

Letter to the Reader

The work of creating change is simple. Most of us complicate it with our thoughts. This book offers a new approach to change, along with a new approach to quality. It undermines the conventional order that people have come to expect and encourages readers to step into a new way of thinking, which allows them to approach their situation with a larger viewpoint. It includes real situations from my work over the past 14 years with senior managers, executives and engineers in several industries. These include international high-tech firms, the automotive industry, the Canadian aerospace industry, health care in the United States and Canada, the media, family-owned businesses, the U.S. military, church boards and education. While the content in each industry is different, the process of bringing people together to create the changes they want and need is similar.

The pyramid, the hierarchical structure of most large companies, isolates. It keeps people from speaking with those who can make a difference in the work that must be done on a daily basis. In the hierarchy there are unwritten rules that say I can't go to my boss's boss to deal with this, and yet that is the person who could be most helpful. The reader discovers that the place to begin is neither with the boss's boss nor with the boss, but within himself. The process of change always begins with an ending and then there is a new beginning. The reader discovers a new and deeply personal shift in how she herself views her current reality...an ending of her old thinking and a new beginning in her thought processes. The material in this book helps to navigate the time between this ending and the new beginning.

For well over a year now I have been working on innovation and change with a senior team in the high-tech industry. Before we began the work I asked the leader why he had called on me to work with his team. "We are already a highly effective team," he said. "We want greater and different results, and we know that if we continue working the way we do now, we'll get the same results we always have. How can we change," he wanted to know, "when we are already using our wisdom and our technical knowledge in the best ways we know how?" He was wise; he knew something different needed to happen. They were ending their individual search for answers and beginning their collective journey. And for that journey wisdom, not intelligence, was required. The difference would be found in their thinking and in their intention.

For this group the task was unusual. While they were about to change their behavior, they would first address their thoughts. They had to look inward, examine their thoughts about their own expectations and suspend their ideas about how things "should" happen. This is a difficult task for technical leaders, many of whom are engineers. Steeped in the engineering/high-tech culture, they are trained to find the right answers. Their methods, while state of the art for engineers and scientists, are not applicable to the technology of human change.

On the one hand *SHIFT* is a concise reference manual to assist the reader with change. It outlines a series of steps through four major principles of change. On the other hand, it constitutes an action plan. The very act of reading it gives rise to a process of change, one that encourages a quiet mind. Various themes are woven throughout the book. While reading Section IV, you may notice a concept that was first introduced in Section II. The material in Section I, "Transforming

the Organization,” is designed to help you bridge the gap between quantitative forms of measurement and qualitative forms of measurement. Section I is also about my work and learning with the premier Total Quality guru, Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Interspersed throughout the book are Dr. Deming’s **14 Principles of Quality Management**. These are listed in total in Appendix One at the end of the book.

Sections II to V define the principles of change that I created and now use extensively in client coaching and team interventions inside organizations. The **4 Principles of Change**, useful in both your work and your life, include:

- Start fully where you are and tell your truth.
- Acknowledge what’s working.
- Ask for what you want and need.
- Step aside and notice the evidence of change in the making.

Reading *SHIFT* chapter by chapter is not essential. If you do read it sequentially, you will benefit from the cumulative effect of the ideas presented. But all the topics are interconnected, so you can start anywhere and build on whatever concepts you find that are useful to you. Reading a few pages daily offers support for change in your leadership thinking. Starting with your “thinking” is significant because your thinking is the basis for all your behavior. If you can think of something, there is a good chance that you can do it. If you can’t think of what you want to do, where you want to go or how you want to get there, the task will be difficult to accomplish. When you want to change your behavior, you must first change your thoughts. As you read these chapters, please notice what you are thinking.

Each person finds at a glance some element they need to deal with the challenge they face at that moment in their work or their personal life. The material encourages the reader to discover their own current beliefs and values and to continue to weed out older and less effective thought patterns and beliefs. In the process the reader discovers new ideas about how to handle long-standing problems and difficult current situations. For instance, continuously improving interpersonal relationships in the work environment is essential for handling people. Effective leaders know that work gets done through their people. Truly great and effective leaders are committed to continuous improvement in these areas.

The exercises are presented to get you thinking about yourself, your own style and your own situation. What you do with what you learn about yourself is up to you. The purpose of this book is just to help you become more aware.

In the mid-1990s I took the opportunity to study with a truly brilliant woman in the United States, Dr. Jean Houston. Jean runs Mystery School, a year-long program (one weekend a month) that begins in January and ends in December each year. At that time Jean was traveling about 250,000 air miles per year working with heads of state, whole governments, developed and underdeveloped countries, and international conferences. She describes her work as “changing the thinking of the globe.” In fact it’s about saving the planet.

The point I am making is that her work is profound and significant. People come to Mystery School from all over North America to expand right-brain learning and to build new ways of

thinking. They then return to their regular work in manufacturing, law, high-tech industries, hospitals, consulting and a variety of other sectors to apply new ways of leading. During my year at Mystery School, I met with Jean and a small number of organizational development consultants each Sunday morning for one and a half hours. We shared rich ideas and practices about how to expand leadership and human potential in the workplaces of the nation.

I believe that everyone is a leader somewhere, sometime and somehow. This book is for you in whatever leadership role you are now playing. The best leaders are, first, fully functioning human beings. A senior engineer recently challenged this. He told me that he leaves his personal self at home or in the car when he enters the workplace. When he finished his explanation I smiled and said gently, “Hold on to your chair, Henry. You’re about to discover a whole new concept!” People have one basic personality, even though they may temper it according to whether they are at work or at home. Taught to suppress feelings in the workplace, people often think that they are “being different.” However, those who work with them experience one person; the same one who is at home is also at work. Are you prone to think of yourself as a completely different person at home from the one you are at work? If so, you are suppressing a rich and living part of yourself.

***SHIFT* offers simple steps to help you slow down and notice how you contribute to the work environment.** It then helps you to move forward in a more purposeful and effective manner. It is about personal change. All change starts with the individual. Since organizations do not exist without their people, it is also about organizational change. It is about creating meaning in work environments where chaos seems rampant.

In order to work effectively and to keep a positive and forward movement, employees and especially their leaders need to have the courage to tell their truth. This means they need to first discover and then speak about what is going on inside themselves. Talking honestly about positive and negative events that impact their ability to do good work ultimately has an impact on quality, productivity and innovation and these in turn drive up profit. Trust, morale and a sense of power increase. You will see later in this book that the human response is an integral part of Total Quality. As people change, so do their organizations.

Carry this book in your briefcase, in your purse or in your coat pocket! If you have the book in your car you can read a few pages when sitting in a traffic jam. Glance at it when you are having lunch alone or when you’re riding on the bus or the subway. Start anywhere! Read a few pages at a time! Share it! As you complete the exercises you’ll begin to shift your thinking from old routines to new approaches. Your interpersonal skills will improve. You’ll have greater peace of mind. Some of you will find yourselves being more introspective. Others may find themselves taking first steps to abandon old habits that no longer serve them.

Use each chapter as a guide to expand your choices about leadership responses. Before long your peers and those who report directly to you will notice that there is something different about you. Your own manager will comment on your changes.

Open the book. It is time to begin.

