some key findings of the participants:

I doubt if there is such a thing as 'one size fits all' with change management. My experience tells me that there must be some organised stages such as planning, especially in the initial stage. From there, it depends on so many aspects – goals, people, facilitator, management expectations, contingencies, etc. The important thing for the Change Agent is to know that there is a choice and that there is more than one pathway to success. A skilled Change Agent will be able to read the situation and take the path that suits the situation best (Cooper 2003).

■ Abbreviations

For brevity, the following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
NTF	National Training Framework
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

■ Definitions of terms

The following definitions of terms regularly used in this document are provided at www.anta.gov.au, the website of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

The **National Training Framework (NTF)** is the system of vocational education and training that applies nationally. It is made up of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and nationally endorsed Training Packages.

The **Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)** is a set of nationally agreed arrangements to ensure the quality of vocational education and training services throughout Australia.

A **Training Package** is an integrated set of nationally endorsed standards, guidelines and qualifications for training, assessing and recognising people's skills, developed by industry to meet the training needs of an industry or group of industries. Training Packages consist of core endorsed components of competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications, and optional non-endorsed components of support materials such as learning strategies, assessment resources and professional development materials.

A **Registered Training Organisation (RTO)** is an organisation registered by a State or Territory recognition authority to deliver training and/or conduct assessments and issue nationally recognised qualifications in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework. Registered Training Organisations include TAFE colleges and institutes, adult and community education providers, private providers, community organisations, schools, higher education institutions, commercial and enterprise training providers, industry bodies and other organisations meeting the registration requirements.

An **industry training advisory body (or ITAB)**, also called industry training advisory board, is an organisation, usually an incorporated association or company, recognised as representing a particular industry and providing advice to government on the vocational education and training needs of its particular industry. There are both national and State and Territory industry training advisory bodies. Industry Training Advisory Bodies are being replaced by **Industry Skills Councils** in 2004.

For more information on the above concepts and for further definitions of terms, see www.anta.gov.au

Why are internal change agents needed in VET?

- **This chapter suggests** that substantial and ongoing change is needed in VET organisations and professional practice if the VET sector is to continuously respond to the shifting training requirements of industry. Change agents are one of the possible means for bringing about these changes in VET.

The discussion in the chapter distinguishes between internal change agents, who are staff members of RTOs, and external change agents. While noting a role for both types of change agents, the discussion highlights the need within VET organisations for the internal change agent.

■ Key points

Key points raised in the chapter include the following:

- While VET needs change agents, change agency is difficult and change agents often face resistance and need to be passionate about the role. The VET change agents in 2003 faced a range of challenges that reflect the complexity of both the sector and the national training system.
- There is some debate in the literature about whether it is better for one person or a group to take the responsibility for change. There is also debate between those who believe that any manager or staff member can be a change agent and those who see the role as a specialist one. This report addresses these debates.
- There is a lack of literature on the legitimacy or efficacy of internal change agents inside of RTOs and this report attempts to fill some of that gap.

■ Definitions

Three key terms used in this report – change management, change agents and change agency – are defined differently by different authors. Some useful, starting definitions are as follows:

Change management is the process of modifying or transforming organisations in order to maintain or improve their effectiveness (Hayes 2002, p.22).

The term '**change agent**' is used here loosely to refer to anyone involved in initiating or implementing change, whether or not they have an official job title recognising that responsibility (Buchanan and Badham 2000, p.4).

Change agency refers to the ability of a manager or other agent of change to affect the way an organisation responds to change (Hayes 2002, p.17).

Alternative definitions of the term change agent are discussed at a number of points during the report.

In addition to using the term change agents, theorists also use terms such as

- 'facilitators of change' (Paton and McCalman 2003)
- 'change manager' (Hayes 2002)

- ‘political entrepreneur’ and ‘change driver’ (Buchanan and Badham 2000)
- ‘leader of educational change’ and ‘change manager’ (Scott 1999).

Paton and McCalman (2003) find that the term ‘master of change’ was framed by Kanter (1983) but that there are many other terms that have been used to denote those responsible for the effective implementation of change: for example change agents, problem owners, facilitators or project managers (p.49).

For brevity, the term change agent will be used throughout this report, to describe anyone involved in initiating or implementing organisational change, although the advantages and limitations of this term will be discussed later. While the report uses the term change agent, VET practitioners may prefer one of the other terms, such as ‘change driver’. The report does infer that VET practitioners using any of these terms are advised to consider the existing theory surrounding the terms. A consideration of the theory will add value to professional practice.

One of the 2003 change agents, Sandra Lawrence from Brisbane North Institute of TAFE, found that it was important to define terms in her change agent project, because people have different interpretations of one of the key terms, change management:

Because change management has figured prominently in both populist and education and training writing and discussions, it is interpreted and understood widely and differently. Consequently it was necessary to continually clarify definition and language and check for shared understandings through the program (Lawrence 2003).

The concept of change agency is of more value than the notion of the singular change agent, argue Buchanan and Badham (2000, p.4). They quote Hutton (1994) who finds that change is typically driven by a ‘cast of characters’:

Our ‘change agent’ is thus any member of that cast of characters, formally appointed by the organisation, or a self-appointed promoter or saboteur seeking to drive an alternative agenda (p.4).

By indicating that any number of individuals within the one organisation can assume the mantle of change agent, Buchanan and Badham (2000) appropriately draw attention to the many different roles that need to be performed if change is to occur, including the roles of initiator and sponsor (pp.23-24). Similarly, Ottaway (1983 in Buchanan and Badham 2000, p.184) distinguishes between change generators and change implementers. Whether one uses the label of change agent or another term, the label is less important than the definition, as organisational change is often complex and it is worthwhile defining the roles of different participants in the change process. The question of whether change can be driven better by one person or a cast of characters is discussed further below.

■ Why VET needs change agency skills

The need for change agency skills in the VET sector is underlined in a range of recent research studies. For example:

- Callan (2001) identified ‘change leadership’ as one of the nine core capabilities for VET managers and leaders.
- Mitchell (2003) found that if customised change management approaches are employed, it is possible for RTOs to change entrenched cultures.
- TDA (2003) identified as one of the core leadership capabilities in VET ‘the ability to steer and implement change in a turbulent environment’.
- Mulcahy (2003) found that ‘change leadership and change management are the preferred processes for effecting organisational change in VET providers’.

A literature review by Mitchell and Young (2001) found that the launch of the National Training Framework policy in 1996 marked a significant move towards a VET sector driven by industry needs and that the pursuit of this goal continues today. To ensure this new policy results in high-performing Australian enterprises, VET organisations themselves need to become high-performing, characterised by creativity, innovation, flexibility and competitiveness (BCA 2000, p.3). If VET organisations are to become high-performing, change agency – which is about affecting the way an organisation responds to change – is a core need within VET.

■ Summary of change management activities undertaken

The change management activities undertaken by the 2003 change agents – in the Reframing the Future sub-program – provide examples of the wide range of changes required in the VET sector, specifically in response to the challenges of implementing the national training system. The following table sets out key change activities of the eleven change agents.

Table 1: Key change management activities of the 2003 change agents

Change agent	Key change management activity
1. Chris Cooper, Principal Lecturer, Challenger TAFE, WA	introduced the new Horticulture Training Package to project teams in two WA TAFE Institutes
2. Cinthia Del Grosso, National Project Manager, TDT Australia, VIC/national	worked with industry and RTOs to find common ground between the industry and VET perspectives, where the core business of the transport industry is transporting and storing goods, while for the VET Industry, the core business is training
3. Chris Steele, Senior Project Officer, South Australian Public Service, SA	worked with industry and trainers to develop an enrolment process that enables trainers to contextualise training programs to suit learners' needs
4. Gillian Robertson, Education Manager, Gordon Institute, VIC	developed a State-wide professional development network to support TAFE staff who are resistant to change, encouraging them to adopt changes associated with the implementation of the national training system
5. Greg Stuart, Head Teacher Agriculture, TAFE NSW North Coast Institute, NSW	defined capabilities required of Head Teachers in a TAFE Institute and then developed a self-assessment tool to determine Head Teachers' development needs in relation to their new role
6. Kaaren Blom, Senior Researcher, CIT-CURVE, ACT	encouraged VET practitioners to conduct their own research to enable them to be responsive and adaptable in their approaches to delivery and in their dealings with clients and industry
7. Laurie Miller, Team Leader Horticulture, Institute of TAFE Tasmania, TAS	persuaded teachers to move from classroom based teaching to workplace based delivery and assessment of the Horticulture Training Package through a partnership between industry and the RTO
8. Sandra Lawrence, Manager Research and Innovation, Brisbane North Institute of TAFE, QLD	worked with VET practitioners to develop an informed approach to delivering and assessing generic, employability skills
9. Sharon Johnson, Head Teacher Travel and Tourism, NSW TAFE Southern Sydney Institute, NSW	worked with VET practitioners to shift attitudes to assessment from 'testing knowledge through exams' to 'gathering evidence to determine attitudes, skills and knowledge'
10. Wendy Davies, Project Manager, Manufacturing Learning Australia, VIC/national	facilitated partnerships between companies and RTOs to promote the uptake of nationally accredited qualifications and worked with companies to match Training Packages to suit their own standard operating procedures

Table 1 (contd): Key change management activities of the 2003 change agents

<p>11. Wendy Morrow, Director Australian Council for Private Education and Training SA and Principal, SA College of Natural & Traditional Medicine</p>	<p>worked with private training providers to engage them in continuous improvement in relation to the national training system</p>
---	--

The tasks described above show that VET organisations contain numerous change management challenges, to increasingly align the approaches of VET practitioners with the multiple needs of an industry-led national training system.

While Table 1 above provides a snapshot of the change management activities undertaken in 2003, Figure 1 below provides descriptions by a number of the change agents of the challenges they faced. The descriptions reinforce the point that VET is complex and that many changes are needed.

Figure 1: Sample of major change management challenges addressed in 2003

The description below of the change management challenges faced by the 2003 change agents shows the variety of issues facing VET practitioners.

Wendy Davies, formerly with Manufacturing Learning Australia, explains the breadth of the charter her work entails: 'In general terms I liaise between government, industry and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to promote development of workforce skills'. Her organisation's charter requires her to operate as follows:

specific objectives which are relevant to my change agent role include to work with industry to determine training needs and priorities; work with employers and employees in developing, promoting and delivering competency based, accredited training within the national framework; and work with training providers to ensure effective delivery of training (Davies 2003).

What makes her job particularly challenging is the range of industries she works with including oil and gas extraction; petroleum, coal and chemical product manufacturing; rubber and plastic product manufacturing; electric cable and wire manufacturing; manufactured mineral products (concrete product, clay and ceramics, cement, glass products, lime, plaster, abrasives, acoustic tiles and panels, fibre cement, foundry cores, insulation and stone masonry); iron and steel manufacturing; cross-industry laboratory operations; and scientific glassblowing.

Just as there are many different industries for VET to serve, there are many different components of the national training system, like workplace assessment, which practitioners need to address. For example, Sharon Johnson from TAFE NSW Southern Sydney focused on change management issues around assessment. She set out to change the idea that the only 'real' measure of competency is testing and to change the approach to assessment to gathering evidence to determine competency. She also aimed to benchmark industry practices against industry standards; to develop relationships with industry beyond ad-hoc personal relationships into something more formal and durable; and to develop relationships with TAFE Tourism trainers that will assist her Institute to comply with the AQTF standard 9.2 on assessment validation. She also aimed to provide the following professional development opportunity:

to bring TAFE Tourism trainers from across NSW together in a forum to share resources, relationship building and offer the same opportunities to country as well as metropolitan colleagues for industry networking and professional development in assessment (Johnson 2003).

It is difficult for staff to focus on the national training system and related changes if they are in the midst of restructures. For example, challenges for Sandra Lawrence from Brisbane North Institute of TAFE revolved around the fact that the Institute is less than 18 months old and its current educational structure is less than 12 months old:

Creating an amalgamated organisation with more than 700 employees, while still meeting delivery and business targets has absorbed focus, energy and resources. The necessary concentration on implementing new structures, systems and processes and creating a shared culture from the separate social capital of the two previously competing Institutes which integrated, has been demanding and taxing. Given this, it was challenging to enthuse staff about other change. This was mitigated a little because the program centred on the core concern of delivery staff - their learners (Lawrence 2003).

Sandra also found it challenging to influence VET practice because there is continuing debate about the best model for teaching and assessing Key Competencies:

The 2003 change agent program involved implementing a model of assessment through workplace simulation that recognised that Key Competencies must be factored in, and given their current prominence, extended to employability skills. There is still a great deal of debate about the best model for teaching and assessing these skills, so no single sanctioned approach is yet evident. Although I don't really see this as an impediment to addressing employability skills because teachers can exercise professional discretion in making judgements about evidence of competency, some participants were wary of the inclusion of employability skills in assessment, without clear direction on a common methodology (Lawrence 2003).

The national training system contains new concepts such as Key Competencies and practitioners often take time to adjust to them. Hence, change agents need high-level skills to persuade a group of VET practitioners to share a common approach to any one issue such as teaching and assessing Key Competencies.

An increasingly common challenge for change agents in RTOs is to persuade or guide staff to implement new versions of Training Packages. This was the first challenge faced by Chris Cooper from Challenger TAFE, whose project introduced the new Horticulture Training Package to project teams in two Perth colleges:

The change management challenges that they have been given are to design implementation processes that ensure that they don't just follow the model used for the existing Training Package. They have been asked to review current delivery models and decide what has worked well and should therefore be used again, and what hasn't and should be improved. The two project teams selected different implementation issues to tackle. The Swan TAFE team addressed how they would structure their new Horticulture courses for their particular students and local industry. The Challenger TAFE team addressed the delivery of the new Training Package to apprentices for four Horticulture industry sectors. Both project teams looked at substantial changes to delivery strategies and customer service to the current model in place at their colleges (Cooper 2003).

Another challenge faced by all the change agents was the attitude of project participants, as found by Chris Cooper:

The second change management challenge is attitudinal. The participants for this project have been selected to cover a range of occupations at the campuses. They have different roles in the Training Package implementation and don't always appreciate each other's viewpoints. This project has brought them together with a common goal.

The teaching staff members are also undergoing an attitudinal change. These subject specialists are now involved with a project that requires them to understand the bigger picture. During this project they have learnt how to make their own course structures fit the packaging rules, their industry and students' requirements and the best fit for their own campus. They have been able to take ownership of decisions that will affect their teaching area in the future (Cooper 2003).

Gillian Robertson, from Gordon Institute, also found a mixture of attitudes amongst her colleagues:

This project has given the School's leadership group the catalyst to re-visit and give momentum to review our management and leadership structure within our School and to examine the impact of proposed changes on all business units (Robertson 2003).

She explains that the leadership team has been dealing with a negative culture that 'didn't appear to be diminishing despite the efforts and strategies put in place by several managers':

That negative culture didn't have defined boundaries either—where did it come from, when did it start, how was it perpetuated, and most importantly, who cultivates it. There was a general lack of ownership of the School's operational plans and vision by all staff. But there are definite pockets of excellence that continue to thrive, despite the negativity (Robertson 2003).

A number of the 2003 change agents, like Laurie Miller from the Institute of TAFE Tasmania, addressed the challenge of developing partnerships with local industry:

I have examined the changes required to shift delivery of training from an RTO based to an industry partnership based program. I have explored models of delivery partnerships that provide mutual growth benefits to both the RTO and the industry partner. I have been participating in the

process of changing attitudes to training in the VET sector in Tasmania through conference and workshop presentations. I have acted as a change agent within my own organisation particularly in the area of training partnerships with industry and workplace delivery (Miller 2003).

Greg Stuart from TAFE NSW North Coast Institute explains that his Institute has undertaken a number of organisational improvement and change management strategies as part of the organisation's strategic plan. These activities were designed and delivered with the intention of enhancing the organisation's ability to implement the imperatives of the national training system through the professional development of its managers. He is focused on assisting Head Teachers, who, he says, lead educational delivery teams and constitute the largest group of managers in the organisation.

Greg Stuart argues that, given the size of this group of Head Teachers and the nature of the activities of the teams they lead and manage, that is educational delivery, this group is likely to have the greatest influence on the transition to an outcome-focused organisational culture. Hence his focus on Head Teachers:

Head Teachers often now represent the most professionally isolated group in the organisation. Quite clearly this represented two important opportunities in the change process. One was research into the current management and leadership capabilities of Head Teachers which could be used in the development of a strategic plan for the professional development of this group. The other was the facilitation of the establishment of a professional network for Head Teachers which represents an opportunity to leverage skills and knowledge and help establish replacement organisational identities for many. As well this group could provide emotional, social support through a sharing of the experience and therefore an understanding that individuals are not alone in their struggle with discontinuous change (Stuart 2003).

