



MORE FEARLESS CHANGE

STRATEGIES FOR
MAKING YOUR IDEAS
HAPPEN



MARY LYNN MANNS, Ph.D.

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Foreword by TIM LISTER

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More Fearless Change

Strategies for Making Your Ideas Happen

Mary Lynn Manns

Linda Rising



◆◆ Addison-Wesley

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Praise for *More Fearless Change*

“The hard part of change is enlisting the support of other people. Whether a top manager interested in improving your organization’s results or a lone developer promoting a better way of working, this book will give you tools and ideas to help accomplish your goal. Best of all, they’re presented in small, digestible bits.”

—George Dinwiddie, independent coach and consultant, iDIA Computing, LLC

“*More Fearless Change* is a great book. Through real experiences and concise analysis, Linda and Mary Lynn identify patterns that will help change leaders quantify the situations they often face. From there, they provide practical advice for dealing with and overcoming them. I found every pattern in *More Fearless Change* took me back to a specific place and time where I struggled to find the right approach to articulate my ‘great’ new idea and connect with the people around me. I went from conference talks and challenging questions from skeptics to meetings with colleagues where I failed to convey practical new solutions, or to quiet times on my own where I was downright frustrated with my progress. Linda and Mary Lynn have patterns for each that helped me think through to practical, positive solutions and prepare for the future. For a topic as challenging as organization change, it’s rare to find a collection of patterns that are as powerful as those you’ll find in *More Fearless Change*.”

—Neil Johnson, principal hardware consultant, XtremeEDA

“More secret sauce for positive organizational change! Mary Lynn and Linda make it sound so easy, but using their building blocks, it actually is. With books like these, change agents won’t run out of steam while resistors will run out of excuses.”

—Jochen (Joe) Krebs, author of *Going Lean*, Agile coach, trainer, speaker, and incrementor

“Keep the patterns in this book and *Fearless Change* handy. Whenever you are frustrated by an intractable problem, choose a pattern to try. If you still don’t get the desired results, try another. Others will join in your efforts, and you’ll feel the satisfaction as small successes start to add up. These patterns transformed me from an ineffective ‘voice in the wilderness’ to a valued collaborator.”

—Lisa Crispin, co-author (with Janet Gregory) of *Agile Testing: A Practical Guide for Testers and Agile Teams* (Addison-Wesley, 2009) and *More Agile Testing* (Addison-Wesley, 2015)

“*Fearless Change* and now *More Fearless Change* are required reading for my doctoral students. As they explore emerging issues and are learning new concepts and ideas, my students have been able to make significant changes to their professional workplace using these patterns for introducing new ideas. We look forward to *Even More Fearless Change*.”

—Fred Grossman, professor and director of doctoral study in computing, Pace University, New York

“This book, *More Fearless Change*, is creative work. I use these patterns with my students to

take innovation into practice, and also with my collaborators working in industries to promote organizational change. This book is a significant read for people in academia and in the workplace.”

—*Takashi Iba, associate professor, Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University, Japan*

Mary Lynn:

~~*To my daughter Alison—because a mother's love never changes.*~~

Linda:

For Karl; everything I do is better because of you.

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Foreword

On first noting this book's title, you might mistake *More Fearless Change* as a follow-on to *Fearless Change*, Linda Rising and Mary Lynn Manns' previous collaboration—but if you have not already read *Fearless Change*, don't put this book down to hunt for it first. *More Fearless Change* is written stand alone as a collection of tactics and strategies for you to employ to increase your odds that the change you want can make it all the way from bright idea, through fruition, to “the way it is.”

More Fearless Change is not a recipe book for change. Rising and Manns are far too experienced in these matters to oversimplify the situation. It is a book of patterns—nuggets you pick up and inspect—and it is up to you to decide if one or another nugget would be helpful in communicating your particular idea campaign within your organization. The tactics and strategies are not specific to any organization type. If you see a need or an opportunity to improve the long-term health of your organization, and you want to see your idea through, and you are willing to work at it, I believe that *More Fearless Change*, as a coaching guide, can provide the key.

