

### **Discovery 1: Ideal Self**

I am hard-wired for change. Everyone that knows me well, describes me as creative and always up for a challenge. I am often told I have an energy that is hard to define, but that is infectious and positive. At my absolute best I consider myself a change chaser, or catalyst for positive improvement in myself, family members, and others; and I feel the day I stop changing (transforming/learning) will be the day I cease to exist. At my core, I want to leave people better than they were before they interacted with me. I often fall short of this goal, but it is always my desire. Being a change chaser means I embrace the core concepts of Boyatzis Intentional Change Theory (ICT). “The experience is one of an epiphany or discovery (Boyatzis, 1983). Self-awareness or mindfulness (of self and context, both social and natural) (Boyatzis and McKee, 2005) is inversely proportionate to the degree of surprise or discovery” (Boyatzis, 2006, p. 609). Epiphanies are my energy source. Awareness of the fact that we are all connected and share each other’s energies personally and professionally, is an aid in remaining centered and focused on my responsibility to that equation.

Without ever labelling it as such, I have been involved in pretty much every role of change agency at some point in my career. I have been on committees, coordinated project teams, implemented new brands, marketing initiatives, major events, and culture stories, and I have been the driver of awareness for the need for change. While not all of these opportunities have been successful, they have provided a wealth of insight, experience, and knowledge as I have grown in my career. I have to admit, however, Cawsey, et al.’s warnings of the duality of change agency would have been of great value to me earlier in my learning curve. “The role of a change agent is a double-edged sword. While it can prove exciting, educational, enriching, and career enhancing, it can also be hazardous to your career, frustrating, and demoralizing when risks escalate and failure looms” (Cawsey, et al., 2016, p. 257). Hurling myself ignorantly into change initiatives has resulted in disaster more than once in my career.

Regardless of my difficulty in “identifying where and how [I] fit into the change process” (p. 257) early on, I am grateful to have matured and grown in knowledge enough to harness my passion to better make a difference moving forward. As Cawsey, et al. mention, I am experienced in the feeling that I cannot effectively initiate or implement beneficial change from a “low- or mid-level role, title, and minimal experiences in organizations” (p. 257). This is where I have lived for 30 years. I have learned, however, in recent years that this is where MOST change agents and leaders exist. It is rare that we have an opportunity to lead change initiatives from a healthy and powerful top post in an organization. Embracing this awareness built in me a passion for helping others learn how effective they really are and can be from “within” an organization. This is where change is actually birthed in most organizations. Some technician or highly knowledgeable organization member says something to someone else; an awareness is germinated. This awareness grows into a vine that eventually feels its way to someone that has the power to help make it come to fruition. My ultimate change agency role is helping people explore the power to be found from this “non-powerful” position.

In addition to being a natural change agent, I am also a strong communicator and a “get ‘er done” type of person. I achieved a BA in professional and creative writing because I was passionate about storytelling, and helping organizations hone their stories to better help stakeholders and constituents know who they are and why they do what they do. Until my late-earned BA, I was adept at proving my

worth in an organization by being the go-to person on staff when there was something that needed to be tackled. No matter how large or small, I possessed enough grit to just jump in and eat the issue one bite at a time until we saw improvement or completion. Beside the grit to prove my worth this also fed that change chasing thirst in me.

There is an infectious curiosity that I bring to any engagement and sometimes it is highly effective while other times it is seen as over-reaching and nosy. More than once my curiosity (question asking) has resulted in being told I am out of my lane and that I need to just focus on my own department or task work. It is rare that my curiosity and questions have been motivated by negative ulterior motives. Most of the time I experience something akin to someone handing me a photo album of an organization that allows me to read the images or reading between the lines of a leader's journal which drives me to ask questions that seem invasive at times. I possess an innate discernment or curiosity that formulates itself into questions.

In the best-case scenario, as a leader, I encourage deeper dives that help leaders tap into passions that once energized their leadership efforts and opened them up to possibilities. I have witnessed in my career leaders getting torn away from their original intentions and passions by whatever pays the bills or the politics of keeping the doors open. This quagmire not only diminishes leadership energy but is injected throughout a root system of the organic life source of an organization, infecting the morale, performance, and empowerment. I see it as a seed to self-destruction, especially in smaller organizations.