The objective of the project undertaken by Kaaren Blom from Canberra Institute of Technology was to more firmly embed a broad-based practitioner-research culture within the Canberra Institute of Technology:

The aim was that VET practitioners within the institute, whether teaching or non-teaching, would increasingly see research as an activity that informs their strategic practice, not merely as an activity that belongs within CURVE, the Institute's designated research centre (Blom 2003).

The primary change management challenge for Wendy Morrow from the SA College of Natural & Traditional Medicine was to assist a group of Managers and Directors to identify their professional role in the VET System, bringing with it an improved understanding of the NTF through increased involvement in professional development activities. She explains helping RTOs to become more aware of their responsibilities in VET will assist with 'the AQTF, NTF and all the rules under which we live being seen as more of a professional development exercise than an external imposition'. This necessitated the following:

an improvement in the understanding of private RTO managers of the concept of the VET Professional and their professional role in VET. All of these managers have come from their profession with a desire to teach others their passion. These people have become a VET Professional by default with limited understanding of their professional VET role (Morrow 2003).

As can be seen from their stories above, the change agents in 2003 faced a range of challenges that reflect the complexity of the sector and the complexity of the national training system. As we will see more and more in the following pages of this report, to function effectively as a change agent in this dynamic sector requires considerable skill and knowledge.

Change management and change agency are difficult

It is not only difficult to bring about change in the VET sector: it is difficult in any sector. Burnes (2000), one of the leading international theorists on change management, notes that a high proportion of change efforts end in failure (p.470). He also notes that to achieve any change will normally require additional resources, both financial and human (p.478). Paton and McCalman (2003) note that 'change is messy, affects many, requires systematic

diagnosis and needs an effective strategy' (p.187). Buchanan and Badham (2000) add that 'change is untidy, and major change can be particularly messy' (p.189).

One of the 2003 change agents, Wendy Morrow, acknowledged how difficult change was in her setting:

One of my hopes was that each RTO would develop their own change management strategies to achieve this and although it was successful in my own organisation, I was unable to achieve this in other organisations. Perhaps this was because the change I was/am hoping to achieve is too broad to be achieved in a short time; it is a fundamental change in the culture of private RTOs, taking them from one world and introducing them to another (Morrow 2003).

One reason that change is difficult is that it often involves organisational politics. Buchanan and Badham (2000) provide a strong argument that change agency is inevitably involved in the politics that are a normal part of organisational life. They promote the concept that the change agent is a 'political entrepreneur' as this term rightly emphasises the following:

the risk-taking and creative dimensions of the role of the change agent, and also the personal commitment, extending on occasion to passion, toward the change agenda (p.5).

Burnes (2000) agrees that managers and change agents have the legitimate right to introduce changes, 'but to do so they must use political skills in a pragmatic way to build support and overcome or avoid resistance' (p.300). While Burnes advocates avoiding resistance, Buchanan and Badham (2000) suggest that the change agent who strives to be politically neutral or 'squeaky clean' will be ineffective:

The change agent who is not well equipped, or not willing, to deal with political issues and power plays is thus likely to be outmanoeuvred – and will probably fail. This argument is based on the presumption that organisational politics are pervasive, and cannot be 'wished away' or 'managed away' (p.5).

Buchanan and Badham (2000) suggest that because change generally stimulates both support and resistance, it is naïve to deny the political dimensions of change:

The 'squeaky clean' approach which ignores, avoids or otherwise denies the political realities of organisational life could be viewed as unskilled, incompetent, unprofessional and unethical (p.5).

■ Both individuals and groups manage change in VET

There is some debate in the literature about whether it is better for one person or a group to take the responsibility for change. As discussed above, Buchanan and Badham (2000) believe that change always involves a 'cast of characters' and that a wide range of roles need to be performed for change to succeed, such as the role of patron or the role of driver. On the other hand, Paton and McCalman (2003) agree that change will involve the group, but that someone is, in the end, responsible for the change:

The focal point of a change need not be an individual; a work group could quite easily be designated as a special task force responsible for managing the change. However, generally within, or above, any work group there is still someone who ultimately is accountable and responsible (pp.49-50).

Burnes (2000) agrees that whatever approach is taken to change, it has to be managed:

someone has to take responsibility for ensuring that change takes place. Whether this person is a team leader, facilitator, coach or even a dictator, there is usually one individual who bears the responsibility for being the change agent (p.297).

Reframing the Future's overall program – which consists of five sub-programs including one focused on strategic management and change management – recognises that there

are different ways to manage change besides using change agents: for example by providing funding for executive and senior managers as well as faculty-based managers to undertake change management activities in groups, as described in Mitchell (2002; 2003). Reframing the Future also sees change management components in its other sub-programs that are entitled staff development, networking, communities of practice and research and information dissemination. The structure of Reframing the Future accommodates different ways to manage change – from group-based approaches to individually-driven activities. And if change is driven by an individual, the individual needs to bring others along.

■ **Are change agents specialists or can anyone be a change agent?**

There is also a debate in the literature between those who believe that any manager or staff member can be a change agent and those who see the role as a specialist one. This topic is discussed more fully in Chapter 6 of this report. Burnes (2000) notes the following argument that every manager needs to be a change agent:

It is because change is so complex and multifaceted that Clarke (1994) suggested that mastering the challenge of change is not a specialist activity to be facilitated or driven by an expert but an increasingly important part of every manager's role (p.285).

While it is an attractive goal that every manager be a change expert, even Clarke (1994) cites a list of strengths required by the manager to be an effective change agent:

Managers will require knowledge of and expertise in strategy formulation, human resource management, marketing/sales and negotiation/conflict resolution (Burnes 2000, p.291).

Additionally, managers must be prepared as follows:

to challenge their own assumptions, attitudes and mindsets so that they develop an understanding of the emotional and intellectual processes involved (Burnes 2000, p.291).

This report adds further to this list of skills and knowledge required by change agents, suggesting that the ideal of every manager being capable of being a change agent may always remain an ideal that has to be worked towards. Simply prescribing that every manager will be a change agent will not mean that every manager has the requisite skills and knowledge.

■ **The differences between internal and external change agents**

The Reframing the Future sub-program on change agents focuses specifically on the individual VET practitioner who is publicly nominated as a change agent. The sub-program also focuses primarily on what could be called 'internal' change agents – that is, personnel already employed within a Registered Training Organisation – as personnel within RTOs are the primary audience for Reframing the Future funding and support. However, the sub-program also caters for 'external' change agents who might be employed by a VET organisation such as an Industry Skills Council or systemic groups such as the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) or TAFE Directors' Australia (TDA) to work with RTOs.

The sub-program is not focused on 'external' change agents who are employed outside the VET organisations, such as in consulting firms, and who are engaged by RTOs as specialist change agents, as these specialists are not eligible for publicly-funded staff development. The different roles of internal and external change agents and their different advantages and disadvantages are discussed in Chapter 4.

The view taken in the sub-program and in this report is that both types of change agent have their place. For example, Paton and McCalman (2003) summarise the benefits of both internal and external change agents:

External consultants can bring objectivity, expertise and fresh approaches to organisation problem solving. Internal consultants provide knowledge and understanding of organisational processes, information about current issues, and continuity of effort (p.190).

One of the 2003 change agents, Wendy Davies, found that there are disadvantages and advantages of being an external change agent:

The real challenge of being a change agent as a project manager for Manufacturing Learning Australia is that all of the change is to outside organisations and networks, rather than internal networks. However this has advantages because as an outsider I have no vested interests and I can provide independent analysis and assistance. On the other hand it takes time to build credibility and legitimacy with stakeholders (Davies 2003).

Paton and McCalman (2003) find that the choice of an internal or external change agent will be influenced by factors such as the external environment, the cultures of the organisations involved and whether skilled individuals are available to act as change agents.

■ Evaluation of the efficacy of the internal change agent

This evaluation of the 2003 National Training Change Agent pilot program was undertaken to determine the potential role and efficacy of internal change agents within RTOs. Most of the eleven pilot change agents selected for the project were at supervisory or frontline management level, such as Head Teacher. This selection was deliberate, in order to investigate the challenges faced by change agents in winning legitimacy without senior management positional power.

The evaluation set out to test a number of propositions in the literature:

- that change agents are needed in modern organisations (Burnes 2000, p.297)
- that change agents need diagnostic models of change that focus on identifying *what* it is that needs to be changed (Hayes 2002, pp.18-19)
- that change agents need process models of change which are concerned with the *how* of change management (Hayes 2002, pp.18-19)
- that change agents need a raft of skills (King and Anderson 2002, pp.191-192)
- that change agents can both benefit organisations and be restricted by organisational constraints (Paton and McCalmon 2003, p.189)
- that managers or their delegates can learn to be change agents (Hayes 2002, p.18).

Hence, in response to the literature, the research questions addressed in the research were:

- Why are change agents needed in VET?
- What diagnostic models for change agency are available?
- What process models for change agency are available?
- What other skills and knowledge are needed by change agents?
- What are the potential benefits and limitations of change agents?
- Can a VET practitioner learn to be a change agent?

Each of these questions is a chapter heading in this report.

■ Final comment

Significant structural and cultural changes are needed in VET organisations to support a responsive national training system (Mitchell and Young 2001). VET practitioners functioning as internal change agents could be one way to bring about such changes (Mitchell 2002). While there is a substantial amount of literature about the legitimacy of the specialist change agent who is external to – but works with – organisations like RTOs (e.g. Cummings and Worley 1997), there is a lack of specific literature on the legitimacy or efficacy of internal change agents functioning inside of RTOs. This report attempts to address that gap in the literature.

What diagnostic models for change agency are available?

- **As part of** the exploration in this report of the skills and knowledge needed by change agents, this chapter considers the different ways change agents can diagnose organisational challenges and collect data relevant to those challenges.

■ Key points

Key points raised in the chapter include the following:

- Change agents need to know about different diagnostic models for change, to help identify those aspects of their organisations that need to be changed.
- As their projects progressed, the 2003 change agents became clearer about their existing model of how organisations work and sometimes their experiences in their projects caused them to modify their model.
- The change agents in 2003 used a range of methods to collect data that informed their diagnosis, ranging from guided conversations, observations of colleagues, reviews of literature and, in one case, the construction of a customised data-gathering tool. Most of all, the change agents used their professional judgement and their knowledge of the groups they were working with to determine appropriate data-gathering methods and when to implement them.

■ Diagnostic models

Hayes (2002, pp.18-19) finds that change agents need concepts and theories that fall into two categories:

- diagnostic models of change that focus on identifying *what* it is that needs to be changed
- process models of change which are concerned with the *how* of change management.

This chapter focuses on diagnostic models (what) and Chapter 3 focuses on process models (how).

Hayes suggests that change agents need to know about different diagnostic models for change, to help identify what needs to be changed and in order to improve organisational effectiveness (p.19). Hayes points out that numerous models exist about the behaviour of individuals and groups in organisations, so the change agent will be challenged to know which ones to apply in a particular setting. But first change agents need to clarify their own, pre-existing models of how organisations work.

■ Knowing one's own model for organisations

Hayes (p.72) believes that it is essential for change agents to be aware of models of how organisations function because, to start with, we all have implicit theories about

organisations, based on our personal experiences. Morgan (1997), in his seminal book on *Images of Organisations*, summarises the most popular models or images that we have of organisations. These include the image of an organisation as a machine – an image popular with those who are comfortable seeing the different parts of an organisation as the interlocking parts of a machine. Other popular images of organisations are that they are like organisms, or brains, or cultures, or political battlegrounds, or psychic prisons. Morgan finds that each of us brings models such as these to our analysis of organisations, although our model may not be so clearly formulated and we may not be very aware of our model.

Hayes (2002) suggests that we need to be more aware of our own models and to know their limitations:

Sometimes these models provide a good basis for understanding what is going and predicting what kind of actions or interventions would produce desired change. Often, however, they are very subjective and biased, they overemphasise some aspects of organisational functioning and completely neglect others. Consequently they do not always provide a useful guide for management practice and the management of change (Hayes 2002, p.7).

If the change agent develops a greater awareness of his/her own model of how organisations function, the change agent will be able to determine whether the model is consistent with or relevant to the organisational problems that need to be addressed. Knowing one's own model will also help the change agent compare his/her model with alternative models (Hayes 2002, p.72).

■ Using your own and others' diagnostic models

One of the most popular diagnostic models in the VET sector in the 1980s and 1990s was the SWOT model for diagnosing an organisation, focusing on an organisation's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Many a VET strategic planning event started with a whole-group brainstorm, using the SWOT model, with the facilitator filling with ideas the sheets of butcher's paper temporarily tacked to the walls. The SWOT model is a useful model for diagnosing the fit between an organisation and its environment, but it is not the only model for conducting such a diagnosis. The SWOT model has limitations in that it is not very useful in diagnosing the internal alignment, such as the alignment between the organisation's internal components such as its strategies, structures, systems, shared values and skill sets (Hayes 2002).

Hayes (2002) is as wary of theoretical models such as the SWOT framework as he is of the change agent's own model of organisations:

You are advised to develop a healthy scepticism towards the utility of different models and to constantly reassess which is most appropriate for the purpose at hand (p.86).

He acknowledges that all models are 'a simplification of the real world':

None are guaranteed to accommodate all circumstances and provide a reliable basis for understanding why things are the way they are, or identify actions that can be taken to produce a desired outcome (p.86).

On the other hand, each time change agents need to diagnose an organisation, ideally the change agents will check the validity of their favourite model by comparing it to other theoretical models. Their own model might not fit the situation at hand.

Collins (2003) adds to Hayes's position: it is not only important to be aware of one's own theoretical framework for understanding organisations, it is also important to be sensitive to the world views of others. He suggests it is important to 'interrogate' your personal frame of reference and those of others (p.136).

■ What diagnostic models did the 2003 change agents use?

Figure 2 below contains examples of the 2003 change agents interrogating their own and others' frames of reference and, while not often using the concept of a model, they articulate aspects of the various models they use for understanding organisations.

Figure 2: Diagnostic models used by the 2003 change agents

Some of the 2003 change agents implicitly used a SWOT analysis to diagnose their organisations – a useful, non-threatening model for initiating a strategic dialogue with multiple stakeholders. For example:

The diagnosis was carried out through analysis of the external and internal environments. These included consultations with members of the TDT Australia Corporate Training Managers Network as well as consultations with representatives from RTOs (Del Grosso 2003).

Some of the change agents focused more on the external environment and others focused more on internal skills. An example follows of a diagnosis focused on the internal aspects of the organisation, including the management approaches and the attitudes of staff. The change agent in the following paragraph uses the analogy of change creating a ripple effect, suggesting she uses a model of her organisation as an organism. This choice of model is not surprising, given the change agent is from the horticulture field:

The implementation of the first Training Packages was a top down management process that created resistance and reluctance in teachers. The change management challenge for this new Training Package, through this Reframing the Future project, has been to foster a positive attitude by encouraging the teachers and other staff involved with the implementation, to understand how the Training Package will work for them and for them to decide how it can be implemented at their colleges. The managed change process has empowered the project members and created a positive outlook for the future that has led to other change management projects taken up by other staff members. The project has created interesting spin-offs and caused a positive ripple effect amongst the Challenger TAFE staff (Cooper 2003).

In this next excerpt from a change agent's final report, the change agent focuses on internal skills and attitudes and uses the analogy of being like a newly-graduated teacher – full of theory but lacking in practice – in the way she initially interpreted her role as a change agent:

The need for change in assessment practices was certainly valid. However if I were to start the change project now, at the end of the change agents' pilot project, I would have used some different approaches. My understanding of change processes was initially more theoretical than practical. The project reminded me of my initial teacher training. When I thought back to those first classes I taught as a newly graduated teacher, full of theory but with minimal practical classroom time, I know that I managed the classes differently from those of several years later, when I had more working knowledge to fall back on. Like the teacher role, the change agent role needs some actual doing to gain any mastery (Lawrence 2003).

In the following piece, the change agent displays a model of his organisation as a political battleground where there are spheres of influence and where skills and knowledge can be leveraged and people can be connected:

The feedback from those Head Teachers who have not disengaged has been quite positive. We have been very careful to promote this as a Head Teacher forum and have denied access to other Institute members who see this as a potential opportunity to give Head Teachers information about what is happening in their sphere of influence. Given that in some of my earlier ravings about the role of change agents included recognising opportunities for making useful connections in organisations to leverage skills and knowledge and improve social capital, the name given to the North Coast Institute Head Teacher network is 'Useful Connections' (Stuart 2003).

