



CORE RESOURCES OF PARADIGM-CHANGE FACILITATION

BY CHRISTOPH HINSKE



Large-scale problems require paradigm-shifting change processes. Whether facilitators are tackling climate change, organizational transformations, poverty reduction, or ecosystem degradation, they must be capable of partnering with others to lead fundamental shifts rather than simply surface-level fixes. For more than a decade, I have worked with and studied the capacities required for leading this kind of change, culminating in my graduate work in global change management, in which I interviewed successful pioneers in this work in the US and Germany (see “Research Process”).

These pioneers helped me formulate responses to four questions:

1. How can we enable people to enact fundamental change?
2. How can we liberate the enormous possibilities that global change processes offer?
3. How can we change ourselves in order to be authentic when facilitating these paradigm-shifting processes?
4. How can we shape our organizations toward higher performance?

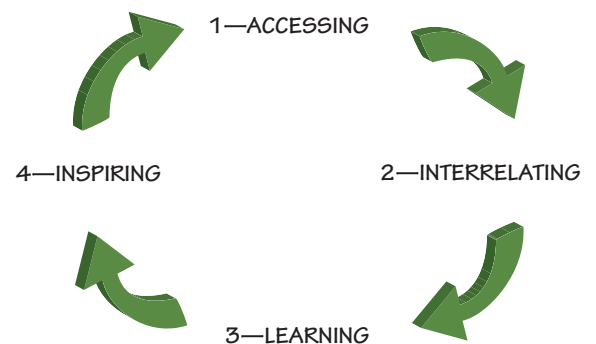
I will characterize the sum of these responses as “paradigm-change facilitation,” a body of work aimed at identifying, illuminating, and accessing the inner stances and core abilities that allow us to realize transformational processes together. Although this process is highly specific to each person and situation, we can generalize the steps (see Paradigm-Change Process).

The four steps for supporting fundamental change are:

Accessing—access our inner resources and the individual parts of the system

Interrelating—study and/or create interrelationships among those parts

PARADIGM-CHANGE PROCESS



Real transformation starts with the ability to make paradigm changes within ourselves by following an iterative, four-step process.

RESEARCH PROCESS

To describe an emerging approach to facilitating paradigm change, in the spring and summer of 2010, I interviewed 12 highly distinguished facilitators in the US and Germany. They include internationally renowned advisors, coaches, trainers, trauma psychotherapists, theologians, community leaders, and researchers.

I triangulated insights from these interviews with the scientific findings of the 4th Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and from the Economics of Ecosystems & Biodiversity (TEEB) group. I then synthesized the results as eight resources underlying the crucial ability to create new options in the twenty-first century: four “inner stances” and four “core abilities.” For my original thesis, *Triple-loop learning in the context of global environmental change – 21st century competencies of global change agents to facilitate third-order change*, see www.globalchange-research.net.

I thank the interviewees who gave so freely of their time and wisdom, the German Academic Exchange Service for funding my interviews, and my advisors Martin Welp and Jim Ritchie-Dunham.

TEAM TIP

To fundamentally change the system you are in instead of making surface-level fixes, you and your team members must reinvent yourselves at every moment based on the inner stances and core abilities described in this article.



Learning—learn to be changed by the parts and their interrelationships

Inspiring—dissolve ourselves into the system and change it from within by starting to ask for and listen to its essence

Inner Stances and Core Abilities

I define “inner stances” as the mindset and attitude with which one approaches a particular situation.

These filters shape the logic behind our daily actions. They shape the way and the intensity with which we relate to others as well as to the content within which we’re operating. I define “core abilities” as the skills, methods, and tools used to create a setting where paradigm shifts are likely to happen—a setting in which entirely new ideas, intentions, and perspectives come into reality.

Before I describe these inner stances and core abilities, I invite you to take about three minutes to reflect on four questions. To do so, you will need to imagine that you are in a position to facilitate a paradigm-shifting process. You will refer to these answers at the end of this article:

1. What is the inner stance with which I enter the room when I am facilitating a paradigm-shifting process?
2. What inner stance allows me to connect to the other stakeholders?
3. What inner stance enables me to activate and make full use of my innate and trained core abilities?
4. What inner stance allows me to maintain the creative tension as we think out of the box and enact something genuinely new?

In my research, I found that successful, paradigm-changing practitioners seem to have certain inner stances and core abilities:

I define “core abilities” as the skills, methods, and tools used to create a setting where paradigm shifts are likely to happen.

