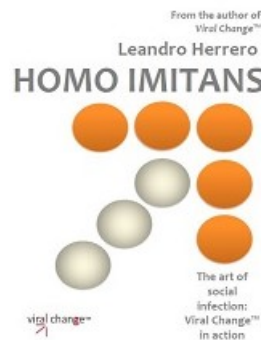


HOMO IMITANS



Sample Chapter 3 A Tale of Two Worlds

Distribution permitted with full reference to the book
Homo Imitans- the art of social Infection; Viral Change™ in action by
Leandro Herrero. Meetingminds (2011)

Other books by Leandro Herrero

The trouble with Management *(out of print)*

The Leader with Seven Faces

Finding your own ways of practicing leadership in today's organization

New Leaders wanted: Now Hiring!

12 kinds of people you must find, seduce, hire and create a job for

Viral Change™

The alternative to Slow, Painful and Unsuccessful Management of Change in Organizations

Disruptive Ideas. 10+10+10=1000

The maths of Viral Change™ that transforms organizations

Ideas Rompedoras

Las reglas del Cambio Viral para transformer organizaciones

Homo Imitans

The art of social infection: Viral Change™ in action

However:

Work Could Be Remarkable

The Flipping Point

Deprogramming management

Coming soon:

The Book of Change

Universal rules for change makers

Camino

Leadership notes on the road

Unplugged

Organizations under new management

Homo Imitans

The art of social infection: Viral Change™ in action (second edition)

Exotics on the payroll

The anthropology of life in organizations

Victims or agents?

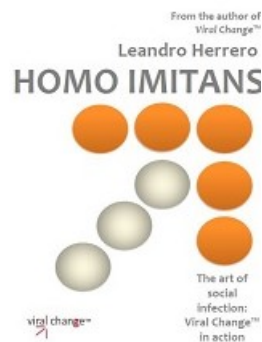
The modern choices of employee engagement

All books are available from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Blackwell, Waterstones, Books Etc. and many other bookshops.

For book enquiries and bulk orders please contact:

meetingminds@thechalfontproject.com

HOMO IMITANS



The art of social infection:
Viral Change™ in action

Leandro Herrero

HOMO IMITANS



A DIVISION OF THE CHALFONT PROJECT
The Charter Building, Uxbridge, UB8 1JG, UK
meetingminds@thechalfontproject.com

Text Copyright © 2010-2011 Leandro Herrero

Leandro Herrero has asserted his moral right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written consent of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer

The Author and **meetingminds** shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the information contained in this book.

Published by:

meetingminds

PO Box 1192, HP9 1YQ, United Kingdom

www.meetingminds.com

ISBN Paperback edition:

10-Digit: 1-905776-07-1

13-Digit: 978-1-905776-07-8

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library

Contents

1	Copy ergo sum (cogito is a bonus)	1
2	The social life of Homo Imitans	19
3	A tale of two worlds	53
4	The five disciplines of Viral Change™	85
4.1	It's behaviours!	99
4.2	Scalable influence	125
4.3	Informal networks	151
4.4	Accelerating a new narrative	163
4.5	Leaders outside the charts	173
5	Viral Change™ in action	181
6	The art of social infection	203
7	Viral Change™ cannot fail (it can also fail)	227
	Annex–The human condition: a guide for the perplexed	237
	Bibliography	281



3

A tale of two worlds

We've been getting it wrong time after time. Change management programmes that fail to deliver, many inefficiencies in the management of organizations, the poor performance and big disappointments of government-orchestrated social change interventions, the failed civic or religious campaigns to develop and implement a 'social agenda', the slow, painful and often unsuccessful health education and promotion initiatives...in short, lots of failed attempts to change behaviours in a large population, either inside the firm or in the outside world.

They all have something in common. All these failures stem from the misunderstanding of the differences between two separate worlds, each with their own rules and their own tempo: the world of communication (world I) and the world of behaviours (world II).

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

These worlds are very different. I have summarized these differences in the graph at the end of this chapter. Yet we mix up these worlds all the time, like mixing apples and pears, pretending that they are the same. After all, they're both fruit. We cross the border between these two worlds at our convenience and we use their attributes indistinctively. And this is where the problem starts.