Actually, I would suggest that you read *More Fearless Change* twice, each time from a different perspective. First, try reading the book from the relatively safe perspective of you as *change agent*: You see a need for change, and you have an idea that will facilitate that change. You need to convince those around you to join in, to invest in your idea, and to nurture it to full benefit.

Now from the scary view: After your first read, don't pick up *More Fearless Change* for at least a week. When you start rereading, imagine yourself not as the change agent, but as a *change recipient*. If you have been in this business a while, you can probably choose a real occurrence from your own experience; if not, go ahead and invent one.

Imagine, for example, that your job is being outsourced, and your company would like to outplace you as an employee of the outsourcee, which is located in <pick a distant place that does not thrill you>. You see that these requests are basically reasonable. You understand the business case the company is making. You see that this is absolutely not a case of Bad People Behaving Outrageously. You get that. So, how do you want to be treated? Which information do you expect, and from whom? Which promises would you ask for? Which time frame do you want to decide your path?

In the context of the real world, *More Fearless Change* reveals itself like a 3D stereogram. First you see it as a book to help you advance your ideas, then as a book to help you understand the complexity of how people react to proposed change.

Rising and Manns are the voices of honesty and fairness as they treat what is usually called change management, but it is not change “management” they are talking about. Theirs is a *campaign for change*, and their book is about changing the minds and behaviors of smart, emotional, real people, each of whom carries personal and career experiences from his or her past. What they address is not management, and therefore it is most worthwhile for all of us to look for help. Now turn the page. You can always read *Fearless Change* later.

Tim Lister
The Atlantic Systems Guild
New York, August 2014

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About the Authors



Mary Lynn Manns is a management professor at University of North Carolina–Asheville, where she was recently awarded Distinguished Professor of Social Relations for her work in change leadership. She has a Ph.D. from De Montfort University in Leicester, United Kingdom, where her thesis focused on the introduction of patterns into organizations. She has continued her work with numerous presentations at a variety of conferences and in organizations that include Microsoft, [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), Avon, and Proctor & Gamble. Her publications include *Fearless Change: Patterns for Introducing New Ideas*, co-authored with Linda Rising. At her university, she guides students of all ages in learning the tools (patterns) for leading change and competing as social entrepreneurs. In 2013, Mary Lynn was the commencement speaker who transformed the typical model of speeches by encouraging the graduates to take the first steps toward changing the world as they got off their seats to dance. In her spare time, Mary Lynn helps individuals make personal change by leading “Zumba for People with Two Left Feet” workouts.



Linda Rising is an independent consultant based in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee (just east of Nashville). She has a Ph.D. from Arizona State University in the field of object-based design metrics and a background that includes university teaching and industry work in telecommunications, avionics, and tactical weapons systems. An internationally known presenter on topics related to patterns, retrospectives, the change process, and how your brain works, Linda is the author of a number of publications and four books: *Design Patterns in Communications*; *The Pattern Almanac 2000*; *A Patterns Handbook*; and, co-authored with Mary Lynn Manns, *Fearless Change: Patterns for*

Introducing New Ideas. Linda has been an amateur recorder player for more than 50 years. She and her husband, Karl Rehmer, are part of three performing groups. They also enjoy bike riding, even when the hills in Tennessee are pretty steep. They also serve as board members for Habitat for Humanity of Wilson County. Find more information about Linda at lindarising.org.

Part One: Overview

Welcome, dear reader! You have picked up this book because you are someone with a great idea. Perhaps you are trying to make it happen in your organization, or in your community, or in yourself. Since writing our original book *Fearless Change*, we've been thinking about you and your struggles. Our readers have been thinking about this as well. That connection has led us to write this new book with 15 new change leadership strategies (patterns), along with insights on the original patterns to make them even better. We welcome the readers of our first book, as well as our new readers who are using the strategies for the first time, to continue the ongoing dialogue that all leaders of change need. Making a new idea happen can be difficult, but we invite you to take the journey with us!

Chapter One. Introduction

Our first book, *Fearless Change*, is 10 years old. Since it appeared, both of us have continued to study the patterns and regularly hear from others who have used them for organizational, community, or personal change. As a result, we have become even more convinced that the patterns are valuable tools for leading change, and that they are still relevant and useful today.