Inner stances

1. Being present with mindful passion
2. Creating reality out of an attitude of letting go to let come in
3. Knowing that one does not have to merely like but must love and integrate other belief systems
4. Being an interdependent part of our surroundings

Core abilities

1. Learning and perceiving information
2. Creating trusting relationships
3. Enabling a holistic worldview
4. Contextualizing the facilitation process with the characteristics of human development

Experiencing Inner Stances

The first stance, being present with mindful passion, includes a willingness and ability to develop, train, crystallize, and act mindfully out of one’s innate purpose. Practitioners who successfully realize paradigm-level change tend to work with a high level of concentration while remaining detached from the situation. Passion brings the focus, while mindfulness reminds the practitioner that there is not just one truth to be defended, rather an infinite number of truths worthy of being integrated. This perspective increases the facilitator’s ability to overcome doubts, accept ambiguities, and bridge different opinions.

One way to practice this stance in everyday life is by aligning one’s will (intentions) with one’s feeling (relationships, emotions) and thinking (cognition) during a facilitation process. I perceive the “O Process” of the Ecosynomics framework as well as the “U Process” of the Presencing framework as powerful approaches to achieve this kind of alignment. They also help to create shared understanding on the levels of willing, feeling, and thinking. By consciously applying the principles of the O as well as the U Process, we can build our ability for authenticity and mindful presence.

The three other stances are letting go to let come in; dislike the system, but love it; and be an interdependent part of it. When we are humble and have a welcoming and loving attitude toward both “enemies” and “friends,” we are more likely to see ourselves as learners and not as knowers of the situation. This objectivity and curiosity allows us to serve the process out of a conscientious and exploratory mindset and thus support emergence of a new future.

Letting go of one’s own ideas and realizing a loving attitude does not mean that we always have to like our counterparts; we are merely making a

THE CORE RESOURCES FOR PARADIGM FACILITATION

Process	Inner Stances	Core Abilities
<i>Accessing</i>	Do not like it, but love it	Contextualizing the facilitation process with the characteristics of human self-development
<i>Interrelating</i>	Being present with mindful passion	Ability to create trustful relations
<i>Learning</i>	Letting go, to let come in	Learning and perceiving information
<i>Inspiring</i>	Being an interdependent part of the system	The art of integrated thinking



conscious decision to embrace their world in a neutral and appreciative way. In the facilitation process, this means not imposing our own ideas or serving any specific interests, but rather fostering a holistic and interrelated awareness toward others and the process. By cultivating this stance, we prevent our self-interest from blocking any emerging possibilities, ideas, or products. This attitude enables the practitioner to ask for and listen to the essence of how the system (and its individual parts) makes sense of the topic at hand.

Experiencing Core Abilities

The first core ability, learning and perceiving information, requires an intrinsic willingness to constantly gain and improve our basic skills. It requires learning, experiencing, and internalizing relevant models, concepts, and tools derived from evidence-based scientific and spiritual levels of human existence. One way to do so is by organizing learner-centered study workshops with colleagues or friends. In this protected space, people are more likely to learn how to apply relevant concepts, theories, and models of change in a way that will *serve* the purpose rather than letting them *be* the purpose of the intervention. In addition, by integrating emotionality and mindfulness, practitioners can find peace and sovereignty in dealing with conflicts and ambiguities.

The second core ability, creating trusting relationships, strengthens the social fabric as a whole. While teaming and trust-building methods support this process, the practitioners I interviewed focused on two main drivers: a sense of humbleness and a high level of self-awareness. Paradigm-change facilitators must remain uninfluenced by power and authority, and be able to relate to and support the individual members of the group, so that they can gain clarity about their own intentions, become a trusted part of the process, and avoid taking action independently.

To build self-awareness, try to sense your own boundaries and limitations. By being clear about yourself and your abilities, gifts, and limitations, you can see the larger system much more clearly. As a result, the practitioner can support the group in understanding its organic structure, different subgroups, and inherent common purpose. I was amazed to find that even though all the practitioners I met were highly experienced professionals, they never perceived themselves as superior to others.

The third core ability, enabling a holistic worldview, requires thinking in interdependencies and grasping how and why different parts of a system come together to accomplish a common goal. In this

kind of thinking, no single part of the system alone can achieve the function or purpose of the system as a whole.

Paradigm-change practitioners seek to discover and highlight individual and groups mental models. They bring assumptions to the surface and create a common understanding of reality as it is, not as it is assumed to be. This ability to combine systems thinking with the knowledge of group dynamics helps the stakeholders to appreciate each other's different backgrounds, enabling them to form new agreements and partnerships.

