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Change visits all of us

Sometimes it arrives like a storm, leaving us with little choice but to surrender. Sometimes it slips into our lives, unnoticed until we suddenly realise that nothing is quite the same anymore. And only rarely does it arrive gently

By T.T. Srinath

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As I watched the FIFA World Cup 2026 unfold, I could not help but think about change.

For years we have admired the brilliance of Messi, Modrić, Neymar and Ronaldo. They have stretched the boundaries of what seemed humanly possible, defying age, expectation and, perhaps, even time itself. Yet this World Cup reminded us that there comes a moment when change takes over. No matter how fiercely greatness resists it, time eventually asks even the greatest to step aside.



And yet, change has not been cruel.

As one generation slowly leaves the centre stage, another begins to write its own story. Watching nineteen-year-old Lamine Yamal

was a reminder of that. There is something profoundly moving in the image of a young boy, once cradled affectionately by his hero Messi, now standing on the same stage as that hero prepares to bring an extraordinary career to its close.

Perhaps that is the beauty of change.

It closes one chapter only so another can begin.

The World Cup, in its own way, taught us two important lessons—the grace of embracing change and the sadness of resisting it.

These thoughts remain with me because I had recently been consulting with an organisation on the subject of Change Management.

As I usually do at the beginning of any workshop, I asked the participants a simple question:

“What would you like to take away from these two days?”

One gentleman stood up and asked me something I will never forget.

“Before we begin,” he said, “can you tell me whether this workshop comes with positive intent, or is it meant to tell us what is wrong with us?”

His question stopped me.

I asked him what made him ask that.

His answer was honest, disarming and, I suspect, shared by many others in the room.

“When you say ‘change management’,” he said, “what I hear is that what I am doing today is not good enough. I hear that I need to become someone different because who I am isn’t enough.”

The more I reflected on his words, the more I realised how often I have felt something similar myself.

Whenever someone has told me, “You need to change,” there has almost always been a subtle sting attached to those words. Hidden beneath the advice is an uncomfortable message—that somehow I am falling short.

Perhaps that is why so many people instinctively resist change.

Maybe they are not resisting the change itself.

Maybe they are resisting the judgement they believe accompanies it.

That conversation made me wonder whether we, as consultants, leaders and facilitators, need to become much more compassionate in the language we use.

Instead of communicating, “There is something wrong with you,” perhaps we need to say,

“There may be another way that will help you become even more effective.”

The intention is the same.

The experience for the listener is completely different.

This reflection also made me revisit Kurt Lewin’s beautifully simple model of organisational change—Unfreeze. Change. Refreeze.

For years I have taught this framework. Recently, however, I have begun to appreciate it differently.

Perhaps unfreezing is not about dismantling who we are.

Perhaps it is about gently loosening our grip on those beliefs, habits and assumptions that no longer serve us.

Not because they are wrong.

But because they may have outlived their usefulness.

When people are given the psychological safety to examine their own assumptions without feeling judged, they often become remarkably willing to let go of what limits them.

Only then does the middle stage—change—begin to feel less threatening.

It is no longer an instruction imposed from outside.

It becomes a choice that grows naturally from within.

People begin to ask themselves,

“What else is possible?”

“What might work better?”

“Who could I become if I were willing to experiment?”

That is a very different conversation from telling someone they need fixing.

And perhaps that is where real transformation begins.

If, with curiosity rather than interrogation, care instead of confrontation, and commitment instead of indifference, we can help people see how a small shift in thinking or behaviour can enrich their lives, then change stops feeling like punishment.

It becomes possibility.

If we then allow them the freedom to experiment—to succeed, to stumble, to practise and to learn without fear of embarrassment or punishment—they begin to own that change.

And once people own it, they rarely have to be forced to sustain it.

This leads me to another question organisations often ask after a workshop.

“How do we sustain the learning?”

It is a question I have heard countless times.

For many years, I answered it by recommending follow-up sessions, coaching, reinforcement and action plans.

Today, I think differently.

I am beginning to believe that most workshop learning fades because much of it remains cognitive.

People leave inspired.

They leave informed.

But very often they do not leave transformed.

Information, by itself, rarely changes deeply held beliefs.

If the unfreezing has not happened first—if people have not had the opportunity to honestly question the assumptions that govern their lives—then new learning settles on the surface.

It inspires for a while.

Then life takes over.

But when individuals are gently helped to recognise the beliefs that have limited them, without shame or psychological hurt, something much deeper becomes possible.

The new ideas they encounter no longer remain information.

They become personally meaningful.

With encouragement, reflection, practice and support, they gradually become part of who the person is.

Perhaps that is what lasting learning really looks like.

And perhaps that is why I find myself wondering whether the time has come to retire the phrase “Change Management.”

Maybe what organisations really need is not better change management.

Maybe they need a more compassionate way of inviting people to grow.

Because growth feels hopeful.

Change, for many, still feels like criticism.

And there is a profound difference between asking someone to become different because they are inadequate, and inviting them to become more of who they are capable of being.

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