Ten years later, our book is still selling. It has been published in Chinese and Japanese, and partially translated into French. We continue to receive email and verbal testimonials from satisfied users, such as the following:

Fearless Change is a catalogue of patterns for introducing change in a company. Personally I've been in the role of change agent for years and this book provided me many "ah-hah's" which you get from reading good patterns. Most of the patterns I've applied in the past. Now I realized it and I got a name for them, which makes me more able to reuse the patterns. Some of the patterns were new to me and I've applied them immediately in my work.

I had found myself moderately successful at introducing new ideas and influencing change in my organizations, but never knew why, or how to improve my ability to influence and sustain the change effort. The light bulb was illuminated immediately upon getting a few patterns into this book—I had been, in one way or another, using some of these patterns without realizing it. Opportunities I had failed to take advantage of in the past became obvious as well in many patterns that were new to me, and in the past went unrecognized (next time, they will either be easy to spot or part of the plan in the first place!).

The patterns are used by people leading change around the world and are also part of a game created by Deborah Preuss (<http://fearlessjourney.info/>). In addition, Joseph Pelrine uses the patterns in an exercise in his training, and Julia Dellnitz from Learnical uses the patterns with the LEGO Serious Play materials and methodology to plan change initiatives.¹ Some patterns were also chosen for illustration in Preston Smith's book *Flexible Development*.² Among other tributes, *Fearless Change* received the "best book of the year" award by Charles Ashbacher soon after its publication in 2004 and was included in David Bock's list of "books that changed my career" on amazon.com.

We know that the work is never finished. Patterns are living things. We continue to look for new ones and uncover insights on the existing ones. We definitely agree with what the prominent architect and creator of the notion of patterns, Christopher Alexander, has noted:

*As people exchange ideas about the environment, and exchange patterns, the overall inventory of patterns in the pattern pool keeps changing. ... Of course, this evolution will never end.*³

We have kept the target user for the change leadership patterns: You are a powerless leader. We call you the Evangelist. You sincerely believe in the new idea, but may or may not have the authority to "make it happen." Even if you have power, an enlightened evangelist will realize that when others see the value in the change, rather than having it forced upon them, they will be more satisfied and more likely to allow change to happen. The patterns help you encourage people to become so interested and involved in the initiative that they *want* to change.

In our presentations, attendees often tell us about their frustrations in persuading others to change. We hear questions about handling irrational reactions, dealing with the skeptics, or convincing a manager who won't budge. The short answer to dealing with these dilemmas is that it requires

patience. Each person responds to new ideas in different ways. No one strategy works for everyone. And no approach works in every situation—each pattern must be matched to the context and problem the evangelist is facing.

In recent years, we've looked at how the change strategies appeal to each individual's logic (head), feelings (heart), and desire to contribute to the change (hands).⁴ This is not a novel concept: to involve others in a new idea, help them see the logic in it, feel that it is valuable, and play a role in it. However, many leaders of change stop with a logical argument—simply providing a description of the new idea and what it can do. While this is an excellent first step, you must engage the heart and hands too. The *Fearless Change* patterns help the evangelist do all three. Some, like Study Group and Elevator Pitch, have a rational appeal, while others, such as Emotional Connection and Shoulder to Cry On, touch the heart. Still others, such as Ask for Help and Trial Run, help others get their hands into the game. As you begin to use the collection, you will discover ways to engage the heads, hearts, and hands of those you are trying to convince.

Throughout the years, we have occasionally been asked about creating a categorization scheme or flowchart for using the patterns. However, applying patterns cannot be done following a recipe, such as 2 “head” + 1 “heart” + 3 “hands” = mission accomplished. Change never happens in a “clean” fashion. Usually you are applying more than one pattern at a time because you are dealing with more than one problem. You are working with humans, often in complex organizations, so results are rarely straightforward and the emergent behavior might be totally unexpected. Therefore, upfront detailed planning is rarely effective. Instead, take one small step toward your goal and see what happens. You will inevitably encounter missteps and failures along the way. In most cases, your process will be one step forward followed by two steps backward. This uneven progress can be discouraging but may also teach you about the idea, about the organization, and, most of all, about yourself.