I deeply believe that achieving success in any of the goals described before, from internal management in the organization to an external macro-social change, depends on mastering both (a) the understanding of and respect for the differences between the two worlds and (b) the establishing of bridges between them without getting them mixed up. Management in particular has not learnt the distinction between world I and world II. It muddles them together as if they were one single territory. The consequences are a series of messy and wrong expectations either about people or 'management systems'.

Things that belong to world I are expected to deliver outcomes that belong to world II and vice versa. For example, behavioural change (world II) is expected to follow an information or communication cascade (world I). Every single day in the management of organizations this mistake is made. The mistake costs time, effort, and results, at the very least, in inefficient management and leadership. Let's look at this in detail.

World I

In this world, the currency is information: verbal, written or electronic information that flows all around and between us. This is the world of facts, the world with pieces of data or packages of knowledge flowing from one place to another. Homo Sapiens and management love this world. The information is packaged and pre-cooked so that it is digestible, usually presented in PowerPoint dishes or contained in spreadsheet

HOMO IMITANS

prisons (after all, we call the boxes 'cells'). Bullet points flood corporate life, encapsulating and summarizing thoughts.

In this world, company visions are presented and declarations of intention made. We 'send' guidelines, announcements, directions, pieces of news, congratulations, threats, tricks, explanations on the steps needed to go from A to B and anything else that the label 'communication' can accommodate. The 'organizational logic' is explained and distributed this way. It travels 'down' using traditional communication vehicles (from emails to posters, newsletters and magazines) or more modern media (video, audio or a combination of both).

Formal verbal interactions take place in world I. A significant amount of our time is dedicated to this world. We have 'collaboration devices' to facilitate the currency exchange: meetings, forums, workshops, town hall presentations, seminars, webcasts and podcasts. Technology has helped us to communicate in bigger and better ways. Fibre optics can now transfer 10 trillion bits of information per second¹.

Information can be used, reused, packaged and repackaged. And what's more, it's able to reach your eyes/screen/earphones on demand. E-mail is pervasive in this world. The corporate executive or the individual professional is 'always on', on demand, connected to a server 24/7. The arrival of a piece of information to your (big, small or minuscule) screen is announced by a blip that triggers a Pavlovian reaction. There is no way that information, the currency of world I, would not get to you.

In this world, big seems to be beautifully linear as well: the more information pushed down to the bottom, the more pipes or channels used, the more flow created...the better it seems. Indeed, this is a world of channels, vehicles and their language:

¹ A 2008 version of a series of video presentations entitled 'Did you know?' contains astonishing information about the 'exponential times' we live in, as the authors put it. (See for example <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cL9Wu2kWWSY>)

flow, block, saturation, etc. The pathways are algorithmic, pardon my language. It means that usually the roads are more or less preset and laid out like on a geographical map. You can go from A to Z via different roads—either meandering along the scenic route or taking the highway—but you have to stick to the map. In large organizations, the organization chart represents the information highways (algorithms) for the ‘cascade down’.

● ● ●
Success in
world I is
defined by the
quality and
quantity of the
currency
(information)
going down the
organizational
pipes.

● ● ●
Success in world I is defined by the quantity and quality of the currency that reaches its destination points. In a 1,000-employee organization, the aim of a communication campaign is to reach 1,000 points of arrival. Simple. The assumption is then that 1,000 people will understand the message and that, as a result, 1,000 people will be ‘engaged’ in a particular way (intellectually, emotionally). The latter is difficult to validate other than by invoking the corporate equivalent of the ‘deus ex machina’: the post hoc fallacy. In other words, we did communication campaign A, we improved B (results, performance, employee survey data), ergo, the communication campaign did it. In most cases, this is a very weak argument dominating a strong and convenient management belief.

World I is a ‘stock economy’ where the recipients of communication (‘information stocks’) are either full, half full or empty. More currency will fill up an empty recipient as needed to increase the stock. World I is also a push-world. Exercise enough ‘pressure’ from the north, the outputs will come south (and maybe west and east). It is a ‘Big Splash’ world or, as I called it in my previous book *Viral Change*[™], a tsunami approach with the epicentre at the centre of power and the waves reaching all company shores. The push-world craves hierarchy because it needs to use the top-down channels (as described in the

HOMO IMITANS

organization chart) and some sort of command system. As a navigation system it is very effective and predictable. The organization here is consciously or unconsciously seen as a complex plumbing system of interconnected top-down pipes. Management is in charge of the valves.