The next change agent perceives herself as an opportunistic strategist, suggesting she sees her organisation as a cultural and political landscape, containing different settings:

Having determined that it was change in the practice and location of Institute research that I wished to foster in this project, I next identified three varied settings within CIT in which I knew that activities with the potential to be more valuable by having research incorporated into their design, were already occurring. In other words, I thought somewhat strategically about where my efforts as a change agent within a research domain could most profitably be applied. Drucker (2001) might describe this as being 'purposefully opportunistic' (Blom 2003).

Some of the change agents were very confident about their initial diagnosis of their situation. Such confidence seems to be linked to pre-existing knowledge of the people involved in the change process, the history of the organisations involved and the change agent's previous experiences with the national training system. Two examples follow:

I feel the change management needs within the Botanical Gardens/TAFE Tasmania partnership were accurately diagnosed and in particular staff resistance to change was addressed. Within TAFE Tasmania the need for change to workplace delivery was diagnosed by senior management and I have worked to implement that change (Miller 2003).

I feel that I diagnosed the needs for change management well. Both teams of participants embraced the projects and have exceeded my expectations in their achievements. I feel that both groups were ready for change and just needed to establish their direction and be led through the change process. Both teams worked with the old Horticulture Training Package for the past four years and have seen that the new one is a vast improvement. They now understand how Training Packages work and through this project have shown that they are ready to try different and more flexible approaches to their implementation and delivery (Cooper 2003).

A number of the 2003 change agents provide extensive, in-depth diagnoses of their organisations, their industries and the topic they were focused on, such as assessment. For instance, this is a small section of a fuller analysis of attitudes to training in the travel industry:

Our industry is very fractured, with not many cohesive groups and most are large, government organisations like Tourism Training Australia, Tourism Council Australia and the NSW Tourism Council. Because of the difficulties the industry has faced both internationally and nationally in the past few years, the focus on training has been very limited. Training is fundamental to this industry, however most training has been in-house one-on-one training or small group training when employees start. They pay lip-service to training needs but don't actually support formal training options (Johnson 2003).

Similarly, here is one part of a longer analysis and diagnosis of the Natural and Traditional Medicine industry, which demonstrates the change agent's deep knowledge of her industry, enabling her to diagnose accurately:

Diagnosis was the straightforward component, because I am a member of the community whose needs I was investigating and I understood the context of the operations of private RTOs and the types of difficulties faced. The RTOs with which I work are small businesses; and they are mostly family owned and operated and the principals are 'content' professionals rather than VET professionals. Through my role in ACPET and through this my involvement with the wider VET community, I was able to envisage ways in which RTOs could change the physical nature of their operations whilst maintaining their philosophies and structures. I could see the problematic areas in the way in which our RTOs operate and how some aspects of the operational procedures of larger organisations could be implemented to facilitate AQTF compliance. I believe that my diagnosis is accurate both from my interactions with RTOs within this group and outside. The difficulties were not with the diagnosis but in promoting the political vision required to bring about change in organisations other than my own (Morrow 2003).

The above change agent changed her diagnosis during the project, for a number of reasons, including the fact that she had not worked with the group of people before on an intense topic such as change:

Although I started with only one diagnosis of the change situation I faced, I found that as I progressed toward my stated goal that a second, perhaps even more profound diagnosis emerged. My first diagnosis was that in the industry in which I work, there is limited understanding of the concept of VET

professionalism, although there is a small core who understand and embrace the concept. The major challenge that I faced however, was not this, but that the concept of change and knowledge of change theory varied between providers (Morrow 2003).

The 2003 change agents were very clear about the need to listen and to understand the frame of reference of those they were working with. Typical comments included:

I think that I was able to diagnose the needs quite well. It was really important to listen very carefully to each group to be able to understand where they were coming from in terms of their perceptions of the world. Once I had a clear understanding of the views of each group, bringing these to the attention of the RTOs was the easy part of the process (Del Grosso 2003).

Each of the three practitioner-researchers who worked under the umbrella of this project was driven by what Senge describes as ‘creative tension’—that is, by seeking to address a gap between her current reality and her vision of where an area for which she was responsible should or could be. Mento et al, drawing on Senge’s work, note that changes that can be achieved by efforts that originate in ‘creative tension’ are intrinsically-oriented, and more likely to be successful, because they result in new learning, than are extrinsically-oriented motivators of change, which seek only to ensure adaptation (Blom 2003).

Before the program began, I believed that some assessors did not really have a deep understanding of competency based training, of Training Packages or of the range of valid ways to collect evidence, and this was reinforced during the program. Part of the diagnosis though, was the way to engage assessors in realising this. Putting on ‘assessment workshops’ and mandating attendance smacked of remedial action to deal with the problem staff. Not only was this unlikely to motivate interest, it had little prospect of any sustained change in practice. Instead I chose to travel a parallel path to the assessors, joining them in forums like Strategic Product Implementation Group meetings, team meetings, the Institute Professional Learners’ Conference etc. When I then facilitated a section of the meeting around assessment, there was more open, positive engagement and less resistance based on perceived attacks on professional expertise. Once the word got around that the program’s aims were non-threatening and were based not on doing more things on top of existing workloads, but on doing things differently, there was more enthusiasm for participation (Lawrence 2003).

The concept of the practitioners involved in change activities having ownership of the problems was a frequent analogy in the change agents’ reports. For example:

Since framing my original action plan, I have certainly realised that effective change plans require consultation with those who are to be involved in order that they have ownership of the change activity (Blom 2003).

A number of the 2003 change agents became aware of the value of examining their own models or perceptions:

... constantly evaluating my own approach seemed necessary. Bringing about change can’t be a haphazard sideline if anything worthwhile is to be achieved. I found that I had to consciously consider how I incorporated change into my own work and into my leadership style in influencing others (Lawrence 2003).

I had also intended to be much more interventionist in the three projects in question. I withdrew from that position for several reasons. As I began to see myself (and accept responsibility) as the change agent, not merely as the facilitator of others’ change agency, I realised that such intervention was not appropriate or necessary, and that I needed to focus more explicitly on understanding and developing the requirements of my own role instead (Blom 2003).

To diagnose the changes needed, the 2003 change agents used models of their organisations that included the organisation as an organism, the organisation as a political machine and the organisation as a cultural landscape. As change agents, their self-perceptions, which coloured their diagnoses, included the image of an inexperienced teacher, a political broker and an opportunistic strategist.

In preparing their diagnosis, many of the change agents commented on the value of comparing their own world views with those of the people they were assisting in the change process. By interrogating others’ world views, a number of the change agents were forced to modify their model of organisations.

In an ideal world, change agents would clarify the model they have of an organisation before collecting data so that they could change it if it transpired that it did not fit the new situation they were involved in. When their projects started, many of the 2003 change agents were not completely clear about their existing model of how organisations work, but they became clearer about their model as their project progressed and sometimes the new experience caused them to modify their model.

■ How did the 2003 change agents identify and gather data?

Figure 3 below shows that the 2003 change agents used a variety of useful techniques to identify possible sources of data and to gather that data. These techniques included:

- building trusting relationships with the people they were helping to change, so that sharing could occur
- conducting both informal and structured conversations
- collecting industry documentation, observing teachers and trainers and collecting existing teaching/training and assessment tools
- developing a specific tool for collecting data, based on a detailed knowledge of colleagues.

Figure 3: How the 2003 change agents collected data

A number of change agents focused on building a trusting relationship as a precursor to VET practitioners voluntarily sharing their knowledge:

Data gathering processes rely on processes such as the formation of good relationships where open discussions can occur, using the whiteboard to note what has been agreed, development of trust so that stakeholders feel comfortable sharing their issues, giving people the opportunity to discuss their concerns, managing the forums so that everyone feels valued and can have a say and following up with the meeting notes so that people know what has occurred (Davies 2003).

Others collected data from within their own organisations through conversations.

For example:

As a leadership team, we also had different agendas, different priorities and certainly some differing behavioural values. I spent time individually with the Head of School and some Education Managers discussing their perspectives on what was right and wrong, and what could be done to fix it. Again, the answers differed quite significantly (Robertson 2003).

A number of change agents used directed conversations to obtain valuable data. For example:

To check and extend my understanding I asked my superiors, team members, and colleagues in different areas, with different accountabilities what they saw as critical challenges, barriers, opportunities and influences. This brought more perspectives to bear from their different priorities and levels in the institute. Regular discussions with my own Educational Services Director were particularly useful as she has a great deal of experience in both educational delivery and management. She broadened the scope of the data, as well as its meaning, by offering knowledge and insight from the Executive level and from her wide current reading (Lawrence 2003).

The following change agent collected industry documentation, observed teachers and collected existing assessment tools:

We collected a range of industry documentation against which to measure our own documentation used in our simulated workplace. Some teachers were observed continually testing students across a range of areas and failing students in subjects because they 'failed' the quiz, test, exam. I collected evidence of the range of assessment tools used to assess competency – notably there were too many tests, exams, quizzes which had a disproportionate weighting for the competency being assessed (Johnson 2003).

Another change agent developed a specific tool for collecting data, based on his knowledge of his colleagues' experiences:

Data was gathered through informal discussions and observation of other Head Teachers over a number of years, my own professional experience in North Coast Institute as well as capturing the responses of a number of Head Teachers to the most recent leadership and management development they had undertaken as part of the organisation's human resource development strategy. Given no management and leadership capability profile existed in the organisation it was critical that hard data be generated which would be the foundation for the development of a Head Teacher professional development strategy. To enable this to happen, a self-assessment tool for leadership and management capabilities was developed for Head Teachers as part of this program (Stuart 2003).

The change agents in 2003 used a range of methods to collect data, ranging from guided conversations, observations of colleagues, reviews of literature and the construction of a customised data-gathering tool. The change agents used their knowledge of the groups they were working with to determine appropriate data-gathering methods and when to implement them. Considerable professional judgement is evident in the way the change agents collected their data.

■ **Final comment**

High-order skills and knowledge for change agents include being aware of one's own theoretical framework for understanding organisations and being sensitive to the world views of others (Collins 2003, p.136). Yet another set of skills is needed to identify and collect data from the organisation.

What process ('how to') models for change agency are available?

- **This chapter explores** how the 2003 change agents drew on different process models of change.

- **Key points**

Key points raised in the chapter include the following:

- Change agents need to know about alternative process models of change – the *how* of change management – so they can manage different types of change, such as incremental or discontinuous change (Hayes 2002).
- The 2003 change agents used a range of different process models for managing change, from Kotter's model to Cummings and Worley's to Stace and Dunphy's or parts of models or their own.
- Following their selection of a process model, the 2003 change agents used a variety of different interventions, from convening meetings, workshops and conferences, to mentoring project participants. They needed to exercise considerable professional judgement in selecting and timing each intervention.
- All models and theories can be challenged, but it is imperative to have some models to guide action or to refer to, even if the models used by practitioners have considerable variations from text book theories (Burnes 2000). The alternative is to stay unconscious.

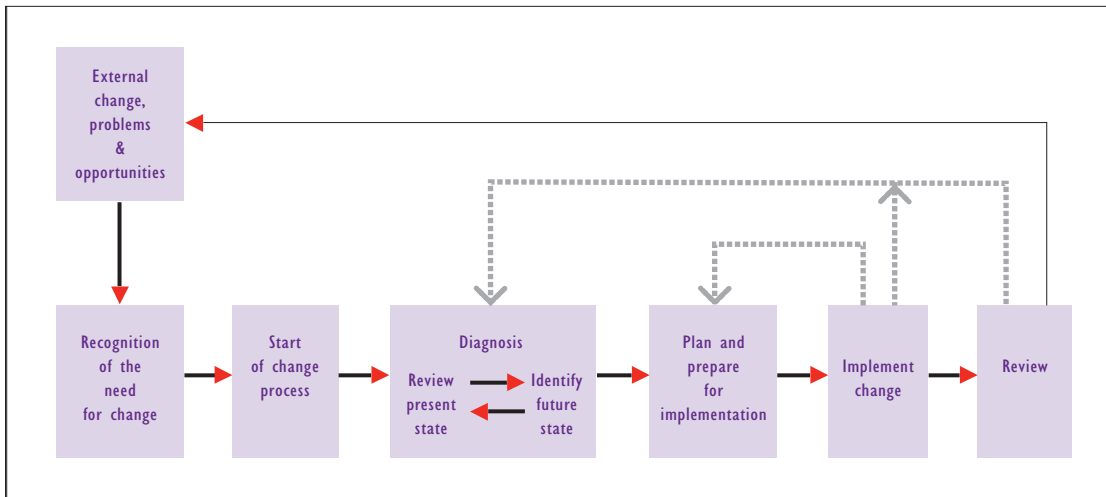
- **Alternative process ('how to') models for change management**

Hayes (2002, pp.18-19) finds that change agents need concepts and theories that fall into two categories: diagnostic models of change that focus on identifying *what* it is that needs to be changed and process models of change which are concerned with the *how* of change management. Diagnostic models were discussed in the previous chapter and process models are discussed below.

Having clarified which type of change needs to be managed, such as incremental (small, continuous adjustments) or discontinuous (episodic) change, change agents need to know about alternative process models of change – the *how* of change management – so they can manage these different types of change (Hayes 2002, p.51).

Possibly the most famous process (or 'how to do it') model of change is Lewin's (1951) three stage model – unfreeze behaviour, move to a new level and then refreeze behaviour. While Lewin saw three steps in the change process, others see more steps, such as Hayes and Hyde (1998), who provide the following map of the steps in the change process. They suggest that this model can be used at the organisational, the group or the individual level.

Diagram 1: Steps in the change process (by Hayes and Hyde 1998, in Hayes 2002, p.54)



Features of the Hayes and Hyde model include the very thin line, which shows that feedback is required and the process will possibly need to be repeated. In particular, the loop between ‘review’ and ‘external’ factors shows that change rarely involves moving from one steady state to another. As Hayes (2002) comments: ‘typically it is an ongoing process. Often new pressures for change emerge before the current change initiative has been completed’ (p.54).

The Hayes and Hyde process model of how change can be managed is but one of many in the literature and the 2003 change agents were encouraged to consider a range of such models before modifying an existing model or constructing their own. For now, the Hayes and Hyde model is useful as a general reference point. In the previous chapter we noted how the change agents undertook some of the earlier steps in the Hayes and Hyde model, including:

- recognising the need for change
- diagnosing the present situation.

In this chapter the focus is on the process model of change adopted by the change agents – for example, whether it was like the Hayes and Hyde model or not. Then the specific interventions made by the change agents are examined – initiatives which fit with the Hayes and Hyde stages of ‘plan and prepare for implementation’ and ‘implement change’.

■ Which change management process models were used by the 2003 change agents?

At the workshops and in the documentation issued to the 2003 change agents (e.g. Mitchell and Young 2003), change agents were encouraged to consider the two major schools of change process models:

- *the emergent school* most famously articulated by Kotter (1996)
- *the planned change school* represented by Cummings and Worley (1997).

Cummings and Worley (1997, p.168) suggest that change agents must carry out five kinds of activities when planning and implementing changes:

- Creating readiness for change and overcoming resistance to change
- Creating a vision, by articulating a compelling reason for the change
- Developing political support for the change
- Managing the transition of the organisation from its current state to the desired state
- Sustaining momentum for the changes so they are carried to completion.

In comparison to these five activities, Kotter (1996) provides an eight-stage model for producing change in organisations. His eight steps include establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition and developing a vision and strategy. Brief descriptions of the features and limitations of these schools are provided in Mitchell (2003) and a fuller analysis is provided in Burnes (2000).

The change agents were also encouraged to consider theorists who recommend that a mixture of emergent and planned change be undertaken, such as Stace and Dunphy (1997) and Burnes (2000). The change agents were then asked to comment on which change management models worked well – for example, Kotter’s model; Cummings and Worley’s; Stace and Dunphy’s; or parts of models; or their own. Their comments are set out in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Process models used by the 2003 change agents

One change agent found useful both the planned change model of Cummings and Worley and the emerging change model of Kotter, to the point that she mapped her project’s major steps against the five steps advocated by Cummings and Worley and the eight recommended by Kotter. Another change agent linked Cummings and Worley to Kotter and other theorists and models, as follows:

Cummings and Worley (1997) recommend that change agents create a readiness for change and overcoming resistance. If I can I will and I bring my staff along with me. I try to impart the vision (Kotter 1996) for the change to my staff to motivate them to accepting change, when necessary.

Burnes (2000) identifies change as a continuous improvement approach, which I relate to very well, because that is what I want to encourage in my team. Continuous improvement to ensure that we deliver the best outcomes for our clients – industry, students and the travelling public.

Sustaining momentum is essential (Cummings and Worley) and it is essential that we don’t just stop now, because all change is only a beginning. Change occurs by finding better ways to do things, (Seppanen, Buharist and Virtaharju) not just changing for changing’s sake. This is something that we need to be aware of especially working for an organisation that is subject to the variances of politics.