You will find that a change effort progresses as a series of experiments. When you decide to just do it, begin with baby steps, followed by time for reflection, building on small successes. Sustain momentum by repeating these patterns, learning along the way. Others have described this iterative process in various ways. Psychologist David Kolb believes all learning takes place in this kind of feedback cycle.⁵ Just as children begin to understand the world around them by testing it and adjusting to it, you will do the same as you continue through the long journey of leading a change.

Every now and then, a participant in a training class will ask whether a given solution is “underhanded.” This can certainly be an important issue. All influence strategies can be used for both good and bad intentions. Similarly, any tool—whether a hammer in a worker's toolkit or a pattern in a leader's change kit—can be wielded for multiple purposes. It's easy to find examples in history where these approaches have been used for both “good” ideas and ideas that were, well, not so good. We encourage our readers to continue to use the patterns to create constructive and valued changes in the world.

When some people are first exposed to the change leadership patterns, they sometimes comment, “Aren't these strategies just common sense?” This always makes us smile. It's a human tendency to confuse simple with easy! We remember a story about Dale Carnegie, who received a similar comment on the recommendations in his training based on his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.⁶ He replied with an example. Everyone knows it's rude to talk when others are talking, but we all do it anyway. Carnegie also noted that his concepts might well be “common sense,” but that they were certainly not “common practice.” We agree that the *Fearless Change* patterns may seem obvious to an “expert” in change leadership, but not all of us are experts. Even experts couldn't possibly know all the possible strategies. As one reader observed, “The patterns may seem like little things, but each

of them makes a bigger difference than you may think.”

Some Insights since Our First Book

Insights we’ve acquired about many of the patterns in our first book appear in Part III, in the section “The Original Patterns with Insights.” We didn’t just write the first book and then stop learning. Instead, we talked with people who use our patterns and continued to study what it takes to be an effective leader of change. To reflect what we’ve learned, we’ve updated many of the pattern abstracts from our first book—these new summaries appear in the quick guide in the Appendix.

In addition, we share in the following sections our own personal insights about all the patterns and some general things we’ve observed about the joys and challenges in leading change.

Mary Lynn’s Insights

Most of my insights on the patterns come from leading a significant 2½-year change effort in my organization. I used the patterns consistently throughout the initiative. The project was an eventual success, and it is still going strong today, but there were significant struggles in the journey to make it happen. As I faced each challenge throughout the years, I reflected on which pattern to use. In this process, I discovered implementation details and consequences we didn’t include in our first book—these are added to the “lessons learned” in this book. Yes, it is certainly true what Christopher Alexander, the first promoter of the patterns concept, said—“Patterns must not be etched in stone; rather, they must grow as the users gain new experiences.”⁷

During the years since the publication of the first book, I have become even more convinced of the value in making an emotional connection. Despite my expertise in putting together a good PowerPoint presentation and elevator pitch, I recognize that these types of techniques are only the first step. Other strategies must also be used, especially if listeners are emotionally tied to the old ways of doing things and are not connecting with the new ways. Before I learned this, I would often respond to skeptics with what I considered to be a stronger and more “logical” argument. I have seen other evangelists do the same, spilling out more facts about the innovation with a variety of phrases. I think this tendency may reflect the fact that it is rather easy to develop another set of bullet points in our head or simply recite something in a different way. It takes much more time to spark and nurture an emotional connection with someone whom you are hoping to persuade—to truly get to know that person so he or she trusts you and you understand the individual’s needs. We are not taught how to do this in business schools. Nevertheless, many of the patterns in our first and second books will help with just these challenges—for example, Emotional Connection, Personal Touch, Ask for Help, Shoulder to Cry On, Hometown Story, Imagine That, Fear Less, and Group Identity.