One possibility for cultivating this ability in everyday life is to study and apply systems thinking. To complement this study, practice actively putting yourself in a position of being an “in-between,”

switching between different concepts and cultures. For example, go to a meeting or party that doesn't interest you and try to internalize why it may appeal to someone else. Try not to have one fixed viewpoint, but switch, interrelate, and interconnect between different cultures and per-

spectives. Attempt to develop a feeling for when to apply which model, concept, or tool in order to integrate rather than separate.

The fourth core ability, contextualizing the facilitation process within the characteristics of human development, requires an in-depth knowledge of how people change and grow. It is not enough to understand the concepts; practitioners must also work on their own personal development as well. They need to be able to process knowledge “spatially”—understanding how actions and decisions affect somebody in remote areas—and “temporally”—understanding how actions and decisions will impact people in the near and distant future. To help develop this perspective, the following questions could serve as a daily training: “How many hands has this product I am holding in my hands touched?” “What might those people have done to have this job and what are their dreams for the future?” and “How are those dreams connected to me, the consumer of this product?”

Observations from My Path

I have witnessed many colleagues and close friends involved in paradigm-change processes (see “Case Study” on p. 9). These practitioners gained their diverse working knowledge in leadership and management positions in the three sectors of civil society, economics, and politics. Those who have been successful demonstrated an extraordinarily high level of self-awareness and perceived themselves as global change agents. They participated in facilitation processes with curiosity and humbleness

In facilitating paradigm change, the practitioner acts as a vehicle for fundamental shifts in thought and action.



CASE STUDY

A global company struggled to maintain its position as a market leader in communication and strategy consulting. Due to lack of new opportunities to develop their full potential, innovative employees, who are the company's main resource, started to leave. Moreover, long-time clients reported that the company's credibility and its innovative spirit had declined. Worse still, the competition in the field increased.

In order to address these challenges, a group of employees was trained to act as internal change agents following the four-step approach of Paradigm-Change Facilitation:

Accessing – By taking adult development tests, team members became aware of their own mental models, biases, and feelings toward their co-workers. They also trained their core abilities. They mapped abundance- and scarcity-based realities as well as the “system of emotional relationships” within the company.

Interrelating – Based on the analysis, the team members created working hypotheses of how to strengthen the existing positive relationships among

company employees. They tested those in one-on-one dialogues and small-group discussions.

Learning – Every team member kept a “change diary” to note down the key learnings and their implications. In reflective learning sessions, they challenged their own mental models. By adjusting their hypotheses, they became more open to change themselves.

Inspiring – The change agents transformed their hypotheses into high-leverage intervention points, strategies, and actions. After that, they dissolved themselves back into the system and took part in the proposed actions.

Results of those interventions included a company-wide Innovation Day, new training modules, modified organizational processes, and more of “out-of-the-box” business models, and in turn increased employee satisfaction. Even though the project is still in process, it has already been observed that innovative employees now have more ways to work to their full potential and are thus more likely to remain in the company.

toward the past, present, and future, as well as with regard to the visible and non-visible parts of the system. I have been deeply impressed by their ability to think, feel, and act during an intervention while maintaining a learning instead of a knowing mindset. They demonstrated great rational, emotional, and spiritual skills. All of them showed a good working knowledge of multiple levels of human interaction and personal development concepts. They combined these with the principles and tools of empowerment, trust, mission, and passion.

Coming Back to Your Starting Point

To return to the propositions described above, I invite you to take out your notes from the short reflection you made at the beginning. To what degree do your notes correlate with the four stances and four core abilities I suggest?

In facilitating paradigm change, the practitioner acts as a vehicle for fundamental shifts in thought and action. This approach invites practitioners to understand that they are not using tools and methods to realize change, but that real transformation starts with the ability to make paradigm changes within ourselves. At the heart of this belief is the willingness of all participants in the process to recall the inner stances and core abilities that enable them to

reinvent themselves at every moment.

What daily exercises do you take part in to transform your own mindset so you can shape your organization toward higher performance? Here are some practices I learned during my research:

- When lying in bed at night, reflect on how you responded to the situations you encountered, how you learned from them, and how you tried to change the larger context.
- Reflect on the degree to which you are using yourself as a vehicle for change.
- Paint, write, or model the inner stances from which you seek to inspire change in the existing structures.

By following these and other practices, you are likely to improve your ability to lead fundamental change rather than working just on surface-level fixes. ■

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