Loss of power, will certainly lead to resistance. Using power as the only way to implement change will result in resistance, therefore strategies must be in place to ensure that all stakeholders are empowered (Seppanen et al).

As a change agent, I have got to ‘walk the talk’ (Knowling 1997). It is not enough to get other people to implement continuous improvement and just sit back and watch it happen. The change agent is an agent of change and must know, understand and facilitate change to ensure it is successful and to accept that sometimes it isn’t.

Change is a people issue (Larson and Carnell) and ensuring I understand the people I am working with and what motivates them and what scares them is vital to the success of any implementation of new practices. The position of change agent comes with a certain amount of real or imagined power. This power may be of supervisor of people, manager over subordinates or power given to an outside operator. This power may be exerted to get things happening, however without support, necessary changes are unsustainable. Power doesn’t necessarily translate into acceptance (Johnson 2003).

This same change agent then summarised her newly developed change process model:

My theory is this: have a vision and a plan for implementation, ensure your people understand the plan and listen to them. Hear criticism in a positive way to tap into ideas you may not have thought of and see things from a different perspective. Expect to succeed, but ensure the measures of success are flexible. Adaptability is essential, because you never know what paths you may have to choose along the way and what obstacles you will need to overcome. Accept what you have no control over and be very patient. Don’t give up and understand that life is change, change is life. To be alive is to participate in change. Embrace it. (Johnson 2003).

Another change agent also examined Kotter and Cummings and Worley in detail, as well as finding value in other models:

I found it interesting to consider different theorists, other than the major ones above, as they all add richness to the appreciation of change and change management. For example greater understanding

of organisational vision came from Collins and Porras who see it as comprised of both the organisation's enduring core values and core purpose that remain fixed, together with an envisioned future, which though long term, is not fixed. Business strategies and practices relate to the vision, but are adaptable to the ever-changing environment (Lawrence 2003).

One change agent set out in her Action Plan that she expected to use the Cummings and Worley model, but ended up with an approach that suited the situation as it unfolded, with its unexpected idiosyncrasies. When summarising her approach she commented:

I am unsure where this all fits with academic change management models – probably a mix of them all. I doubt if there is such a thing as 'one size fits all' with change management. My experience tells me that there must be some organised stages such as planning, especially in the initial stage. From there, it depends on so many aspects – goals, people, facilitator, management expectations, contingencies, etc. The important thing for the Change Agent is to know that there is a choice and that there is more than one pathway to success. A skilled Change Agent will be able to read the situation and take the path that suits the situation best (Cooper 2003).

The comments above are a major finding from this 2003 research project.

The following change agent cautioned about any model which suggests that all unrest can be removed and normality returned. Instead, he believes that perpetual unrest is the new normalcy:

Nadler and Tushman (1986) proposed three key activities required in managing transformational change: envisioning, energising and enabling. This process for organisational change fits this particular change episode at North Coast Institute.

Whichever model is used, it is important to keep in mind that any attempts at dealing with change in terms of old organisational paradigms are unlikely to be successful in the long term. Dealing with change in terms of old organisational paradigms tends to perpetuate the expectation that any unrest will eventually be removed and 'normality' will return.

It is necessary to accept at all levels in the organisation, especially at senior management level, that the new paradigm is that of perpetual unrest (Stuart 2003).

One change agent used Cummings and Worley's model but found that the first phases advocated by these theorists needed to be conducted simultaneously:

So I worked on 'creating readiness for change by creating a vision for change and gaining political support' as a single step because each component was required to assist the process (Morrow 2003).

The 2003 change agents often found limitations in the linear, step-by-step nature of many of the models in the literature:

Although there are many prescriptive and linear models in the literature, I agree with Kotter that these can be less than helpful, in fact, distracting. As he notes, 'those who attempt to create major change with simple, linear, analytical processes almost always fail' (Kotter 1996, p.25). Leadership rather than management entails an acceptance of the organic, messy and unpredictable nature of change and, therefore, its management (Blom 2003).

This same change agent observed her own progression from initially favouring models that fitted with her previous experience to experimenting with others:

Kotter's eight-stage model has been the one which I have found most helpful – particularly as he bases his theorising on observations of where organisations and individuals most often make errors in dealing with change management.

However, there are elements of other models which seem to be in tune with my experience, and where I've found them, I've tended to pick those up and use them to support my own evolving repertoire of strategies.

I think as I build in confidence as a change agent I might be more inclined to experiment with strategies that are further removed from my own personal style; however, at the moment I feel more comfortable being able to choose selectively and to apply different models as I see fit (Blom 2003).

The 2003 change agents were sophisticated in the way they examined existing process models of change, like Kotter's or Cummings and Worley's, then decided whether they would use these models, or develop variations, or build their own, depending on the type of change they were involved in.

■ **The dangers of simplistic theories of change**

The finding by the 2003 change agents about the limitations of many theories in the literature, when applied to complex VET settings, deserves further comment. Change management is one of the most popular topics in the business world and bookstores are often crammed with 'how to do it' guides to change management. Some of these books reduce change management to five or ten or 'n' easy steps, dangerously suggesting that the same 5-10 steps can be applied in every situation. Collins (2003) criticises management theorists who produce programmatic or schematic guides to managing change in organisations: what he calls '*n-step* guides for change' (p.83). His typical example of the schematic *n-step* change models are as follows:

1. Develop strategy
2. Confirm top level support
3. Use project management approach
 - Identify tasks
 - Assign responsibilities
 - Agree deadlines
 - Initiate action
 - Monitor
 - Act on problems
 - Close down
4. Communicate results (p.83).

Collins suggests there are three key features of simplistic *n-step* change models:

A rational analysis of organisational change

A sequential approach to the planning and management of change

A generally up-beat and prescriptive tone (p.84).

Collins criticises *n-step* guides because they downplay the existence of conflict and the breadth of personalities in organisations and they sanitise the change process (p.127):

Unlike the organisations assumed to exist in *n-step* guides, organisations are not peopled by workers who naturally share a common consensus. Instead, people adhere, to a greater or lesser degree, to their own value system... We must, therefore, be realistic about the extent to which managers (or the state) could effectively erase such a complex, plural, deep-rooted and socially maintained set of values (p.127).

These comments apply to change agents operating within all organisations, including VET organisations.

■ **What were the major interventions undertaken?**

In addition to being asked what change process models (e.g Kotter's or Burnes's model) they used, the 2003 change agents were also asked what specific interventions or

steps they took to try to bring about change. While a planned approach is obviously interventionist, so is selecting, advocating and supporting an emergent approach.

The following accounts from a number of the 2003 change agents show the variety of different interventions undertaken by them and are a reminder that each change agent needs to exercise considerable professional judgement in designing and then timing an intervention.

Figure 5: How the 2003 change agents intervened in their projects

One change agent determined that she needed to work on a number of different fronts and with a range of different stakeholders, to address issues raised by assessment:

The focus of my project was always on assessment, ensuring our assessments mirrored industry practices and requirements, that case studies were real scenarios, and role-plays closely copied situations which would arise in a tourism situation.

Being aware of the AQTF requirements regarding assessment, it was evident to me that we needed to identify actual performance in the workplace to do the job; gather more evidence over time to determine competency; not just rely on test results; develop relationships with industry; develop assessment tools that met the validation requirements; and develop assessment validation teams across NSW (Johnson 2003).

Another change agent found that a large part of his role involved using activities that would persuade the client about the benefits of workplace delivery:

I investigated and documented the strategies used to develop a successful training partnership between the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (RTBG) and the Institute of TAFE Tasmania. Strategies undertaken include workshops with TAFE staff to develop a shared vision of training delivery and an action plan to address issues identified.

With the RTBG the activities included participating in their strategic planning forum, running workshops for staff on the National Training system and in particular the Horticulture Training Package, promoting the value of their workplace as a venue for vocational training, addressing concerns over student placements and work responsibilities.

The change to workplace delivery for RTBG staff also involved demonstrating how this training could lead to improved horticultural practices and direct benefits to the gardens (Miller 2003).

The change agent who developed the 'Head Teacher Management and Leadership Capability Profile' explained how the tool was implemented:

A research tool was developed to allow individual Head Teachers to rate the importance of a number of capabilities considered important in realising the imperatives of their evolving roles. The tool also provides Head Teachers with the opportunity to self assess their own performance for each of these capabilities.

Each capability is described in terms of a number of components. For each component Head Teachers are asked to rate the level of proficiency they believe is required to perform their current Head Teacher role effectively. Head Teachers are also asked to rank the actual level of proficiency they believe they now exhibit in performing their role (Stuart 2003).

Many of the change agents found during their projects that some interventions were unsuccessful and they needed to find different approaches. For example:

I had telephone meetings with nine providers and face-to-face meetings with two providers and one face-to-face group meeting with South Australian RTOs were held. This was not a particularly successful strategy and so, following this meeting, I held individual follow-up meetings. I also met with individual Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland providers.

Meeting with providers separately was the most successful strategy. Because group meetings went down so poorly, I changed tracks and used as my main strategy personal contact, telephone meetings and face-to-face meetings with South Australian, New South Wales, Queensland and Victorian providers were involved (Morrow 2003).

This change agent also found value in what she called ‘Accidental Strategies’, that is ‘there are strategies that you mean to use, but there will always pop up others that could end up being just as useful’ (Morrow 2003).

This same change agent works with private RTOs and found the lack of prior research into the change management needs of private RTOs was a handicap in her role as change agent:

In selling the concepts of their professional VET responsibilities and managing change to private providers, the main block that I faced is that most of the research that backed up my arguments was based on public institution research. To be the effective tool that it has the potential to be, change needs to be supported by contextualised research (for private providers) (Morrow 2003).

The following change agent moved away from prescribing how to do things to using one-on-one approaches:

Although I had planned two joint sessions to bring all the practitioner-researchers together, it no longer seemed appropriate once I saw that it was my role as change agent that I had to focus on – and that the participants’ roles and needs were different to that. It was not appropriate to treat them as a group with identical needs, and in fact, their needs as practitioner-researchers were better met by one-on-one mentoring or by my being a critical friend to their activity, rather than by my prescribing how they might go about it. Thus I made a shift away from managing, towards leading (Blom 2003).

The interventions selected, designed and implemented by the 2003 change agents were based on the agents’ diagnosis of their specific context and the type of change being sought. Sometimes initial interventions were less successful than hoped, so modifications were made.

■ Final comment

This chapter began by examining process models for change and then reviewed the interventions made by the 2003 change agents. In relation to using a process model to guide change, Burnes (2000) argues that all models and theories can be challenged, but it is imperative to have some models to guide action, even if the models used by practitioners have considerable variations from text book theories:

There is no such thing as uncontested theory – all have their drawbacks. In particular, most tend to be situation-specific, even if they do not acknowledge this. Managers and organisations need to treat theories with a degree of scepticism. However they also need to realise that if they can identify the main theories for running and changing organisations, and they do understand the context in which they operate, they are in a position to identify choices and make changes (p.506).

Hayes (2002) arrives at a similar conclusion:

...there is no one recipe or prescription about how change ‘should’ be managed, that can be applied to all situations. Managing change is a complex process. Change managers need to contextualise their approach and develop bespoke [customised] strategies that accommodate the cultural and political dynamics that can undermine or facilitate any attempt to manage change (p.58).

The experiences and the initiatives of the 2003 change agents reinforce these findings from the literature. The 2003 change agents demonstrated that there is no single recipe for managing change, so they deliberately designed interventions that fitted their local context. Schematic and prescriptive *n-step* change management models have no value in the complex world of VET organisations.

What other skills and knowledge are needed by internal change agents?

- **The literature suggests** that change agents need a vast range of skills. This chapter explores the skills and knowledge needed by internal change agents, in addition to the skills and knowledge discussed in the two previous chapters, such as diagnosing what needs to be changed and knowing how to change it. This chapter of the report focuses on three separate skills: being diplomatic, responding to resistance and developing relationships.

- **Key points**

Key points raised in the chapter include the following:

- The 2003 change agents demonstrated a raft of diplomatic skills like staying quiet on occasions, for strategic purposes; using language common to the group; and speaking up when their professional judgement suggested it was the right step.
- The change agents developed sophisticated insights into the different factors that might influence a person to be resistant to change, like a fear of the unknown, group pressure and legitimate concerns about the change. The change agents also learnt that humour can be a useful aid; that planning can sometimes circumvent resistance; and that it is important to operate strategically.
- The change agents indicated an understanding of how networks sometimes evolve over a number of years and how it is valuable for change agents to tap into them. Others realised that many different strategies can be used to expand or develop networks, including accessing existing frameworks such as ongoing committees or reference groups.

- **Additional knowledge**

Managing change is difficult so change agents require advanced skills. For instance, King and Anderson (2002, pp.191-192) find that a base-line range of skills for change agents includes:

1. networking abilities to make constructive contacts and to develop cooperative and productive relationships with a wide variety of individuals and clients;
2. data-gathering skills to be able to collect reliable information on apparent organisational challenges;
3. evaluation and integration skills to correctly weigh information and to integrate this information into a coherent picture of the issues warranting intervention;
4. diagnostic and prognosis skills to translate this mass of information into intervention strategies and a proposed plan of action.

Hayes (2002) identifies other skills of change agents as follows:

When managers are acting as change agents they need to be able to communicate, offer leadership, work with teams, confront, negotiate, motivate and effectively manage relationships with others (p.19).

Hayes makes the point that sometimes change agents are less effective than they might be because they fail to recognise the importance of some of these skills or they fail to apply them when required. Adding to Hayes' argument, Scott (1999) argues that if change agents are to apply the knowledge they have, they need some additional personal attributes:

- their stance towards change, work and the people who populate it;
- their ability to think creatively, reflectively and with focus, especially their ability to 'read and match'
- their ability to continuously update what they know and can do, especially through their expertise in the self-management of their career-long learning (p.148).

Lippit and Lippit (1975) (in Paton and McCalman 2000) argue that the behaviour of the change agent runs along a continuum of eight different roles depending on whether the change agent is being directive or non-directive. These roles are 'mutually exclusive and may vary according to the stage the change project has reached'. The roles range from:

Advocate, technical specialist, trainer or educator on the directive side to collaborator in problem solving, alternative identifier, fact finder, process specialist and reflector on the non-directive side. What Lippit and Lippit emphasise is the multiple role nature of the change agent, the situational focus which determines these roles, and the need to work in close conjunction with the client organisation no matter what role is being used (p.182).

As an alternative to the roles set out by Lippit and Lippit, Kanter (1989) suggests that change masters need to become business athletes, with the following traits:

- Able to work independently without the power and sanction of the management hierarchy
- An effective collaborator, able to compete in ways that enhance rather than destroy cooperation
- Able to develop high trust relations, with high ethical standards
- Possessing self-confidence tempered with humility
- Respectful of the process of change as well as the substance
- Able to work across business functions and units - 'multi-faceted and multi-dextrous'
- Willing to take rewards on results and gain satisfaction from success (in Paton and McCalman 2000, p.51).

Buchanan and Badham (2000) find that the behaviour repertoire of the change driver is as follows:

A combination of change and project management skills, interpersonal skills in negotiating, persuading and influencing, and political skills, combined possibly with knowledge of the substance of the change itself (p.24).

They also find that during a change project, the agent will need to change roles:

The ability of the change driver readily to switch roles will depend largely on the substance and goals of the change initiative in hand, the formal position, power base and personal attributes of the change driver, and the positions adopted by other players in the game at any one time (p.183).

In summary, the literature suggests that change agents need many skills and a deep knowledge of organisations, people and change. This chapter of the report now focuses on three separate skills required of the change agent: being diplomatic, responding to resistance and developing relationships.

■ In what ways did the 2003 change agents improve their skills in diplomacy?

According to Buchanan and Badham (2000), change agency is not a static activity:

This is a dynamic game of action and response, of anticipating how others will react to one's behaviour and position, and of then acting accordingly. Players are not always well informed about each other and their respective plans and intentions. This is a game played in a mist or fog most of the time (p.206).

Taking into account this description of the 'dynamic game' of change, the 2003 change agents were asked to reflect on how they improved their skills in diplomacy. A range of their responses follow.

Figure 6: How the 2003 change agents developed or improved their skills in diplomacy

One change agent found that being diplomatic was more productive than complaining:

My diplomacy skills have been improved and reflection on the processes has been useful. I have formed a philosophy that is based on the premise that we should be looking for win-win situations, i.e. thinking about 'what's in it for me' for each stakeholder, so that they each have an opportunity to gain something. This leads to thinking laterally to solve problems. This philosophy influences the way I present issues and problems to stakeholders. For example instead of complaining to a State Training Authority about delays in the implementation of Training Packages I presented the information as an opportunity for them to get 300 trainees on board – which will appeal to the Minister (Davies 2003).