I have also learned the importance of a strong marketing “campaign” for a new idea. Evangelists often stop after making a one-time hit, such as an announcement at a meeting, a presentation, or an email. But, because people aren’t necessarily persuaded by simple information and because they are busy and likely to forget what they heard or saw, you need to be persistent about keeping the new idea in people’s spaces. This requires the use of many different kinds of techniques with eye-catching and lively messages—what appeals to one person may not appeal to another, so you must create many different mediums. Since I didn’t have the artistic expertise to make some of the items we needed, I asked for help from people who had those talents. They enjoyed designing fliers, simple brochures, bookmarks, T-shirts, and, yes, even sandwich boards! We made sure these items were released at different times throughout the change initiative and distributed as tokens at every opportunity. To be sure, some items will cost money, but you can mold your plans to match your budget. Much less

expensive strategies such as the Personal Touch and Tailor Made patterns should continue throughout. In addition to regular presentations at department meetings (using the Piggyback pattern) and organization-wide listening sessions (using the Town Hall Meeting pattern), I took some time out of almost every day to knock on one or two office doors to have a short chat about the new idea. Persistent PR can be tedious, but it can also be a lot of fun to brainstorm and develop creative products that will spark the imaginations of the people you are trying to reach. The lesson learned is that you must be intentional about creating some kind of “campaign” or you may end up focusing your efforts on the development of the idea and forget to keep people informed about it.

I have also seen how the *Fearless Change* patterns, which were originally published to help with organizational change, can be useful for personal change. During our presentations on the topic of organizational change, participants often report that they can imagine how the patterns could be used to help with their personal struggles. In addition, the students in my change leadership course use the patterns to make a change that will help them improve their personal leadership skills. For example, they believe it is the right time to make the change, they just do it, beginning with an elevator pitch that describes their personal goal. They often do some research (by enacting the External Validation pattern), attempt a trial run, or move forward with a mentor to help. Following each baby step, they take time for reflection to evaluate their next steps and determine whether they need to revise their evolving vision. They may even build a group identity with people who have a similar goal so that they can have a shoulder to cry on when things get tough and some friends to celebrate their small successes. Yes, the patterns can certainly be used to make a fearless change in yourself!

Linda's Insights

Most of my insights around the patterns have come from research in cognitive neuroscience. As some of our readers have observed, the reason why these patterns work is because many of them are based on influence strategies. I knew what influence was but I didn't know about social psychology, the study of group behavior. So I have studied influence and examined how it fits with encouraging people to change. In addition to tutorials on *Fearless Change*, I now offer training on influence strategies and better ways to think, solve problems, and make decisions. These workshops present many of the same ideas that are captured in the *Fearless Change* patterns but from a different perspective—how our brains work.

One of the many benefits of this connection with social science is that the researchers in this field do experiments. It's long been a contentious point of discussion in the patterns community that we have no proof, no data, that support our intuition that patterns are effective. Now we can point to the scientific studies of experimenters who look at the underlying principles of the organizational change patterns and verify for us that they really do work!

Cognitive scientists say our brains look for patterns even in random events—a warning to all of us who love patterns. It's so easy to pounce on what we believe are significant repeated events and infer causation. It seems naïve but I have had to realize over and over that these and other patterns are not magic. Rather, it's about the power of one person who can make a difference by taking a strong stand. For example, when I recently read the story behind the action of Rosa Parks, who started the civil rights movement by refusing to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama,⁸ the pattern that came to my mind was Evangelist, a believer in an idea who acts on that belief.

In fact, many others before Rosa Parks had also refused to give up their seats. They were all arrested, as was Rosa Parks. The difference was that Rosa Parks was a connector (Connector is another pattern from *Fearless Change*). She knew a lot of people in Montgomery and—what's important for

the outcome of the story—they knew her. When word of her arrest spread, some of her connections posted bail and took her home. Others held meetings and planned a boycott of the city’s buses. These things did not happen for the other evangelists who were just as revolutionary, just as committed, just as passionate about trying to make a difference. It was the combination of the Evangelist and Connector patterns that made it work. Or was it? It seems like these two patterns were involved, but were they really necessary? I think we can say with certainty, yes. Were they sufficient? We can’t be sure. We should exercise caution about describing any human setting with just a pattern name or two. Human behavior is often much more complicated.