Through encouraging honest and open dialogue, leaders can sometimes come to a place of awareness that helps them realize this separation. I see it as a catalyst to new insights and self-reflection on how they as leaders may be able to correctly diagnose ailments within their organization that would otherwise be misdiagnosed. Obviously, leadership is not always the issue that needs diagnosis, but it is my belief that self-aware and open leadership is always going to be more willing to engage in honest dialogue with any and all members of their organization that might have insights as to what the real issue might be, whether they be internal or external.

Basically, if a top executive or mid-level leader is not open and always willing to learn, they will never invite real engagement or willingness to "act" (Cawsey, et al., p. 261) within their organizations. With learning leaders and supervisors/managers, true empowerment and engagement can occur at every level of the organization. This can result in amazing innovation, improvement, and relationship that can't NOT help your organization thrive.

My strengths definitely lie in not being afraid of daunting projects, inviting honest dialogue, and asking questions from what I call "third-eye" (outside) viewpoint. I value all input, am an avid encourager, and am honest in my pursuit of learning. I feel this makes me an incredibly effective change agent. However, I do have areas that I continually work toward better awareness and that I can still mature in.

## **Discovery 2: My Real Self, Strengths, and Gaps**

I have a passion for encouraging new possibilities and asking, “what if.” I possess a bulldog’s stubbornness in achieving steps to completing tasks and my professional life stirs the only competitive bone I have. I have a wealth of dreams and possibilities that I see in myself, others, and in organizations I work with. I can energize a team and can speak to future possibilities while inviting others to allow curiosity in problem solving and engagement in safe and honest dialogue.

I am a solidly well-adjusted individual which means I am usually not consumed with self-reflection. I live, I let live, and I move on. I do not hold on to hurts, grudges, or hurdles. I am gifted at finding silver linings and feel this is a contagious and beneficial energy that is felt among groups I work with. I operate from my soul when healthy and centered and am willing and able to turn my curiosity inward when faced with a setback or hurdle. The last thing I would ever want is to be a hurdle to someone else or to have my motives misunderstood.

My ability to engage in and invite honest dialogue and curiosity allows me to easily build relationships with like-minded people, and to win over those that might be on the fence. It also usually allows me to alternatively distinguish those that are hesitant or adverse to such engagement. However, these individuals are where I find my gaps and opportunities for growth can occur. I struggle with patience when it comes to self-embeddedness and habitual political maneuvering. While I realize that not every person is going to be in the same development space and that we are all at unique mileposts on our awareness journey, an inability to reflect or flat denial of self that others persist in solidly places me outside my normal center of energy and organizational comfort zone. This is due to past experiences that have had negative outcomes when engaging with such individuals in attempting to achieve success within a team environment.

I have recently accepted a position in a non-profit organization with a flat leadership structure. As the new development director (a new position in the organization), I am tasked with creating organizational strategies and a major capital campaign resulting in the construction of a new clinic building and enough donors and supporters to successfully run the larger, higher volume operation. This makes me the fourth member of the leadership team that leads a dozen or so support staff in accomplishing our goals and initiatives.

My primary role as the development director is to structure a capital campaign to raise funds for a new clinic along with establishing a deeper donor support group to help sustain the clinic into the future. The new clinic will allow us to double staff count and quadruple our clinic space in order to increase our surgeries by 150% to better meet the demand of our client service area. The obvious change agency task for me is the new building, but I am also stepping up to assist a new executive director with new culture and organization model that will help us grow stronger as an organization, as well.

While hired to fulfill a more developmental strategy change agency role, I have also been asked to support the organization as an emotional champion, a continuous improver, and one that can help adapt new organizational strategies for growth (Cawsey, et al., 2016, p. 271).

Robin Bishop  
ORGL 516 Relational Dynamics and Organization Development  
Change Agent Strategy

One of the largest caps in my change agent strategy as of right now is confidently establishing a rapport with a team that I am very knew to and rarely see in person. In order to be embraced as an emotional champion, I need to not only have tools and models in place to help us all achieve this major capital goal, but to also be present (physically and emotionally) in order to really “hear” the staff’s aspirations and concerns in this new process. I have a tendency to jump into getting things done and can sometimes leave some team members behind as I aggressively push to meet deadlines and accomplish milestones.