Diplomacy includes listening to fellow staff and using common language:

Conscious listening helped identify barriers and find what others really value. Listening also allowed discrimination between reactions to the specific change proposed and showing general symptoms of change fatigue.

The importance of using common language around assessment and gently insisting that others do so became obvious in workshops. Using recognised, defined terms facilitates professional dialogue (Lawrence 2003).

Using appropriate language was a skill used by other change agents:

This project allowed me to work with different groups of people and to consider the most appropriate language and discussion style of each group (Del Grosso 2003).

Working at a high level with Education Department and TAFE managers has required considerable diplomacy where the concepts and benefits of Training Packages and workplace delivery are often not fully understood (Miller 2003).

Sometimes diplomacy includes knowing when to stay quiet and when to speak up:

I have become more aware that diplomacy needs to be considered for a project such as this. There have been several instances during meetings where I have used my judgement and decided not to say anything, where I would normally have commented. This has proved to be the correct decision as the meeting has moved forward without incident (Cooper 2003).

I learnt to sit back and let others talk, not interrupt (so often) and not give everyone the answer, but to let them find it for themselves. Trying to be less efficient but more diplomatic was definitely difficult for me, but infinitely more effective (Morrow 2003).

I have been aware that the group of participants is somewhat fragile and at the last meeting I needed to step in and get the group back into a positive mind set after one group member (having a bad day) made some comments that seemed to affect them badly. In this instance I was direct and felt that if I had not tried to be diplomatic, the project would have suffered. I know the participant who caused the problem quite well and this direct manner was appropriate when dealing with him (Cooper 2003).

The change agents were clear about the need to judge the moment and not to be too directive:

I learnt not to always tackle head on, and that timing is the key (Robertson 2003).

Interestingly, as the year progressed and progress in this project was slower than anticipated, I found that my direct nature was not as successful as less direct methods (Morrow 2003).

On the other hand, some change agents felt strongly that the role of the change agent is not to be too reticent or retiring:

Buchanan and Badham (2000) found those most politically competent possess the personal attributes of being articulate, sensitive and socially adept. My experience would support the need for these personal attributes of a change agent.

A secret to being a change agent is making no secret of it. In some writings on change management, there's an implied suggestion that 'secret' agents can be more successful, by infiltrating the ranks of those whose practices or behaviour they seek to change. However I found that by openly promoting my change agent role, many were keen to discuss it, thus sharing their implicit and tacit knowledge and sparking ideas about approaches. As trust is a key element in others' buying-in to change, an open declaration of motives, plans and preferred outcomes should be made (Stuart 2003).

The 2003 Change Agents demonstrated a raft of diplomatic skills like staying quiet on occasions, for strategic purposes; using language common to the group; and speaking up when their professional judgement suggested it was the right step.

The final comments by Greg Stuart, above, about the need for political diplomacy fit with the views of Buchanan and Boddy (1992, in Burns 2000, p.473) who suggest that the successful change agent needs more than the skills seen in public; the change agent needs to be able to function 'backstage' or behind the scenes, in recruiting and maintaining support and identifying and blocking resistance:

Backstaging is concerned with the exercise of 'power skills', with intervening in political and cultural systems, with influencing and negotiating and selling, and with managing meaning.

In what ways did the 2003 change agents improve their skills in responding to resistance to change?

The literature suggests that knowledge about resistance to change is especially important for the change agent, because resistance to change is normal and is to be expected. For instance, King and Anderson (2002, pp.208-210) identify three psychological processes which commonly underpin resistance:

- change is an unknown and therefore presents a threat to those affected by it;
- change challenges the status quo and may be resisted because of powerful vested interests in maintaining the current equilibrium position;
- change often means extra workloads for those affected by it.

The 2003 change agents were asked how they improved their skills in responding to resistance to change and some of their responses follow.

Figure 7: How the 2003 change agents improved their skills in responding to resistance

One change agent was very aware that fear of the unknown can underpin resistance, so she listened carefully to the views of the people she worked with, to see if she could detect the underlying reason for the resistance:

Resistance is a fact of any business where there is more than one person. People have different ideas and they often believe their ideas are the best ones and the right ones. By listening to their objections and trying to understand what is going on behind them, I am more able to determine the actual messages that are coming through and acknowledge their fears – fear of the change, fear of more work and fear of failing (Johnson 2003).

The next change agent developed her skills by developing an understanding of the fragile nature of her project:

I used my skills in responding to resistance to change in convincing some very reluctant participants to join the project, to convince them that they could make a difference, and in dealing with some tricky situations during the project. My skills improvement has come from an awareness of the fragile nature of the project, which was mainly because of the mix of personalities of the participants (Cooper 2003).

The following change agent taught herself that not all resistance is based on negativity:

It's easy to leap to the superficial judgement that someone who doesn't buy-in is just being difficult, that is, making a personal attribution. However, rather than being an individual trait, the negative response could be traced back to quite legitimate deficiencies in structures, processes, training or communication etc. This means not accepting resistance on face value but being prepared to peel the onion to the core, to find reasons that participants might not even have acknowledged themselves. What stands in the way? What is the real problem? Is the problem real or illusory? (Lawrence 2003).

One change agent noted that individuals may be resistant to change in front of their peers but may be more amenable to new ideas when discussed one-to-one:

It was interesting to me that while in the group situation, all participants commented that they already 'did that' or 'had considered that' but then after the group session, each participant came to see me and expressed the view that the workshop was really worthwhile and that they wanted the slides and permission to use them as part of staff development with their own staff. As part of a group they demonstrated a resistance to change, but on an individual basis they showed that they were quite open to the idea of change (Del Grosso 2003).

Sometimes humour, humility and a relaxed atmosphere helped the change agents cope with resistance:

I've learnt to be light-hearted when confronted with negativity, sometimes. I also learnt that if I wanted something to change, I have to change it with others (Robertson 2003).

Among TAFE staff I have found that 'Conversation Cafes' were a great mechanism to engage staff and plan strategies to facilitate change (Miller 2003).

Anticipating and circumventing resistance is possible, in some situations, with adequate planning:

The skill was to understand the nature of the resistance, and then present an opportunity to assist in overcoming those perceived deficiencies that were contributing to the construct of resistance. This suggests the importance of effectively managing the meaning of change in overcoming resistance (Stuart 2003).

For change agents to be able to continue functioning, sometimes they need to accept that resistance to change will never stop:

It is likely however, that resistance in the longer term may emanate from those who have essentially disengaged from the organisation... I have always maintained that minimum resources should be invested in this group, as they are likely to have values and attributes which are not consistent with those of the organisation, as stated in the mission and values of the organisation. (Stuart 2003).

Sometimes resistance is replaced by other forms of behaviour, such as indifference, which might be overcome by being strategic:

I think what I experienced was less resistance than indifference, and I found it harder to deal with than active opposition, because people would verbally express support but then just not take the promised action – I found this quite frustrating. This helped me to learn the lesson about needing to be strategic in order to work with change – to think and operate strategically. Here I think I drew on Kotter's fifth stage: empowering broad based action, in which he advocates changing the systems or structures that undermine the change vision. I tended to work around them rather than confront them and challenge them (Blom 2003).

The 2003 change agents developed sophisticated insights into the different factors that might influence a person to be resistant to change, like group pressure, a fear of the unknown and legitimate concerns about the organisation. The change agents also learnt that humour can be a useful aid; that planning can sometimes circumvent resistance; and that it is important to operate strategically.

■ How did the 2003 change agents develop relationships or network, to gain cooperation?

It is common in the literature to see the recommendation that the individual change agent needs to develop skills in forming productive relationships and networking. For instance, Buchanan and Badham (2000) highlight the need for interpersonal skills in negotiating, persuading and influencing. The 2003 change agents were asked to describe how they developed relationships or networks, to gain cooperation and some of their responses follow.

Figure 8: How the 2003 change agents developed relationships and networks

Some change agents believe that relationships in VET are not developed quickly – they are built up over years and change agents can capitalise on them:

Networking and relationship building has occurred over many years primarily through organising and running workshops for stakeholders such as RTOs, industry, State Training Authorities, New Apprenticeship centres and Industry Training Boards (Davies 2003).

With the Corporate Training Managers Network, we already had a well established relationship and given that each of these people had contracted RTOs to delivery industry training, their input was invaluable (Del Grosso 2003).

Capitalised on existing relationships. Even as teacher, I recognised that networks were needed to replace previously existing hierarchies in VET organisations, so I have consciously developed them. These networks are valuable assets in change (Lawrence 2003).

In this project I utilised existing professional networks and relationships that had been constructed over a long period. I feel that it is important that the change agent has credibility among organisational members. It proved to be very important that the person advocating and facilitating activities associated with change came from the group that was the target for change (Stuart 2003).

On the other hand, new strategies sometimes satisfy a need some people have for new relationships:

We had tapped into a need for networks, cooperation and sharing. Everyone is feeling the strain of continuous change and this forum provided them with opportunities they/we had forgotten how to exploit (Johnson 2003).

This change agent listed a number of ways she developed networks, including being opportunistic:

Opportunism by using membership of other groups, including reference and strategic groups and using the contacts to advance the project.

Using presentations at seminars and conferences to identify those who could add value to the project and asking for their advice and co-operation.

Piggy-backing on other networks of colleagues, who generously allowed me to use them

Responding positively to others who approached me at the project's workshops and presentations to ask for similar presentations for their own organisations (Lawrence 2003).

Sometimes the occasion of participating in a joint project – and the skills of an experienced facilitator – can help create new relationships:

The ownership of this topic, the processes of analysis, and problem solving have been vital to the level of cooperation. This team has realised the value of working together and understanding why people

in different job roles do things in a particular way. The project has pulled these people together in the same room and encouraged them to communicate with each other. It has made them take the time, although they are all very busy, to work towards a common goal. They are now feel part of a successful team, understand why people in other job roles work the way they do and know that they have developed their own strategies for Training Package implementation (Cooper 2003).

The 2003 change agents indicated an understanding that networks sometimes evolve over a number of years and that it is valuable for change agents to tap into them. Others realised that many different strategies can be used to expand existing networks or develop new networks, including accessing existing frameworks such as ongoing committees or reference groups.

■ **Final comment**

The skills of the 2003 change agents displayed in this chapter – as diplomats, ‘backstagers’ and networkers – are a reminder of a point made by Buchanan and Boddy (1992) that managing change is a creative activity, extending beyond the application of formulae:

Expertise does not simply involve the mechanical deployment of diagnostic tools, competences and stereotyped solutions, but involves also the innovative and opportunistic exploitation of other dimensions of the organisational context (p.123).

The experiences of the 2003 change agents also confirm a finding by Scott (1999) that change in education and training is highly subjective, with a combination of values and individual motivations ‘driving the way each initiative unfolds, right from the first moment a change idea is mentioned (p.24)’. Skilled change agents try to understand the values and motivations of the people with whom they are working. Skilled change agents also need to clarify their own values and motives.

What are the potential benefits and limitations of internal change agents?

- **This chapter considers** the benefits and limitations of internal change agents – that is, staff members of VET organisations operating as change agents within their own organisations.

■ Key points

Key points raised in the chapter include the following:

- Two limitations of internal change agents are that they are not always seen as legitimate in that role and they might find it difficult to remain objective.
- The 2003 change agents commented on the temporary or fragile nature of the relationship with their client or the group they were working with; the need for them as change agents to address a real problem; and the need for them as change agents to have both competence and courage.
- The 2003 internal change agents assisted the implementation of the national training system in a variety of ways, from developing relationships between providers and industry, to focusing on critical components such as assessment, to introducing new Training Packages, to focusing providers on workplace delivery.
- The 2003 change agents ensured their projects assisted VET organisations to become more client-focused by a number of means: creating opportunities for providers and industry to mix and learn more about each other; focusing on a core client need of improved training and assessment in the workplace; and highlighting to providers the business benefits of an improved client focus.

■ What are the limitations of internal change agents?

The limitations and benefits of internal change agents versus external change agents were discussed briefly in Chapter 1. This topic of the internal change agent deserves further examination, as the focus of the Reframing the Future sub-program is on internal change agents. On the other hand, four of the eleven change agents in 2003 operated outside of their home organisation and it is common in VET for staff to operate away from their base, interacting with industry and other stakeholders. So while the sub-program focuses mostly on internal change agents, it is also supportive of staff from VET organisations working as external change agents, say, with a mix of industries, providers and other stakeholders.

Two limitations of internal change agents are discussed below: legitimacy and objectivity. A first limitation of internal change agents is that they are not always seen as legitimate in that role; and interestingly, winning legitimacy was a challenge faced by most of the change agents in 2003. A typical comment from one of the 2003 change agents concurred with the view that achieving legitimacy is challenging:

Personal credibility, sincerity and reputation seem essential in the change agent role. Because these can take some time to establish, yet remain relatively fragile, it was

important to protect these by being aware of how others perceive you and your role, but without becoming paranoid or precious (Lawrence 2003).

Paton and McCalman (2003) note that winning credibility is a challenge right from the start of a change management activity:

In terms of entry into a change management process as a facilitator, the internal change agent has to convince management and employees within a particular part of the organisation of their expertise in this area (p.189).

Buchanan and Badham (2000) also note:

This is a game of credentials, in which reputations established through time are important assets. The credibility of the players is crucial: will individuals keep to their goals and agendas and promises? (p.206)

Paton and McCalman believe that the internal change agent is constrained by his/her involvement and participation in the organisation and by his/her specified role which others may seek to exploit to their advantage (p.189). The internal change agent may also be driven by the 'intrinsic or extrinsic rewards associated with a successful change project' (p.192). Paton and McCalman acknowledge that this might also apply to the external consultant who is paid by someone within the organisation and may slant the approach to fit with the views of the person paying him/her.

Paton and McCalman (2000, p.189), drawing on Margulies and Raia (1978), identify a second potential limitation of the internal change agent, the challenge of remaining objective – that is, remaining objective in relation to a problem existing within the change agent's own organisation. Factors that might hinder the change agent's objectivity include:

being too close to what the problem is

being part of the problem

being willing to confront issues when promotion and pay issues are forthcoming

being part of the power system being examined

being aware of the needs and demands of superiors (p.189).

Interestingly, Paton and McCalman (2003) see as a solution to the problem of objectivity that the internal change agent 'must not and cannot become involved in change within his/her area'. (p.189). The custom in VET is to do the opposite: to deliberately engage colleagues to work within their own areas as change agents. The position taken by Paton and McCalman (2003) can be taken as a cautionary note that the use of internal change agents within their own areas of VET organisations is, at the least, challenging, requiring high-order skills.

Despite these challenges of legitimacy and objectivity, it is possible for internal VET change agents to impact on their peers more than an external change agent might, as one of the 2003 change agents commented:

I have concentrated on one-to-one communications, interpersonal skills and sales techniques. I have had to dig deep for some skills that I had used in previous job roles. This is not a project that could have been undertaken by an outside facilitator (Cooper 2003).

■ Some complex challenges for change agents

Providing change agency services is a complex undertaking and Paton and McCalman (2003) quoting Lippitt (1959) table some features of an ideal arrangement between change agent and client. Firstly, the relationship between change agent and the organisation ideally will be voluntary and can be severed at any time:

This allows those who feel uncomfortable with the relationship to express their discomfort openly, allows both parties to begin to address this, if possible, and maintains an open and honest atmosphere. It also has the benefit of allowing the change agent to withdraw if they feel like the assistance being provided is not what is needed, or wanted (p.190).

Secondly, the organisation must recognise that a problem exists. Paton and McCalman (2003) suggest that this realisation ‘should come from senior management, as the instigation of change stands a greater chance of success with top management support (p.190)’.

Thirdly, the change agent must be competent:

To help solve a problem, the change agent has to be able to offer some form of expertise. Traditionally, this is based on knowledge of the subject. However, for the organisation development agent, the knowledge, more often than not, is in dealing with people and helping the organisation find its own solutions ... This is a skill that few have, and fewer still use effectively (p.191).

The 2003 change agents generally agreed with these provisos, regularly commenting on the temporary or fragile nature of the relationship between change agent and client or the group they were working with; the need to address a real problem; and the need for competence. One of the change agents adds that there are risks attached to being a change agent, requiring the change agent to have courage:

It appeared that there’s an aspect of exposure and risk in being a change agent that one has to expect and accept, but not necessarily enjoy. Change agents must decide if they are up to the challenge (Lawrence 2003).

Buchanan and Badham (2000) summarise the complexities of the change agent role:

The change-driving role is not an easy one. Major change makes the driver more visible, and more vulnerable. The role requires a behaviour repertoire that extends into different forms of Machiavellian actions, and other managerial character styles. This can involve the conscious switch from one position in relation to change implementation to another, to reduce risk and maximise personal advantage. It also requires energy and commitment – perhaps even passion – as well as creativity. It involves the acceptance of personal risk in career terms (p.207).