Because of this apparent predictability and obvious visibility of the currency 'going down', the temptation is to repeat that process to be more effective. To the linear mind, pushing again would be duplicating the message and duplicating the message is seen as a success factor. Indeed, many studies suggest that messages in the organization need to be 'heard' three to five times before the doors of the brain and the heart start to open. Not surprisingly, typical management mantras are 'you can never communicate enough' and 'communicate, communicate, communicate'².

However, anybody who has worked in large or medium-sized organizations knows that the effect of many repeated internal communication campaigns is saturation of the channels. Or, in everyday language: employee switch-off. "We have heard it all before", "Here we go again", "Yeah, yeah, sure, whatever!"

² Advocates of the big splash communication process would say that this is a stereotype and that there is merit in ensuring that information/communication reaches all the employees consistently. This way, decisions, for example, are made based on what employees themselves learn or take from that information. This is behind the concept of 'information cascades', a term first described in the context of understanding how fashions are created (See: Bikhchandani, S., D. Hirshleifer, I. Welch. 1992. A theory of fads, fashion, custom, and cultural change as informational cascades. *The Journal of Political Economy*. 100(5):992-1026). Today, this has become more of a generic term for a systematic push of communication. Within the organization, the cascade attempts to ensure consistency and availability of facts. There is a well-understood potential flaw in many information cascades. It assumes that each 'echelon' will receive fresh and clean information and will act independently fresh as well. But in reality, the deeper the cascade flows, the greater the probability that people will follow previously interpreted information. It is the Chinese whispers of internal communications. There are many ways to manage that problem and professional communicators know how to deal with this. Unfortunately, in many cases it is all up to the power of the 'PowerPoint presentation' cascading down for managers to use and repeat.

In an information-cluttered working environment where many ‘initiatives’ compete for airtime, repeated top-down communications become terribly inefficient. In Cluttered Corporate Inc, noise and signal get blurred. Eventually all is noise. The biggest health hazard of world I is information pollution.

● ● ●
Attrition is not
only embedded,
amazingly, we
have come to
accept that this
is perfectly OK,
a natural part of
the process.

In fact, the mathematics of world I are the maths of attrition: start with aiming at everybody and then cascade down. Information will reach initial destinations (stocks). Some people will pay attention. From those first ‘receivers’, some people will pay enough attention to understand. From those, some will consider doing something. From those, some will

actually attempt to do something. When you get to the terminus, a relatively small percentage has been truly influenced by the communication(s). Attrition is not only embedded, amazingly, we have come to accept that this is perfectly OK, a natural part of the process.

To fight attrition, we usually have a not-so-secret weapon: repetition. A new, bigger and better communication campaign will take place. This time perhaps communication packages will be prepared for VPs. VPs will brief directors, directors will have workshops with managers and managers have meetings with staff. And this way, ‘everybody will have gone through it’ (this is the language you hear) to ensure consistency. It is a noble and expensive goal. Large budgets are allocated, but the programmes have relatively small impact.

HOMO IMITANS

In the macro-social arena we are confronted with a similar machine-gun approach every day. Health promotion and disease prevention campaigns aim at everybody, everywhere, with a lot of noise and money involved. Their goals: awareness and sensitization. People sometimes use the word ‘motivation’. Motivating people here is bombarding them with enough rational and emotional appeal to get them on board. But they fail to deliver the desired significant change when the main focus is

● ● ●
World I could
also be
described as an
advocacy world.
It is the world of
the logical or
emotional
arguments, the
pros and cons,
the rational
appeal.

the communication. Some sensitization may take place and this is good. No question about that. But attrition maths are built in. Within world I, the only way to improve the results is to follow up with bigger sensitization campaigns. The impact is not zero, it is simply disproportionately low for the cost and effort.

World I could also be described as an advocacy world. It is the world of the logical or emotional arguments, the pros and cons, the rational appeal (‘here is B as a better alternative to A; would you not do B? We must do B!’).

● ● ●
Thousands of advocacy hours are spent debating those pros and cons, the rationality and the need, the logic and the direction. It’s all brains and possibly some hearts. Ideas and information are conveyed, digested, analyzed, internalized, reframed, developed, improved, converted and passed on. Homo Sapiens loves it. Within the organization, world I managers are information traffic wardens.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with world I. What we know as education and training lives in this world. Traditional change management programmes also belong here. A whole industry of consultants, trainers and change-managers live in world I. But ‘activity’ here is magnetic. With its magic of quantifiable and

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

visible parameters that can be accounted for or paid for, ‘activity’ soon takes over.