Neuroscientists also tell us that patterns get our attention from earliest childhood. That is how we learn. This approach is sometimes called statistical learning. Babies notice that sounds are broken into parts and that the parts do not appear randomly. Statistical learning is related to our belief in causality. If a baby pushes a bottle and it always moves, the baby believes that pushing causes movement.⁹ This approach to learning continues throughout our lives.

The penalty for this brain behavior is that we have a tendency to detect patterns where none exists. Since we suffer from the confirmation bias (the tendency to select information that confirms our beliefs) and tend to see what we are already convinced is true, testing ideas against what others believe will help ensure that our ideas are widely applicable. Now I see a compelling reason for including actual “known uses” from a variety of settings and users. This approach helps ensure that it’s not just the good idea of the author or a brain construct that won’t apply elsewhere.

A final significant learning for me came the first time I played the Fearless Journey Game.¹⁰ I saw that when players would choose a pattern and apply it to solve a problem, they would explain why they were using it. Often the explanation of the pattern was not quite “right” and my first response was to correct them. After a few of these experiences, I finally got it. I realized it doesn’t matter whether they had the same idea I did about the pattern, because they had found something that worked for them based on the name and short description of the pattern. As a result, they were able to make progress—an outcome much more important than correctness. No one owns an interpretation of a pattern.

This happens in the *Fearless Change* training classes all the time. I have the same response then—to jump in and explain the patterns—as though it were possible for all of us to have the same sense of what those patterns are all about. Mary Lynn and I have both recognized that our interpretation evolves based on our experience and the different insights we have acquired as we use the patterns. It seems each of us now has a very different definition of many of these patterns—different from 10 years ago and different from each other. I think this is a natural and good thing. We are not all the same people living within the same environment and sharing the same view of the world. There is no always an agreed-upon meaning for anything. What’s important is that the patterns be useful. As both Mary Lynn and I have seen, even without a controlled experiment, the patterns work for different users in different contexts with different understandings of what the pattern will bring. Yes, the patterns work!

The New Patterns

The 15 new patterns that appear in this book are Accentuate the Positive, Concrete Action Plan, Easier Path, Elevator Pitch, Emotional Connection, Evolving Vision, Future Commitment, Go-To Person, Imagine That, Know Yourself, Low-Hanging Fruit, Myth Buster, Pick Your Battles, Town Hall Meeting, and Wake-up Call.

All the patterns have been reviewed at least once at a Pattern Languages of Programming (PLoP) conference. This means they have been shepherded by other writers, presented in a writers workshop,

revised based on feedback, and then published in a conference paper.^{[11-13](#)} To add further validation, each pattern includes known uses from a variety of people (to protect the identities of these people, we have changed the names of individuals and organizations, but all the stories are real accounts from leaders of change).

When the name of a pattern is used in the text to refer to the pattern as a pattern, it appears capitalized (e.g., the Evangelist pattern). If we use the pattern as ordinary language, as just a regular noun, verb, subject, or object, it won't be capitalized (e.g., "He serves as the evangelist for the team")

Chapter Two. Strategize

You, as a budding evangelist, would probably agree that some time should be allotted for upfront planning before you jump feet first into a change effort. There's the usual task of creating a mission and vision, but you should also take some time for self-reflection to determine whether your values are aligned with those of the initiative. In this chapter, we introduce the new patterns Know Yourself, Evolving Vision, Concrete Action Plan, and Low-Hanging Fruit to support you in these exercises.

Know Yourself

If there is a “first pattern” in our collection of patterns for introducing new ideas, it's likely to be Know Yourself. It might seem strange that it's appearing only now, in *More Fearless Change*, but we assumed that it was part of the Evangelist pattern. Over the past 10 years, we've come to realize that this pattern is important enough to document separately. We have heard from many enthusiastic supporters of a new idea who started with high hopes but eventually burned out or simply gave up the fight because they became too discouraged with the way things were going. Leading a change initiative is hard work and takes not just a belief in the new idea but also the fortitude to face the never-ending challenges that inevitably arise along the journey that is always longer than anticipated. Without sufficient internal reserves, this journey is doomed to failure.

While the cognitive scientists tell us that we can't really understand ourselves completely,¹ some kind of objective evaluation is necessary before investing the time and energy to bring new ideas to your environment. Engage a collaborator—a fellow evangelist who is a good listener—and work together to help each other learn about your capabilities and shortcomings, your passions and phobias. Pairing in this way is a powerful way to move forward.