This summary of the role by Buchanan and Badham (2000) stresses both the requirements and the potential risk of the change agent’s role. The benefits of internal change agents for VET will now be discussed.

■ What are the benefits of internal change agents in implementing the national training system?

If internal change agents are able to assist VET organisations to implement the national training system, they will be of high value to the sector. Set out below are examples of how they performed, in assisting with the development of the national training system.

Figure 9: How the 2003 internal change agents assisted with implementing the national training system

One change agent believed that as a change agent she assisted in implementation of the National Training Framework in a range of ways:

- *working with industry to determine training needs and priorities, for example working with the Australian Association of Rotational Moulders to determine what they would like their workers to be trained in, and how they may go about it. This led to a priority to train industry operators as trainers and assessors so that they could train their own workers in the very specialised techniques.*
- *working with employers and employees in developing, promoting and delivering competency based, accredited training within the national framework, for example liaising with Alcoa about how they could use qualifications from the Chemical, Hydrocarbons and Oil Refining Training Package (Davies 2003).*

One change agent noted that her change agency actions fitted precisely with core requirements of the national training system:

- identify actual performance in the workplace to do the job
- gather more evidence over time to determine competency
- develop relationships with industry
- develop assessment tools that meet the assessment validation requirements
- develop assessment validation teams across the State (Johnson 2003).

Assessment was a common focus among many of the change agent projects, with one of the change agents noting the following:

The project meant revisiting the core components of competency, the elements, performance criteria and range of variables and the relationship between them. The importance of the Assessment Guidelines in the overall interpretation of the competencies was emphasised. Some assessors go straight to the individual competencies when planning training and assessment, losing the overarching guidelines approach and the opportunity of holistic clustering that mirrors real work patterns. There was greater understanding of the aspects of competency other than the purely technical, and their role in creating useful workers. The exploration of the many valid ways of collecting evidence to make judgements of competency increased the confidence of trainers, as professionals making the considered assessment decisions that are central to the role (Lawrence 2003).

Implementing new Training Packages is another core activity in the national training system and change agency assisted such implementation in the following context:

At the beginning of the project with the Challenger TAFE staff, I asked them to come up with something we needed to do better and differently, now that we had the opportunity with a new Training Package that we would deliver in 2004. After they had agreed on their problem, I asked them to think of their wish list to fix it and took the project from there. This has resulted in a different, dynamic, flexible and owned approach to the delivery of our Training Package to apprentices in WA. The group has devised an approach that they will use next year as a trial and will assess at the end of first semester. I am sure that they will make this work and their commitment to their students and their quality of training will be obvious to industry and college management (Cooper 2003).

Delivering in the workplace is also a key aspect of the national training system – and change agency assisted this development as well:

The change management activities at TAFE Tasmania have guided our Institute toward greater focus on workplace delivery with Training Packages (Miller 2003).

Some of the change agents won the support of previously recalcitrant practitioners:

A valuable side benefit has been the sharing of information on delivery and resources – plus I observe teachers who were once reluctant or directed not to share in the 1990's are now beginning to share knowledge and experiences of the classroom in the TAFE system once again in Victoria (Robertson 2003).

A focus by a change agent on one group of practitioners – Head Teachers – will assist the Head Teachers and their RTO with the implementation of the national training system. The Head Teacher group could achieve the following:

Provides leaders of educational teams with the opportunity to gain supporters for ideas, concepts or strategies that may have organisation-wide benefits. This has the potential to assist in realising the strategic objectives of the organisation, which reflect strategic objectives of the national training system (Stuart 2003).

A change agent project can help private providers to relate better to the national training system:

It was a commonly heard complaint about the AQTF when it was first introduced ... 'look what they're doing to us now'. There have also been closures of providers since the introduction of the National Training Framework (NTF) and particularly the AQTF and it is possible that this could be, at least in part, due to the lack of understanding by the Principals of their professional VET role with its requisite responsibilities.

With the advent of the NTF and the AQTF, there is a need for this lack of perception to change in order for these providers to fully identify with their integral role in the implementation of the NTF, rather than seeing it as an outside imposition (Morrow 2003).

A change agency project can also be useful for advocating the role of research within the national training system:

The goals of the project were to enhance not only the research skills of individual practitioners, but also the reputation of research per se, and to 'sell' the value of a research culture by helping the participants to see that it is not a luxury, or an activity removed from the reality of their teaching or administrative practices, but one which helps them implement the national training system, comply with the AQTF, and foster positive relationships with their external environment, including with practitioners in other local, regional and national RTOs (Blom 2003).

The 2003 internal change agents assisted the implementation of the national training system in a variety of ways, from developing relationships between providers and industry, to focusing on critical components such as assessment, to introducing new Training Packages, to focusing providers on workplace delivery. Four of the eleven change agents in 2003 operated as external change agents, working with a range of organisations, and they achieved a similar impact on the national system.

■ **What are the benefits of internal change agents in assisting VET organisations to become more client-focused?**

If internal change agents are able to assist VET organisations to become more client-focused, they are positively supporting an industry-led national training system where training providers need to be responsive to continuously shifting training demands. Following are some of their achievements in this domain.

Figure 10: How the 2003 change agents assisted organisations to become more client-focused

The aim of one change agent was to have all the stakeholders involved in her industry area 'singing from the same hymn sheet':

The focus of the workshop was to assist RTOs to become more client-focused. This was done by challenging their perceptions of terms that they used all the time such as 'industry' and 'competence'. It was interesting to me that while we all use the same terminology, we often have very different understandings of exactly what we mean by those terms. Having this discussion allowed us to clarify perceptions and ensure that we were all singing from the same hymn sheet (Del Grosso 2003).

Another change agent organised an impressive conference to bring together industry and providers:

Focusing on assessment automatically focuses on our clients. It is the students, our clients, who are the assessment candidates and it is imperative that the assessment events are fair, reliable, valid and sufficient for them to demonstrate competency.

Industry is also our client, because we are training the next generation of tourism industry personnel. This conference assisted us to profile our training practices to industry. It also allowed industry to see first hand the calibre of the training and the trainers for the tourism industry. It is my belief that industry doesn't appreciate that the people who are the tourism trainers are people who are very experienced across a range of tourism industry sectors (Johnson 2003).

In many of the change agency projects, the learner and the industry client were foremost in the minds of the project participants:

Pointing out that the whole purpose of this or any other change plan should be to benefit the client. At all presentations and workshops, the learners were kept in central focus. The repeated challenge was how would this benefit the learner? (Lawrence 2003)

The project topic that the Challenger TAFE team selected was about improving apprentice training

delivery for the Parks and Gardens, Landscape, Nursery and Turf Management streams of Horticulture. This is an area of training delivery that deals directly with industry as well as students (Cooper 2003).

For some change agents, a major impact of the project was on their RTO colleagues:

I have assisted my own delivery team to develop and implement many strategies to become more client-focused. These have included placing an emphasis on training delivery and assessment in the workplace, ensuring that training is relevant to work roles and establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with key industry organisations (Miller 2003).

The Head Teacher Capability Profile will give the organisation a better understanding of the residual expertise in the organisation. This will enable the organisation to better design and target professional development of Head Teachers. The Head Teacher professional network will facilitate sharing of information which will enhance the ability of individual teams to respond better to customers' objectives and needs (Stuart 2003).

For one private RTO change agent, client-centredness is necessary to stay in business:

The sole income for these private providers is client fees and therefore the argument most often presented has been that whilst a more client-outcome focused service is always needed to improve quality, it is generally not considered to require a change in attitude or operation - without this client focus, these RTOs would not be in business. Most RTOs in this group engage sessional presenters (professionals working in their chosen field) for the majority of their training and therefore the focus is already on relevancy to the workplace. Taking this attitude into account (be it right or wrong), I presented the focus of my project on a perspective of building the quality of your business through acknowledgement of the VET professionalism role of RTO principals and readiness to change (Morrow 2003).

This change agent from a public-sector RTO agrees that being client-centred requires VET practitioners who can continually change, to meet the changing needs of industry:

The national training system's shift to a more demand-driven paradigm means that by definition, the demands of its clients will be constantly shifting, causing the system itself to require the ability to recalibrate its offerings and mindsets on a continual basis. The national training system therefore needs to be implemented by VET professionals who are not only informed, but able to be responsive and adaptable in their approaches to delivery, to their dealings with clients and industry, etc. Having the skills to conduct their own research, rather than always waiting on the research findings of others, will equip practitioners to act as 'codifiers' as well as as 'pathfinders' (Drucker) and to be able to respond with urgency to market opportunities (Kotter) (Blom 2003).

The 2003 change agents ensured their projects assisted VET organisations to become more client-focused by a number of means: creating opportunities for providers and industry to mix and learn more about each other; improving training and assessment in the workplace; and highlighting to providers the business benefits of an improved client focus.

Final comment

This chapter considered the benefits and limitations of internal change agents and found the benefits are significant but the limitations cannot be discounted. Two limitations of internal change agents are that they are not always seen as legitimate in that role and they might find it difficult to remain objective.

Four of the eleven change agents in 2003 were 'external change' agents, in that they worked with people outside of their own organisations, so some comments about the relative merits of external change agents are appropriate at this point. Paton and McCalman (2003) suggest that the role envisaged for the external change agent complements the role of the 'internal problem owner'. The external change agent's role is as follows:

To assist in fully defining the problem; to help in determining the cause and suggesting potential solutions; to stimulate debate and broaden the horizons; and to encourage the client to learn from the experience and be ready to handle future situations internally (pp.51-52).

Paton and McCalman (2003) suggest that, ideally, both internal and external change agents be used by organisations, but the best long-term approach is to transfer skills from the external to the internal manager:

...organisations must learn to use external and internal consultants in more effective ways. Perhaps the best approach consists in the use of both...a collaborative relationship (between external and internal consultants) provides an opportunity to transfer the external consultant's skills to the client system Since the capacity for organisation development must ultimately emerge from the organisation itself (p.190).

Due to the complexity of VET and the multitude of different organisations operating within it, there will always be a need for both external and internal change agents, but the major focus needs to stay on internal change agents.

Can a VET practitioner learn to be an internal change agent?

- **This chapter discusses** whether it is possible for a VET practitioner to learn to be an internal change agent, taking into account the findings from this report about the many skills and the breadth of knowledge needed by change agents.

■ Key points

Key points raised in the chapter include the following:

- It is possible for VET practitioners to learn the theoretical skills of change agency, but they also need faith in their own abilities and, ideally, a supportive organisation.
- The 2003 change agents demonstrated that it is possible to acquire the skills and knowledge of a change agent, but in many cases they had some existing skills and knowledge that were relevant to the role.
- The capabilities of all the participants improved during the 2003 sub-program and a common experience was their development of increased consciousness about their ability to function effectively as change agents.
- The learning of the 2003 change agents was aided by immersion in a structured program which included interaction with other change agents. The structured sub-program also challenged them to consider new ideas and to compare the theory of change with their own experiences as change agents.

■ Conflicting viewpoints

There are different points of view about whether it is possible for every manager or their delegate to become a change agent. At its commencement in mid-2003, the Reframing the Future sub-program on change agents was constructed around a number of assumptions made by Hayes (2002) and other commentators, including that managers or their delegates can learn to manage change more effectively:

Two assumptions underpinning the approach to managing change adopted in this book are (1) managers can make a difference, and (2) they can be trained to manage change more effectively. Effective change managers require (and can be helped to acquire),

- Conceptual models and action tools/interventions;
- Change management skills; and
- Confidence in their own ability to make a difference (Hayes 2002, p.18).

However, these assumptions are not universally accepted. For instance, some theorists argue that, as managers gain experience, they become rigid in that they 'form quite definite opinions of what works and why' (Miller 1993 in Burnes 2000, p.500). Another point of

view is offered by Agyris (in Burnes, p.504) who believes that managers need to experience failure or recognise the inappropriateness of their approaches before they can begin questioning their assumptions and practices, and develop their ability to be critical and creative – an ability that is fundamental for change agents. On the other hand, Burnes finds that some managers are capable of restructuring their mental models of how the world is and how they would respond (p.500).

Hayes (2002) considers that it might be possible for change agents to learn the theoretical skills of change agency, but they also need faith in their own abilities:

Some managers may have the conceptual knowledge and required skills to equip them to intervene and make a difference, but they may fail to act because they have insufficient faith in their own ability to affect outcomes (p.20).

Confidence is essential for change managers:

If they do not have any confidence in their own ability to manage the change and achieve any improvements they will not try to exercise influence (p.21).

Burnes (p.502) believes that it is possible to learn the skills of change agency, but the individuals may have little or no impact, because of blockage by the organisation. Some managers can increase their level of creativity and leadership, but their organisations can block such growth. He warns that it is insufficient to develop managers ‘if the organisation as a whole – people, values and systems – does not also change, or perceive the need for change’ (p.504). One of the 2003 change agents agreed:

... change management around particular issues within organisations may not be enough to transform VET. More radical, systemic change approaches are also part of the answer (Lawrence 2003).

The evidence provided in this report might suggest to some readers that every VET practitioner can become a change agent, but that would be a misunderstanding of the findings from this pilot activity. It is important to note that the 2003 change agents are not a representative group of VET practitioners, so their success as documented in this report needs to be seen in context and not used as an argument that any manager can learn to be a change agent. As the 2003 sub-program on change agency was a pilot program, the participants were selected according to a number of criteria: one from each State and Territory, if possible; a mix of public and private providers; and a mix of people within RTOs and outside of RTOs (e.g. ITABs). But all the 2003 change agents were seen as modelling – before the sub-program was launched – some of the skills and knowledge required of a change agent.

The rationale for selecting people with some existing skills of a change agent was as follows: as it was a pilot activity, it was considered inappropriate to put any participant at risk of failure due to insufficient prior learning; there was an acceptance within Reframing the Future that change agency is a difficult field, so it is wise to fund staff who have a sound base from which to learn additional skills; the time frame available from July–November 2003 was too short a time for personnel to start from scratch as it was known from the literature that change agents require many skills; and Reframing the Future wanted to obtain from the 2003 pilot examples of good practice to guide subsequent VET change agents.

The 2003 pilot program does not prove that every VET manager or his/her delegate can learn to be a change agent. It does prove that VET practitioners with some existing skills and knowledge in change agency can significantly increase their skills and knowledge, after being immersed in a structured, supportive program for change agents. This finding is validated by the comments in Figure 11 below.

■ How else did the 2003 change agents' capabilities increase as a result of involvement in this program?

Previous chapters of this report included commentary about how the 2003 change agents increased their skills and knowledge, for instance, in diplomacy, in addressing resistance and in enhancing client focus. Change agents also became more aware of their models for how organisations function; they developed improved skills in diagnosis and data collection; and they refined their process models for how change can be managed.

The additional comments below show that participants in the 2003 change agent sub-program consider that their capabilities increased during the program.

Figure 11: How the 2003 change agents increased their capabilities

Some change agents learnt about the nature of change and developed new confidence in their abilities:

Knowledge of the underpinning theories of change management has promoted analysis of situations and a more thoughtful and strategic approach to dealing with them. My confidence has grown as a result of learning that this is not a simple business, it takes time, there are ups and downs along the way and attributes like putting on a brave face, resilience and commitment are required (Davies 2003).

I think that this program has helped me to realise my capacity as a change agent – a fact that I had previously ignored. I think that there are many people within the VET sector that have the skills needed and the capability to be a change agent, but probably have been carrying out this role without any real awareness that this has been a critical role that they have played within the sector (Del Grosso 2003).

Better understanding of the dynamics of change in individual teams and an increased appreciation of the importance of the values, attributes and capabilities of individual members of delivery teams (Stuart 2003).

Increased consciousness is a common finding among the 2003 change agents:

I am much more aware of what is going on than I formerly was. I reflect on what is happening around me and try to understand what the reactions are of those with whom I come into contact and on whom the change will mostly impact (Johnson 2003).

This project has had quite a different feel for me. As I now think of myself as a Change Agent, rather than as just a project manager running a project that happens to facilitate change. This change in mindset has meant that I have been conscious of my change management strategies and reflected on the change processes at regular stages of the project. Although I have allowed the projects meetings and topics to be fluid, I have kept a close eye on progress and been very aware of the need for my encouragement, reminders, meeting organisation, facilitation, understanding of psychology and group dynamics and supply of lunch (Cooper 2003).

A different understanding of one's identity was the main outcome for another participant: 'it is largely the development of the ability to conceptualise myself as a change agent that has been enhanced' (Blom 2003).