Very often, the vehicle (activity) takes over from the message. Business becomes busy-ness. Therefore, a ‘change management programme’ is often defined by its number of workshops and perhaps its number of consultants, paid by the number of hours they spend on the ground³. Remember, big is beautiful in world I. But the effectiveness track record here is about 40%...and that’s if you’re being generous.

If you spend most of your time preparing presentations for people who have to deliver a presentation or in meetings, workshops, brainstorming sessions, focus groups, user groups, classrooms or boardrooms, you are probably a citizen of world I.

World II

Then there is world II. This is the world of behaviours. In this world, the currency is action itself. It is not a better world or a worse world, just a different world. World II is the world of ‘day-to-day-doing’ and visible behaviours⁴. Behaviours are reinforced or they’re not. When reinforced (recognized, rewarded, given air time...), they will tend to increase in frequency. If not, they will

³ Numbers are magic and provide immense comfort, reassurance and legitimization. That is why so often the measurement becomes the objective, the target, the real qualifier and the hijacker of airtime: a 100K salary, a 200K programme, a quarterly seminar, a 10-trainer/12-month deployment, a 30-day waiting list, a 2-million Customer Relationship Management programme. Value equals numbers in the quantitative world, which for obvious reasons dominates most of the business world. It would be crazy to disregard numbers, but it is even crazier to manage by numbers alone. (See my article *Prisoners of the numbers* that can be downloaded from the Ideas Lab Section of www.thechalfontproject.com)

⁴ Behaviours are visible units of action which can be attributed to an agent (which is the social sciences way of saying ‘you and me’). Not all that is called behaviour is a true behaviour. The label ‘behaviour’ must have unequivocal meaning. ‘Collaboration’, for example, sounds like a behaviour, but it only becomes a true behaviour when you and I have agreed on what exactly we want to see people doing or not doing. Those actions we are then happy to call collaboration. Until that point, ‘collaboration’ is a concept that only has the potential of being translated into behaviours. We’ll see more of this in chapter 4.1.

HOMO IMITANS

fade. In world II, the consequences of the behaviours dictate how much of them we see. No matter what the 'origin' of the behaviours was, their life is governed by their consequences. Behaviours may become acceptable or unacceptable, rewarded or punished. They will lead you to a promotion or to a deserted island.

Behaviours are exhibited, displayed, demonstrated by individuals or groups. They cannot be sent via email. They do not appear on your blackberry. They are not packaged in PowerPoint. Actually, they do not like PowerPoint at all.

Yes, you can describe them verbally or on paper, on a screen, a flipchart, corporate brochures, a bullet point list or anywhere else...but they do not have a life there. Their reality is in the action. Even when we say that 'we teach behaviours', we don't. We explain them and ask people to imagine them, we warn about them, praise them or encourage people to have them. But this is reminiscent of Plato's cave. The PowerPoint shadows of the behaviours are not the behaviours themselves.

World II behaviours, its currency, are mostly copied by others. Conscious or unconscious imitation makes them scalable. Social imitation and social copying take care of most of their spread. Behaviours are multiplied through influence and travel through social networks (of the organization, of society) in a heuristic way, pardon my language again. That means spreading through the proximity and connectivity of the individuals in the social network. As I have already mentioned, in this world, being a friend, a friend of a friend, 'somebody like me', a peer or somebody you trust has

● ● ●
Behaviours are
exhibited,
demonstrated.
They cannot be
sent via email.
They do not
appear on your
blackberry.
They are not
packaged in
PowerPoint.
Actually, they
do not like
PowerPoint at
all.

● ● ●

far more power in terms of shaping your behaviour than any information package you may have received in your inbox.

It is also a non-linear world where small is beautiful and usually has a big impact. A small number of well-chosen behaviours has the power to create big impact in the organization when they are well-spread and reinforced. And that applies to big problems too. Once the social contagion of these behaviours has started, critical masses will appear ('this is how we do it now') and others

will join in. "*We stopped doing X months ago. Everybody now does Y*", is often heard. And you perhaps wonder: "*Since when? How? What happened?*" Suddenly we seem to have a new way of doing things and it is not always obvious what triggered it or how it happened. Social scientists have that famous word for it, which we have already encountered in previous chapters: conformity. It is mostly irrational and unconscious: something that often terrifies Homo Sapiens.