I listen with my heart more than my head, as well. My strong intuition and discernment can sometimes result in assumptions being made without taking the time to fully explore an engagement with a team member. Excelling at strategy, planning, dreaming big, and encouraging others to do the same can sometimes alienate leadership, management, or frontline staff that feel they are not “really” being listened to. It is very important to me to authentically empower collaboration and engagement without reservation, so I need to slow my natural wiring to accommodate others’ speed of change. This will help my real self align much better with my ideal self.

As Parker Palmer encourages us to embrace our shadow selves in order to fully know and love our true and best self, I will always use his encouragement to embrace the imperfections. This means living fully aware of self, or as Parker Palmer states “undivided” or living comfortably in the gap (Palmer, 2004). “We must learn to hold the tension between the reality of the moment and the possibility that something better might emerge” (p. 175). Standing in this tragic gap is a constant awareness of self and others, of light and dark in my own journey and inner life.

Working on this “gap” I feel is going to be most rewarding for myself and for the relationships I have with team members and collaborators. My ideal self expects a lot from my real self, and I just need to remember to give myself as much grace as I might afford others, and that grace will pay it forward as is needed to maintain positive and authentic connections in achieving organizational goals.

**Discovery 3: Learning Agenda**

Name of the current organization or entity in which you play a role in a change initiative/effort:	Pet Savers
Your role, or description of your current role:	Development Director
Strength #1 as a Change Agent:	Energetic change champion
Strength # 2 as a Change Agent:	Communication and Storytelling
Gap Area #1 as a Change Agent:	Can get caught up in process and lose “listening” skills
Gap Area #2 as a Change Agent:	Hard on myself and change agency stumbles

1. Strength to build or gap to close:	Strength – Energetic Change Champion/Listening
What <u>specific action(s)</u> will you take to increase this strength or close the gap?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish two activities to engage the entire team in the change initiative.</li> <li>Allot time to be self-reflective so I can best listen for others.</li> <li>Effectively outline timeline for milestones to help stay on target and engage others.</li> </ul>
Anticipated duration of time needed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan – 4 hours</li> <li>Self-reflection and openness to listening – 1 hour</li> <li>Outline milestone timeline – 3 hours</li> </ul>
What dates will you begin as well as strive to complete this?	Start Date: October 1, 2019 Target Completion Date: October 15, 2019
Name a few success measures that will indicate progress.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Calendaring of two events beneficial for whole team</li> <li>2. A regularly schedule 1-hour allotment of quiet time</li> <li>3. Finalization of capital campaign strategy</li> </ol>
Describe your accountability plan (partners).	I will share this with Stephanie from work in order to maintain accountability and transparency. I will share this with 2 peers from this class: Eryn W. and Sandra G.

2. Strength to build or gap to close:	Gap – Self-critical when things get scary
What <u>specific action(s)</u> will you take to increase this strength or close the gap?	Engage in honest dialogue with senior level trusted colleague. Commit to daily engaging in affirmations and reading encouraging materials
Anticipated duration of time needed?	20 minutes to breathe, reflect, and let my ideal self lovingly encourage my real self
What dates will you begin as well as strive to complete this?	Start Date: September 28, 2019 Target Completion Date: Daily
Name a few success measures that will indicate progress.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I will have a fewer regrets at the end of the day</li> <li>2. I will see improvements in my interactions with collaborators and family members</li> </ol>
Describe your accountability plan (partners).	I will share this with 2 peers from this class: Eryn W. and Sandra G.

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**Discovery 5: Resonant Relationships** (Discovery 4: New Habits is an Activity, not a paper)

My mentor/accountability colleagues from this class are Sandra Gonzales . [+971 50 514 3980, sgonzalez@zagmail.gonzaga.edu] and Eryn Wells [awells@zagmail.gonzaga.edu]. We have committed to accountability and will probably end up on individual phone calls and email communications.