The ability to reflect at a deeper level is another outcome for some change agents:

Reflection has become part of my everyday working life – it knows no boundaries! This project has focused that reflection and legitimised my passion for what we do in TAFE – and probably given me a bit of courage to go that bit further when no-one else seems to want to. I have yet to develop the courage to name the bullies who cultivate the negative culture rather than let them enjoy their current anonymity (Robertson 2003).

Through this program I have become more aware of change models and their application in training reform and have gained an understanding of the issues behind resistance to change. I have developed my capacity to reflect on change issues such as the role and qualities of change agents and learnt new strategies to facilitate change (Miller 2003).

An understanding about links between change management and knowledge management was a development for one change agent:

Understanding that there should be a close relationship between change management and knowledge management, if the explicit, implicit and tacit knowledge generated by the change process is to be retained in the organisation for sustainability, and as a foundation for subsequent changes (Lawrence 2004).

The capabilities of all the participants improved during the 2003 sub-program and a common experience was their development of increased consciousness about their ability to function effectively as change agents. And with consciousness came confidence.

■ **What most helped the 2003 change agents to increase their skills as a change agent?**

In designing the sub-program in 2003, it was assumed that individuals will vary in the way they prefer to develop their skills and knowledge, but it was assumed that all change agents need to have a theoretical framework for understanding what can be changed and how it can be changed. It was also assumed that change agents will benefit from a methodology where they are immersed in the process of change agency and learn through planning, action and reflection. The sub-program was also designed so that each change agent would interact with the other ten change agents. Set out below are the views of the 2003 change agents about what most helped them learn and which validate the assumptions underpinning the design of the sub-program.

Figure 12: What most helped the 2003 change agents learn about the role

Many of the change agents benefited from interaction with the other change agents. Typical comments were:

The biggest influence by far has been the enthusiasm and sharing of experiences of the other change agents in the pilot project. I have learnt that we are all working in a constantly changing environment and that we all face challenges. I have particularly enjoyed realising that we share underpinning values about providing a good service to our clients and making the most of people's strengths (Davies 2003).

I have found that being part of a group especially focused on the role of the Change Agent has been inspirational. What a dynamic and positive group of people. Just being around them is enough to inspire you with new ideas to try. It has also been comforting to know that there has been support from Reframing the Future management as well as the other Change Agents if it was needed (Cooper 2003).

Responding to and chatting with other change agents on topics posted on the Reframing the Future web forum and also face to face at Change Agent workshops helped me. Their explanations of their own projects and approaches sparked possibilities and actions for my own (Lawrence 2003).

Some change agents became very aware during the sub-program that they had pre-existing skills and knowledge and that the sub-program gave them more confidence to use them:

...recognition of the skills needed to be a change agent, and aligning my skills and experiences with these skills and developing the confidence to believe in my ability to instigate change. During this program I've also understood change, not only from a rational viewpoint, but from the emotional viewpoint as well and I believe that the emotional – the vision and passion to change – are important elements of any change agent (Del Grosso 2003).

I am much more aware of what is going on than I formerly was. I reflect on what is happening around me and try to understand what the reactions are of those with whom I come into contact and on whom the change will mostly impact (Johnson 2003).

I believe that many of us had tacit knowledge and intuitive skills in this domain prior to this pilot program (and that belief is supported by anecdotal evidence from several of my peers) but that it has been participation in this program that has made that knowledge and those skills explicit and foregrounded them in our daily practice (Blom 2003).

I used the skills that I had been developing in my project on other groups that I work with, i.e. the wider ACPET community, and found that my skills had been developing to the extent that I achieved a change within the ACPET community that I had been working on for the last two years. It was a positive change and was achieved due to using the change agent skills I had been developing throughout the year (Morrow 2003).

Some change agents felt that the sub-program stretched them to try new approaches:

This project has put me in touch with ideas about change management and leadership in the change process. My awareness of these ideas has led me to try new approaches and to be more flexible in my project facilitation style. I have challenged myself with this project and have extended my skills as a result (Cooper 2003).

The following change agent learnt from being forced to express her values:

To unapologetically and repeatedly state my set of values. It's been good protection when the going's got tough. I think it's built my credibility as a leader but only time will tell (Robertson 2003).

Some change agents found it a new but important experience to focus on themselves:

The Change Agents project itself has made me reflect on the nature and certainty of change within the VET Sector. I have managed and facilitated a number of projects in the past and, until now, have not assessed my own management style or facilitation skills and performance (Cooper 2003).

...being named a change agent was probably the single most influential factor in my skills development in this area (Blom 2003).

The mix of theory and practice impacted positively on all the change agents.

Comments included:

The underpinning knowledge from the briefing sessions supported by the range of readings undertaken on Change Management theory certainly were the key factors in developing my skills. I think also that once I was identified as a change agent and given the opportunity by my organisation to perform in this role then my skills and confidence developed further (Miller 2003).

Understanding the theory behind my actions and using this theory to direct my actions in a more purposeful manner. Being able to take the time needed to research and gain an understanding of the deliberate rather than accidental use of strategies to implement change. With an understanding of the different approaches that are available to change managers, I can now choose the most appropriate approach and will have more likelihood of success (Morrow 2003).

The other influential activity has of course been the exposure to change theory which the project has enabled. Reading the literature gave structure to my own reflections on the process of influencing change, and enabled me to conceptualise it in ways that previous 'making things happen' had not. Noting that there are several schools of thought about change and its management prompted me to strike an independent path between these established views (Blom 2003).

Some of the change agents undertook reflection together with a group of colleagues while some were reflective on their own:

I continued to read widely on change management, and issues related to it, e.g. leadership, communication, organisational culture. This was made more interesting and productive by members of my work team, particularly the Research Officer and my Director, sharing articles, web sites and reference books and also sharing our thoughts stimulated by the material (Lawrence 2003).

I engaged in personal research to better understand the philosophies and processes associated with change management and why it needs an appointed person – a change agent – to make a difference. Having a better understanding of the role and challenges facing a change agent has enabled me to achieve greater outcomes in all areas in which I wish to achieve change (Morrow 2003).

One change agent learnt from a variety of sources and activities, including the following:

More reading of theories. Getting clarified understanding of possible approaches and keeping a journal of main theory points, responses to them, how they could be used in practice, and re-reading this periodically.

Discussions with my team, directors and colleagues. Talking through ideas and exposing them to other's critical examination, clarified own ideas through having to explain. Conversation is sometimes seen as frivolous and not a legitimate part of work, but I found it an essential one.

Reflecting through deliberately stepping back at times and adopting some distance from the change activity, to consider what was happening, the process itself, how well it was working, and needed adjustment to reach goals (Lawrence 2003).

Some change agents learnt from the people they were assisting to change:

As a result of the project I have developed a better understanding of the range and complexity of the specific change management issues being faced by other educational delivery teams in the Institute. Through the project, a better understanding of how other Head Teachers are dealing with the move from TAFE as a closed system to one which interacts more with its external environment (Stuart 2003).

The 2003 change agents demonstrated that it is possible to learn the skills and knowledge of a change agent – given the following favourable conditions. Their learning was aided by immersion in a structured program which included interaction with other change agents. The structured sub-program also challenged them to consider new ideas. They were even more open to learning when they became aware that they had some existing skills and knowledge in change agency. Being encouraged to focus on themselves as change agents was also helpful to their learning. All the change agents benefited from a consideration of the theory of change compared to their experiences as change agents.

What are your future plans to further increase your skills as a change agent?

Another assumption behind the sub-program was that the 2003 change agents would continue to improve and use their skills as change agents in the VET sector. Following are some of the plans for the future of the participants in the sub-program.

Figure 13: How the 2003 change agents intend to use their skills in future

All of the change agents were convinced that they would continue to use their new or improved skills. For example:

When I return from a year travelling overseas I'm going to continue to refine the model and use the skills that I have gained to find a role in the business of cultural change (Davies 2003).

I think that for me the future will be about refining skills rather than increasing skills. This will occur with the opportunities to practise in the role of change agent in a variety of different projects. I am very fortunate that through TDT Australia I have been provided with opportunities in the past and envisage that these opportunities to practise these skills will continue into the future (Del Grosso 2003).

I will continue to manage and facilitate projects within TAFE. Every project and project team are different and I feel that I can be more confident with a flexible approach to these projects (Cooper 2003).

*My future plans are to continue practising these skills and I would like to encourage others to become involved so that my role in **convincing people that change is a good thing and we should encourage our readiness for it** will not be so hard (Morrow 2003).*

In the future, I plan to apply and extend the learning from this project, to continue to read in the field, and to take on new challenges (Blom 2003).

Some of the change agents saw themselves continuing to delve into the theory and continuing to practise. For example:

I intend to continue my research to further develop my understanding of change management and the techniques involved to facilitate the smooth transition of change in the workplace. Each year I try to address a particular issue which often requires a change in practice and or attitudes. I will continue to do this. However, with the underpinning knowledge of change management I am better equipped to ensure a smoother transition for my staff and students alike (Johnson 2003).

Continue reading and discussion, as there's a need to continually re-invest in being a change agent, being aware of VET issues and environments. An uninformed change doesn't seem particularly useful. Ongoing involvement in strategy-making and strategic planning to understand where change management can be critically directed (Lawrence 2003).

I will continue in my role as facilitator of the workplace learning community of practice at TAFE Tasmania. This provides a great opportunity to further develop my change agent skills. Also there are several new industry partnerships being established by my delivery team and there is potential to act as a change agent as these partnerships are developed. The other method will be through continued readings on change management and following discussion forums such as the on-line forum on the Reframing the Future site. This will continue to broaden my experience and understanding of the ways in which change agents can act (Miller 2003).

A number of change agents saw themselves continuing with the change project that commenced in 2003. For example:

Continued work on facilitating Head Teacher professional network within the organisation. Complete proposal to deliver some activities associated with Head Teacher development in the eLearning environment. This would represent significant cost savings in accommodation, travel and teacher replacement. It would also encourage Head Teachers to experience this medium and in so doing consider its application in their context. Also in delivering in this way, we are providing our internal clients with more flexibility in the way they engage in ongoing professional development (Stuart 2003).

One benefit of the structured sub-program provided by Reframing the Future in 2003 was that it gave the participants confidence to continue using the skills after the sub-program concluded. Participants intend to continue to read in the field of change agency, to manage change projects and to encourage others to learn about the role of the change agent.

■ Conclusion

Key findings from this evaluation of the Reframing the Future sub-program are that being a change agent requires a raft of skills and knowledge, but it is possible for some VET practitioners to acquire these skills if they have some pre-existing and relevant skills and they participate in a structured program.

This report shows that change agents need to draw on experience and judgement and a wide repertoire of skills. Corresponding with the way the 2003 change agents functioned, Buchanan and Badham (2000) note that professionals often base their decisions on the following – a combination of knowledge and conceptualisation of the context, managerial judgement and creativity. Buchanan and Badham believe that professional practice is ‘improvisatory, and is sometimes experimental’ (p.207), which also fits with the way the 2003 VET change agents needed to function. Buchanan and Badham also believe that, to continue to grow, the change agent needs to be a reflective practitioner:

The reflective practitioner is also self-conscious, self-aware and self-critical, learning from experience – and from mistakes when necessary (p.207).

This report captures the reflections of the 2003 change agents and how they learnt from experience and, sometimes, from their mistakes. Their willingness to share their learning via this report will hopefully benefit the VET sector.

Profiles of the 2003 Change Agents – in their own words

- **The following profiles** are taken directly from written reports prepared by the change agents during the pilot program in 2003.

The profiles provide a snapshot of each of the eleven change agents and their very different contexts, challenges, strategies and capability development.

As all of the change agents are happy to be contacted – except one who will be overseas – email addresses are cited below.

Chris Cooper

Principal Lecturer, Challenger TAFE, WA
CoopeC@murdoch.training.wa.gov.au

Context	This project has introduced the new Horticulture Training Package to project teams in two WA TAFE colleges. Both teams are working on the Training Package implementation for 2004.
Challenges	<p>The change management challenges that they have been given are to design implementation processes that ensure that they don't just follow the model used for the existing Training Package.</p> <p>The second change management challenge is attitudinal. The participants for this project have been selected to cover a range of occupations at the campuses. They have different roles in the Training Package implementation and don't always appreciate each other's viewpoints.</p> <p>The teaching staff members are also undergoing an attitudinal change. These subject specialists are now involved with a project that requires them to understand the bigger picture.</p>
Strategies	To form the project team at my own campus, I approached people on an individual basis, both to enlist them as project members and also to remind them of meetings and any special tasks that they are to do. I have made the judgement that with these particular people, this is the best approach. The meetings have been quite straight forward, but I have taken particular care to praise people with ideas and encourage team thinking.
Capability development	<p>I am finding that I am now more aware of how I am managing and facilitating my projects. I have deliberately selected some of the more resistant and difficult people to include in the project team, and also brought together people who don't normally work together. This means that I have to develop strategies for dealing with them all both as individuals and as team members. I have had to fine-tune my interpersonal, listening, negotiation and planning skills at each step.</p> <p>I am now aware of the different change management models and feel more confident to experiment with my project style for different groups.</p>

Cinthia Del Grosso

National Project Manager, TDT Australia, VIC/national
cinthia@tdtaustralia.com

Context	<p>RTOs do not generally recognise that they service three very different client markets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. the Industry/Enterprise and their workforce2. individual clients who want to upgrade qualifications and3. individual clients preparing for the world of work. <p>Without a clear understanding of each group and group needs and expectations, they cannot properly prepare to meet those needs.</p> <p>The introduction to the planned workshop will deal with this concept and position the participant to consider the needs of each, but particularly, the Industry/Enterprise client.</p>
Challenges	<p>The major change management challenge that I have addressed to date is the realisation that with this workshop I am trying to marry the Industry perspective with the VET industry perspective. These are very different. The core business of Transport is transporting and storing goods, however for the VET Industry, the core business is training. They each work in very different realms and have very different expectations of 'training'.</p> <p>Another challenge has been the recognition that not all RTOs will require/want this workshop. The reality is that there are some very good RTOs, just as there are the Dodgy Bros Inc. of the world. In targeting the workshop, work will be undertaken with the State ITAB to identify which RTOs are the ones that want to meet their clients needs, but are falling short and haven't been able to identify why.</p>
Strategies	<p>The activities to date have involved consultation with corporate training managers to identify what companies are looking for when selecting an RTO. What has become evident is that in some cases, companies themselves need some assistance to articulate exactly what they want/need and what is realistically possible.</p> <p>The bar that they set is usually quite high and comes predominantly from a business perspective, not an educational perspective. I have also consulted with some RTOs regarding how they find out about industry needs and found that generally they were very limited in the way they sourced info.</p>
Capability development	<p>I feel that working through the process and focusing on what I am trying to achieve is giving me the confidence to believe that I am capable of 'making a difference'. I recognise that to do this will require the use of a lot of skills, beyond planning – the 'soft skills' of communication, interpersonal skills, facilitation skills and so on. I feel confident that I can handle whatever circumstances should arise.</p>

Chris Steele

Senior Project Officer, South Australian Public Service, SA
steele.chris@saugov.sa.gov.au

Context	<p>Feedback from our clients indicates a level of dissatisfaction among a significant number of those who have attended training workshops. This dissatisfaction stems from the workshop content not being relevant enough, or the pitch of the material being too high or low for the learner to make a reasonable connection.</p> <p>To address this urgent need, a computerised program called a Workshop Generator is being constructed and implemented, with input from all stakeholders.</p>
Challenges	<p>Change management challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• making workshop training more relevant to increase client satisfaction• encouraging relationship-building between industry and its trainers• engaging managers in the workplace to select the range of variables for workshop training• designing a self assessment mechanism for learners to indicate current competence levels• using diplomacy to prevent hijacking of the project to suit other agendas.

Strategies	<p>I convened a think tank for VET practitioners and industry; conducted one-on-one or small group improvement discussions; and designed, developed and field-tested customised software.</p> <p>The only slight resistance was from one trainer who humorously questioned if her preference for drawing up her own manual training plans would make her redundant. There is no evidence of resistance due to self interest, fear of the unknown, differing perceptions, suspicions or conservatism.</p>
Capability development	<p>As a result of the project, I have developed new relationships as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with other change agents, to develop a national collaborative approach • with skilled and passionate industry representatives wanting more relevant training • with interested and committed training providers interested in improving client focus • with IT companies on the design and building of web-based software tools.