● ● ●
World II
behaviours are
mostly copied
by others.
Imitation makes
them scalable.
Behaviours are
multiplied
through
influence and
travel through
social networks.

The vehicles in world II are the social networks, visible or invisible, silent or noisy. Actually, in this world, they are the organization or the macro-social

● ● ●
fabric of society. Nurturing the network is nurturing the organization, as I will explain in chapter 4.3. By the same token, ignoring the social network is ignoring the organization, which is something no manager can afford to do. Diffusion of behaviours through these social networks has its laws. Every day, we learn more about them, what works and doesn't work, what makes a behaviour scale up and what doesn't.

For example, we know that some nodes in the social network (my apologies for calling you a node) have far more power than others in influencing the behaviours of many. The social network

HOMO IMITANS

has no democratic or equalitarian properties. Some nodes are highly connected and well-positioned. They are hubs, always amplifying. If these powerful nodes exhibit a particular behaviour, good or bad, this behaviour will have a high probability of being copied and soon you'll have a new norm. In the organization, these hubs or amplifiers or highly connected-highly influential people can be found anywhere on the organization chart and across all layers of management and staff. Social network connectivity and organization chart connectivity have little to do with one another. I am using connectivity as a proxy for influence. Not all influence is connectivity, but there is no high connectivity without influence, good or bad.

But we also know that sometimes new social norms appear around us, inside or outside the firm, and they cannot simply be traced back to those particularly well-connected and influential people. We do not know why or how, but what we see is that 'the mountain is on fire'. Surely somebody started a fire somewhere. But we don't know who. Or perhaps there was more than one arsonist. Or maybe there were a few little fires which suddenly joined and created a big fire. Oh well! Who knows? We have a fire.

World II is a 'connect economy' where what matters is how behaviours travel around and create norms (read also: cultures). The connections dictate how behaviours spread, but also how fast and how powerful. Connectivity in world II makes the difference between a brief fad, a stable fashion or a social revolution.

World II is the world of social infections and social epidemics. In world II, success is defined by the magnitude and stability of a social infection. For example, is it an epidemic or just the behavioural sniffles? Is it the fad of the week or has it actually

become the norm, ‘the new way of doing things here’?

● ● ●
World II is a ‘pull’ world. In this world, behaviours don’t spread top-down or even bottom-up. They spread multi-centric. By the power of imitation and social copying, your behaviour is pulling other behaviours around you.

World II is a ‘pull’ world, not a push world. In this world, behaviours don’t spread top-down or even bottom-up. They spread multi-centric. By the power of imitation and social copying, your behaviour is pulling other behaviours around you. You may or may not be conscious of it. Remember the example of the first day in the office and the power of unwritten rules.

The existence of those (incredibly valuable!) well-connected nodes means that they are pulling people together all the time and at a scale. If for whatever reason people copy them or mirror them, the pull power of a few must be worth dozens of workshops with partially awake delegates.

World II is a heterarchy⁵ ‘with no centre’. Here, ‘butterfly effects’⁶ are powerful because the creation of a small ‘build-up of behaviours’ has the potential power to create widespread impact and a big infection.

⁵ The term has been used by many disciplines as the ‘opposite’ of hierarchy, but Warren Sturgis McCulloch is credited with the original use of the term to describe how the brain works. In case you didn’t realize, there is no hierarchy in the brain and no command-or-control centre. The brain governs us, but has no governor itself.

⁶ In my book, *Viral Change*, butterfly management of change (‘the wings of a butterfly can trigger a hurricane’) is my term for the opposite of the traditional top-down tsunami approach.

HOMO IMITANS

To follow our previous example: 1,000 employees in world II can be ‘pulled’ (engaged, convinced, infected, changed, converted, influenced, transformed, enlisted...) by a small group of highly influential, highly connected, highly trusted people at a good

