

## chapter 5

### Change - It's Everywhere

*"Be not afraid of growing slowly. Be only afraid of standing still."*

-Chinese Proverb

Life itself is change. We change, as does everything around us. Change is constant, pervasive and irreversible. Some change is measurable, such as growth and decay. Other change is more abstract: the way we become a bit more knowledgeable and experienced everyday, the way our preferences adjust or the way a relationship becomes more open or distant. We barely think about gradual, everyday, common changes like these from one minute to the next. Only months later do we notice the children have grown or that we have become adept at a skill. We accept these changes as part of life and would be surprised if they didn't happen.

No big decision or catalyst is made. It is just the evolution of matter and mind through time.

Though we almost always try to resist change, doing so is futile. Time marches on, dragging transformation in its wake. Every moment – different from the last – creates its own unique opportunity for change, and then is forever gone. It takes a certain set of circumstances to even begin to envision change. Then, things begin to fall into place and a window of opportunity opens for creating change. This takes time. Having a little wind at your back doesn't hurt, either.

It may seem elemental to illustrate that change is inevitable and that we often try in vain to resist it. Nonetheless, here we will discuss it in depth so that we can begin to create a relationship with the idea of change before actually beginning to experience it. Because, as we have found on our own change journeys, the only way to embrace change and not be victimized by it is to be involved in it.

### Change Is Everybody's Job

Creating a lasting change in an organization requires profound transformation of the ruling structure. The human force shaping the future must not manage from above, but lead from within. Leadership must view change as a vital life force and embrace it. The role of leadership is to work enthusiastically to accomplish change. Anyone, and preferably everyone involved can take on leadership roles.

Jan Carlzon, former president of Scandinavian Airlines systems said, "An individual without information cannot take responsibility; with information can not help but take responsibility." Change is everybody's job – throughout the organization. *"The only way to embrace change and not be victimized by it is to be involved in it."*

### All or Nothing

Because of the human dynamic involved, the change needed to sustain progress in long-term care needs to be deep. That is, it needs to be changed (transformed) to be changing (a state of being; not just one thing, but many things).

As Tom Peters offers in his book, *Design*, "Incrementalism is *Out*. Destruction is *In*. 'Continuous improvement,' the lead mantra of the 1980s management, is now downright dangerous. All or nothing. ('Control. Alt. Delete.'). We must gut the innards of our enterprises before new competitors do it for us – and to us."

Our journey to change long-term care must be far reaching, transforming the quality of interactions on the individual level between staff and elders, among

service areas and functions, within the organization as a whole and throughout the industry itself. The change must be profound so there is no mistaking intentions. There is a reason the movement is called "culture change" and not "culture adjustment" or "old culture, new suit" or "same culture, different paperwork." Changes need to be from small and specific to grand and broad sweeping and they must all somehow interplay and complement each other.

Change *imposed* on elders and staff will likely be superficial, unwelcomed and inappropriate. It will not be truly assimilated into the culture but mindlessly adhered to like so many other routines and protocols.

Conversely, when elders and staff work together as leaders to strategize and implement change, they take ownership of the transformation. It becomes easier to predict and prepare for the twists and turns in the road ahead. When something goes awry, they may see it as a crisis, but they persevere because they have control in finding solutions. Rather than feeling isolated and powerless, they gain through collaboration a sense of creativity, adventure and inspiration that enables them to embrace change and the challenges it brings.

The change is not simply from a model resembling an institution to one resembling a home. Rather, it is deep change from living institutionally – where one size fits all and individuality is sacrificed by obeisance to regulations and operational regimentation – to living in a way that honors each individual's idea of home. The concept of home varies from person to person and over time may even change for the individual. Thus, there is no cookie-cutter approach to creating home with and for elders. While the Household Model claims fundamental principles and framework which must be adhered to, it is not prescriptive and does not require each organization to design and implement it exactly the same way. It is not like a McDonald's franchise where a Quarter Pounder® tastes the same in Los Angeles as it does in Washington D.C. Each facility must find its own recipe, devised by the people who live there. The local culture and flavor must find its own expression in each new emerging household in each town. Architecture will vary, staff configurations will vary, and numbers of residents in each house will vary depending upon local variables. On an individual level, staff in all households and various service areas must be responsible for finding how best to foster the freedom of home with each resident.

### **Breakpoint Change**

Every so often a change so big occurs it turns everything on its head. In the book, *Breakpoint and Beyond*, George Lamb and Beth Jarman call this "breakpoint change." It is a change so different from anything preceding it that it demolishes normal standards. Breakpoint change is not incremental change or continuous improvement. At breakpoint, change is so sharp the old rules no longer apply and continuing to use them will result in failure.

Take the rise of cell phones and the Internet for example. These days it is rare for a company not to have a webpage or email. Cell phones are so prevalent, some individuals and companies no longer use a landline. Originally, these technologies gave companies an edge. Now, it is so common that in most cases operating without them puts the company at a serious disadvantage. Not only did the technology change the workplace environment, it also changed our vision of the world and the rules of the game.

### **Breakpoint Change: The Household Model**

The philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset said, "Life is a series of collisions with the future; it is not a sum of what we have been, but what we yearn to be." Is the current state of long-term care what we yearn it to be? Hopefully not. Lucky for us, it is not the past that will define us, but the future we envision. The future of long-term care is elder directed homes, not business institutions. When we hit the breakpoint, there will be no turning back.

Choice will be as commonplace as email. Home environments will be the norm. We will look back at a time when we warehoused our elders with much the same disbelief in which we now behold the age of slavery. It will be unacceptable.

The Household Model is breakpoint change. While struggles abound in the industry as we untangle from the shackles of long-established norms, there is no denying that the sands are shifting in ways not felt before.

We are running out of time for feeling this luxury of evaluating the merits of deep culture change, and if we do not proactively embrace new ways our organizations will not survive the next decade. Unlike virtually everything around us, long-term care has somehow sheltered itself in a cocoon of status quo for decades. But the waters of change have been simmering for some time. We are reaching a boiling point. When that point is reached, the entire face of the industry will change rapidly leaving those hesitant to change and reposition out in the cold. Once that grand change is made, old ways and old systems will no longer fit and it will be impossible to go back to them. The system produced by this new order of things will not allow it.