Gillian Robertson

Education Manager, Gordon Institute, VIC
 gillianr@gordontafe.edu.au

Context	Ongoing changes associated with the implementation of the National Training System continue to take people out of their comfort zone which results in behaviours that are challenging, often not particularly productive and at times somewhat divisive.
Challenges	<p>A major challenge is resistance to change by TAFE staff in the more mature age range who have only been with TAFE for, say, three years. In response, I have encouraged the establishment of and participation in subject and client based networks by VET professionals in the Business and Management Studies School.</p> <p>A measure of the success of this strategy will be the monitoring of outcomes of a specific, credible team within our Institute who have developed a sense of urgency, are viewed as change agents by their peers, and who identify subject based networks as a 'change opportunity'.</p> <p>It is also challenging to be a VET change agent and to combine this with my union role as President of the Gordon's AEU sub-branch.</p>
Strategies	<p>I have organised a statewide course network professional development for all administrative studies teachers, including this School's teaching team. I have also linked to a community of practice project in the administrative studies course area.</p> <p>Part of my strategy to reduce the resistance to change is to work initially with staff who are keen to 'make things better', and to incorporate the work of our newly appointed School Curriculum Officer with this project and whose work is task oriented toward better implementation of Training Packages. Another strategy is to encourage participants to establish their own rationale and ownership of the proposed outcomes within the guidelines of what's required, and hopefully this will encourage cultural change somewhat too.</p>
Capability development	This is the hardest project and role that I have undertaken. My negotiation skills have been honed even more so! My default to reflection has been of value and I tend to not personalise work issues as much anymore. I am learning to look at the situation and the problem from a distance, rather than allowing myself to become involved in the dynamics of the group.

Greg Stuart

Head Teacher Agriculture, TAFE NSW North Coast Institute, NSW
 greg.stuart@tafensw.edu.au

Context	The research I have undertaken as part of this project has clearly identified that many head teachers are not part of an effective professional network which leverages their experience and expertise. There are many seriously isolated head teachers in this regional organisation.
----------------	--

Challenges	<p>Head Teachers understand the imperatives that fall out from both external changes and subsequent internal organisational changes, but they are concerned that they may not have all of the capabilities required for their new work context.</p> <p>The next challenge therefore is to determine existing capabilities with respect to the management of change in the new Head Teacher work context. Any gap in these capabilities can then be addressed through a North Coast Institute TAFE human resource strategic plan – and in so doing improve our customer focus which is an imperative for the whole VET sector.</p>
Strategies	<p>Self assessment tools have been developed which will be used by Head Teachers to self assess their capabilities with respect to their new role. The capabilities that will be analysed in the self assessment include change management, customer focus, establishing focus, setting direction.</p>
Capability development	<p>The project has given me the opportunity to better understand the models for change management and a greater appreciation of the appropriateness of particular models in certain situations. It has also given me a better understanding of the dynamic nature of change. Given this I have found that strategies for managing change often evolve – given team leaders and their teams are evolving.</p>

Kaaren Blom

Senior Researcher, CIT-CURVE, ACT

kaaren.blom@act.gov.au

Context	<p>The national training system's shift to a more demand-driven paradigm means that by definition, the demands of its clients will be constantly shifting, causing the system itself to require the ability to re-calibrate its offerings and mindsets on a continual basis. The national training system therefore needs to be implemented by VET professionals who are not only informed, but able to be responsive and adaptable in their approaches to delivery, to their dealings with clients and industry, etc. Having the skills to conduct their own research, rather than always waiting on the research findings of others, will equip practitioners to act as 'codifiers' as well as as 'pathfinders' (Drucker) and to be able to respond with urgency to market opportunities (Kotter).</p>
Challenges	<p>Realising that perhaps I've committed Kotter's error of thinking I could start at Stage 5 (empowering broad-based action).</p> <p>Knowing that the outcomes will only begin to be apparent to others in the organisation long after this pilot project has finished. I see these three research projects as potential 'short term wins' that will build credibility (Kotter again!), but which will be but the nucleus of a longer-running program.</p> <p>Finally, the main challenge for me has been in seeing myself (accepting responsibility) as the change agent, not merely as the facilitator of others' change agency.</p>
Strategies	<p>I re-thought two of my previously planned activities – the two joint sessions with the practitioner-researchers. Once I saw that it was my role as change agent that I had to focus on (and that the participants' roles and needs were different to that) it no longer seemed appropriate. Their needs as practitioner-researchers are better met by one-on-one mentoring or by my being a critical friend to their activity, rather than by my prescribing how they might go about it. (This is a shift away from managing, towards leading.)</p>
Capability development	<p>I see my role as being to engineer a 'charismatic transformation' (Stace and Dunphy) in the Institute's relationship to VET research – to bring about a cultural value shift that moves practitioners from seeing themselves (at best) as passive consumers of research, to seeing themselves as politically smart designers/generators/conductors of strategic research. In the domain of VET research, this re-positions research as demand-driven rather than supply-driven, paralleling the same shift that is taking place in educational provision.</p>

Laurie Miller

Team Leader Horticulture, Institute of TAFE Tasmania
laurie.miller@tafe.tas.edu.au

Context	All activities have been focused on effective delivery of Training Packages through mutually beneficial partnerships between RTO and industry. The project will promote industry relevance of the competencies delivered and encourage teachers to assess their own delivery and assessment strategies against some best practice models.
Challenges	<p>I have examined the changes required to shift delivery of training from an RTO-based to an industry/partnership-based program. I have explored models of delivery partnerships that provide benefits to both the RTO and the industry partner.</p> <p>I have been participating in the process of changing attitudes and approaches to training in the Institute of TAFE Tasmania and the VET sector of the Education Department through several forums.</p>
Strategies	<p>The most significant activities have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) a workshop at Tasmania's Botanical Gardens on the benefits/problems and change process in developing training partnerships. We also explored strategies to improve the partnership and overcome resistance to change. This has been followed by interviews with key individuals in the organisation.(b) Participating in the TAFE Tasmania 'Learning Coalition' and initiating a 'Workplace Learning' Community of Practice and then forming strategies on how to provide a great learning experience for students.(c) Guest speaker and workshop participant at AEU state conference on effective change management.(d) Participated in a workshop with the Executive management group of the Education Department on strategies for changing delivery in the VET sector.
Capability development	<p>I have become more aware of change models and their application in training reform.</p> <p>I have learnt new strategies to facilitate change.</p> <p>I have gained an understanding of the issues behind resistance to change.</p> <p>I have developed my capacity to reflect on change issues such as the role and qualities of change agents.</p>

Sandra Lawrence

Manager Research and Innovation, Brisbane North Institute of TAFE, QLD
Sandra.Lawrence@det.qld.gov.au

Context	Some practitioners who have a sound theoretical understanding, lack confidence in their assessor role, and are concerned about issues like the level of risk and personal professional exposure around assessment. As a corollary, some who are quite confident in the appropriateness of their assessment practices have a limited view of the range of evidence gathering possible and the components of competence that ought to be included
Challenges	'Infotress', in others, and myself has been a noticeable difficulty. Because of the vast amount of information available, the temptation is to forever seek it out, but not to factor in enough time to digest it, reflect and take what is most valuable and build it into the change process. It takes conscious discipline to stop searching and start processing information in a meaningful way.
Strategies	After revisiting employability/generic skills and the most recently published reports, I adapted the approach to workplace simulation to include an updated view of them. The workshop material includes a summary of the debate around them, the link between employability and generic skills and their differences and commonalities. I advise that there is still no common approach to learning and assessment around employability skills but this is no reason not to tackle them.

Capability development	After being part of an organisation for a long time, one can tend to rely on gut feelings about issues, because gut feeling is really distilled experience, knowledge of organisational history, and mature networks. However being a change agent reinforces the need to keep expanding this with new information and influences.
-------------------------------	--

Sharon Johnson

Head Teacher Travel and Tourism, NSW TAFE Southern Sydney Institute, NSW
 sharon.a.johnson@tafensw.edu.au

Context	Some members of the team have embraced the idea of improved assessment procedures and see value in the assessment validation process; see value in the benchmarking against industry practice; but don't see a need to change their attitude of assessment as 'gathering evidence to determine competency'; and see the only real measure of competency is determined by an examination of knowledge, rather than gathering evidence to determine attitudes, skills and knowledge.
Challenges	It is imperative that we act immediately and continuously and recognise that not everyone will be on the journey. We need to include both early adopters and resisters on the team and ensure collaboration along the way to give everyone a stake in the change process and the improved results.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. staff meetings with small groups of the team. 2. questioned tourism sections across NSW regarding the assessment processes they use within a simulated tourism office 3. gathered industry evidence for the benchmarking process 4. organised a conference in November 2003 for TAFE Tourism trainers across NSW to present ideas on gathering evidence to determine competency and focusing on the clients in the classroom. <p>The benchmarking against industry practice is an ongoing process, with relationships with industry being established on a more formal basis. We are actually demonstrating to industry that 'Tourism is Our Industry' and that our graduates are 'your future'. Industry representatives are impressed and somewhat surprised at the calibre and quality of the tourism trainers in TAFE.</p>
Capability development	I am gaining a greater understanding of the theory behind change management. I am seeing a different view of myself and my capacity as a manager – as one who initiates change and constantly reviews procedures looking for improvements.

Wendy Davies

Previously - Project Manager, Manufacturing Learning Australia, VIC/national
 Email not available, due to change in employment.

Context	Underpinning the work of an ITAB is a myriad of activities ranging from providing advice to companies about the packaging rules of a Training Package to creating partnership arrangements between industry sectors and RTOs to providing input into Federal government strategic initiatives such as Action Agendas and the Senate inquiry into skills shortages.
Challenges	The greatest resistance to change encountered is the change from curriculum based courses to Training Packages by RTOs. This is due to lack of understanding that a Training Package is an assessment document, lack of understanding of what competency is and lack of understanding of the advantages of Training Packages such as flexibility and ability to tailor training to meet a company's needs.
Strategies	I have explained the packaging rules of a Training Package to assist companies to match their own standard operating procedures and job roles against nationally accredited qualifications. I have encouraged partnership arrangements between companies and RTOs to promote the uptake of nationally accredited qualifications. I have provided input on behalf of industry into strategic initiatives to promote the training needs of industry.

Capability development

Knowledge of the underpinning theories of change management has promoted analysis of situations and a more thoughtful and strategic approach to dealing with them. Confidence has grown as a result of learning that this is not a simple business, it takes time, there are ups and downs along the way and attributes like putting on a brave face, resilience and commitment are required.

Wendy Morrow

Director Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) SA and Principal, SA College of Natural & Traditional Medicine
college@chariot.net.au

Context

There is still a feeling that ‘the Training Package has been in for a while now, I have been through my audit and passed, so I’m OK.’ That is, a change from a previous state to a new state has been achieved and that is considered sufficient.

Challenges

These providers were not eager to engage in change management per se. Therefore, my biggest challenge has been to create willingness for change, then creating a vision for change and gaining political support. By working on providers separately, I have seen a change in attitude towards change management in individuals.

The idea of focusing on preparing for change is not generally considered important. It should be noted here that the principals of most providers have come from their profession with a desire to teach others their passion. These people have developed into RTOs from this origin and therefore have brought with them a limited understanding of their professional VET role. There is a lack of perception of change management as an ‘education and training issue’: it is seen as a business management issue.

Strategies

I have had telephone meetings with nine providers and face-to-face meetings with two providers and a face-to-face group meeting with the South Australian providers. Following this face-to-face meeting, I followed up with individual meetings and group meetings, whichever the participants wanted. I also held meetings with New South Wales and Victorian providers.

Capability development

Having a better understanding of the role and challenges facing a change agent has enabled me to achieve greater outcomes in all areas in which I wish to achieve change.

I am by my nature a type of generic change agent, whether this is because of a defined role within a project or the motive behind my actions in general. The difference is that now I have an understanding of what drives me and I have structure for my desires.

■ **After reviewing** the literature on change agents, the following research questions were developed:

- Why are internal change agents needed in VET?
- What diagnostic models for change agency are available?
- What process models for change agency are available?
- What other skills and knowledge are needed by internal change agents?
- What are the potential benefits and limitations of internal change agents?
- Can a VET practitioner learn to be a change agent?

To obtain data in response to these questions, the research methods included the following:

- observations at national forums convened for the change agents at the start of the project, at the mid-way point and at the conclusion;
- informal discussions with the change agents;
- reviews of the participants' action plans, mid-term progress reports and final reports;
- three telephone interviews with each participant;
- and facilitating and monitoring of two web forums.

A participative evaluation methodology was used to conduct the evaluation. Following Parlett and Hamilton (1975), participative evaluation aims primarily to illuminate the processes and settings for the benefit of the participants in the pilot change agent projects and to assist the Reframing the Future National Project Director, Susan Young, to optimise the possible benefits for the personnel undertaking the pilot projects. This illumination was achieved by focusing on the projects as a whole: their different contexts, challenges, processes, difficulties and achievements experienced by the change agents. The participative evaluator John Mitchell set out to understand and describe the complex interplay of factors affecting each pilot project and to feed this analysis back to the National Project Director and to the change agents.

This participative approach provides assistance during the course of the projects and is in contrast to most managerial evaluations where the evaluator is detached from the participants and only gives feedback to the funding body, mostly at the conclusion of the project.

References

- Blom, K. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', CIT-CURVE, ACT
- Buchanan, D. A. and Badham, R. (2000), *Power, Politics and Organisational Change*, Sage Publications, London
- Buchanan, D.A. and Boddy, D. (1992), *The Expertise of the Change Agent*, Prentice Hall, London
- Burnes, B. (2000), *Managing Change. A Strategic Approach to Organisational Dynamics*. Pitman Publishing, London
- Business Council of Australia (BCA), a report by World Competitive Practices Pty Ltd (2000), *Managerial leadership in the workplace*, Melbourne
- Callan, V. J. (2001), *What are the essential capabilities for those who manage training organisations?*, NCVET, Leabrook
- Collins, C. (2003), *Organisational Change. Sociological Perspectives*, Routledge, London and New York
- Cooper, C. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', Challenger TAFE, WA
- Cummings T. G. and Worley, C. G. (1997), *Organisation Development and Change, 6th Ed.*, South Western, Ohio
- Davies, W. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', Manufacturing Learning Australia, VIC
- Del Grosso, C. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', TDT Australia, VIC
- Hayes, J. (2002), *The Theory and Practice of Change Management*, Palgrave, Wiltshire
- Hayes, J. and Hyde, P. (1998), *Managing the Merger, A Change Management Simulation*, Novi, Michigan
- Johnson, S. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', NSW TAFE Southern Sydney Institute, NSW
- Kanter, R. M. (1983), *The Change Masters: Corporate Entrepreneurs at Work*, Thomson, New York
- Kanter, R. M. (1989), *When Giants Learn to Dance: Mastering the Challenges of Strategy, Management and Career in the 1990s*, Unwin Hyman, London
- King, M. and Anderson, N. (2002), *Managing Innovation and Change*, Thomson, Sydney
- Kotter, J. P. (1996), *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston
- Kotter, J. P. (1999), *John P. Kotter on What Leaders Really Do*, a Harvard Business Review Book, Boston
- Lawrence, S. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', Brisbane North Institute of TAFE, QLD

- Lewin, K. (1951), *Field Theory in Social Science*, Harper and Rowe, New York
- Miller, L. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', Institute of TAFE, Tasmania, TAS
- Mitchell, J. G. (2002), *The Never-Ending Quest: Effective Strategy-making and change management for high-performing VET organisations*, ANTA, Melbourne
- Mitchell, J. G. (2003), *Strategy-making in Turbulent Times*, ANTA, Melbourne
- Mitchell, J. G. and Young, S. (2001), *High-skilled high-performing VET*, ANTA, Melbourne
- Mitchell, J. G. and Young, S. (2003), *Change Agents and the National Training System: Core Ideas*, ANTA, Melbourne
- Morgan, G. (1997), *Images of Organisations*, Sage Publications, California
- Morrow, W. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', Australian Council for Private Education and Training SA; SA College of Natural & Traditional Medicine
- Mulcahy, D. (2003), *Leadership and management in vocational education and training*, NCVER, Adelaide
- Nadler, D. and Tushman, M. (1986), *Managing Strategic Organisational Change*, Delta, New York
- Parlett, M. and Hamilton, D., 'Evaluation as Illumination', in Tawney, D., (ed.), *Curriculum Evaluation Today: Trends and Implications*, Macmillan, London, 1975, pp.84-101
- Paton, R. A. and McCalman, J. (2003), *Change Management. A guide to effective implementation*, Sage Publications, London
- Robertson, G. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', Gordon Institute, VIC
- Scott, G. (1999), *Change Matters: Making a Difference in Education and Training*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards
- Stace, D. and Dunphy, D. (1998), *Beyond the Boundaries, Leading and Recreating the Successful Enterprise*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney
- Stuart, G. (2003), 'Final Report on Reframing the Future Change Agent sub-program', TAFE NSW North Coast Institute, NSW
- TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) (2003), *Development of a Management Model for Managers. Leadership for VET CEOs. Final Report*, Canberra