You should also consider how your attitudes contribute to any difficulties you might encounter.

As Craig Freshley suggests in one of his Good Group Tips,² in every setting there are two sides to the change problem. You might see the situation as a collection of “others” who you want to change, but the reality is that you will be required to change as well. Your tolerance for learning and agility will be tested. It's not about your list of requirements that others will meet, but rather about moving together in a direction that will also change over time.

When we assume the problem is caused by others, we are overlooking our part. We can spend a lot of time and energy wishing “they” were different, but Craig's Practical Tip is to ask, “What's my part?” If you want the problem solved, you might have to change your own behavior rather than talk about how others should change. As Gandhi noted, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

Evolving Vision

Bringing clarity to this important initial step of knowing yourself will then be useful to determine the goal or vision for your enterprise. We have learned in the past decade since our first book was published that this vision is not static, but rather will evolve as you and your organization begin to experiment with the new idea—it's an evolving vision.

We have also learned that in most cases, starting with a small, manageable, reasonable goal, and then taking baby steps toward that goal is more likely to lead to success than setting a world-changing, enormous, overwhelming, impossible, pie-in-the-sky goal. As one of our change leaders told us, “You need a broad strategy, but your goals should not be so rigid and narrow that they don't allow for

changing situational realities.”³ While this may be inspiring at the outset, seeing little progress over time can become discouraging. But, consider what Karl Weick says about the theory of small wins—baby steps—toward attainable goals:

*Once a small win has been accomplished, forces are set in motion that favor another small win. When a solution is put in place, the next solvable problem often becomes more visible. This occurs because new allies bring new solutions with them and old opponents change their habits. Additional resources also flow toward winners, which means that slightly larger wins can be attempted.*⁴

This fits well with Agile, the current popular approach to software development. Viewing projects as a series of small experiments that include close interaction with all stakeholders means that the product is grown slowly with input from customers, users, and the business side. The whole process consists of a series of small wins. Even failure is a “win,” because it offers a chance to learn more about what customers want and what the team can do.

Concrete Action Plan

In the small wins approach of using an evolving vision, the baby steps can be defined in a concrete action plan. Research shows that one of the more effective ways to move forward is to create a specific plan for where, when, and how you will go about accomplishing your goal.⁵ Here are some examples:

- ♦ *If I am bored and I feel like having a snack, then I will eat an apple.*
- ♦ *I will set an alarm to remind me to take a short break every 50 minutes.*
- ♦ *The team will meet every Friday morning at 10:00 a.m. for 30 minutes to review the goals for that week and make new goals for the following week.*

By the way, one research study shows that this approach is not effective for multiple goals.⁶ This finding adds more weight to the better approach of focusing on one small win at a time.

Low-Hanging Fruit

You may want to use another new pattern, Low-Hanging Fruit, to get the most benefit from your investment of time and energy. We often assume that a complicated problem must have a complicated solution. What we usually forget is that we are always dealing with a complex adaptive system and that any change, even a small one, can have an enormous impact. Focusing on something small and easily accomplished is a very effective way to move your environment in the desired direction.

In a recent article on [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com), a discussion of health care illustrates the use of this pattern:

*There are many proposals for improving cost and effectiveness of U.S. medicine, including: personalized medicine, big-data technology to find patterns and coordinate care, tightly-managed accountable healthcare systems, and marketplace incentives. These proposals tend to be complex and sophisticated, and need years to develop. We often forget that there is a simple, low-tech innovation that already holds great promise and offers a fast pay-back: re-investment in primary care providers (PCP), giving them the right role in the healthcare system and incentives.*⁷

This example illustrates that a simpler approach may be possible, if you take a bit of time to analyze alternatives. One advantage that emerges from use of the Low-Hanging Fruit pattern is that i

gives you something to talk about much more quickly than other more complicated courses of action

Where to Go Next

Once you begin using the patterns in this chapter, you will want to start telling others about your new idea and encouraging them to be involved. The new patterns in the next chapter will help you with this aim.

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