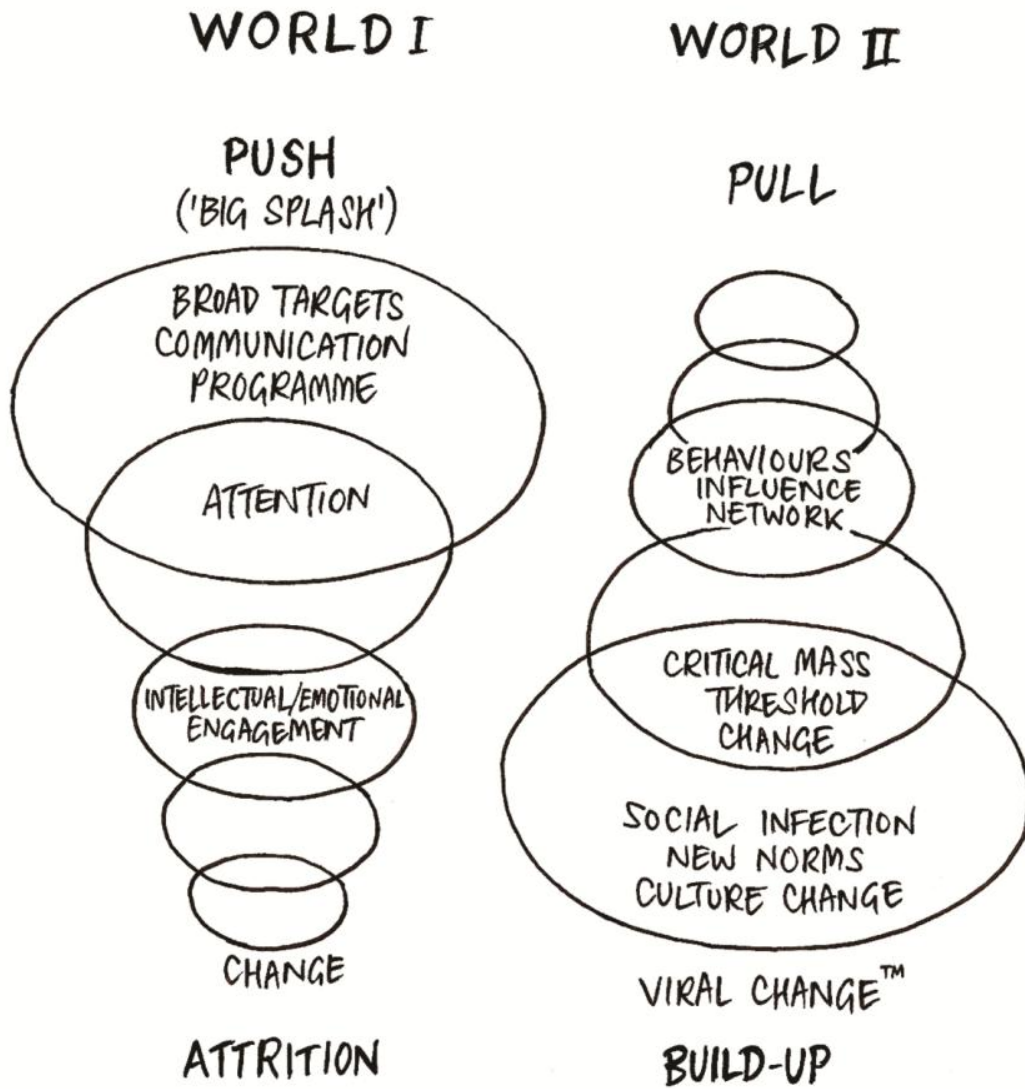
● ● ●
World II is the world of behavioural change and organizational change. Micro- and macro-social change live here. It’s home to Homo Imitans and above all: it’s viral.
● ● ●

pace. For this to work, people in that relatively small group need to be activists, not just advocates. This means that in their interactions with peers, they need to exhibit the desired behaviours, put joint commitments in place and act on the commitments agreed on. This will lead to an emerging and true change of behaviours.

In Viral Change™, we identify these highly influential, highly connected, highly trusted people because we need them as the engine of behavioural change. But let me be clear. If they were asked to just convey information (communicate the values and change objectives, communicate how we need to work differently, for example), they

would at best be super-advocates (i.e. super information traffic wardens). They would perhaps create some sort of ‘viral communication’⁷, which would be the equivalent of moving from copper to fibre optics within the organization. But remember: communication is not change.

⁷ Without claiming credit or falling prey to a post-hoc fallacy, the publication of my book *Viral Change* was followed by a series of publications on viral communication. But viral communication is not viral change. Viral communication is a legitimate way to communicate, a legitimate world I activity. Communication, viral or not, is not change.



HOMO IMITANS

However, when these influencers kick into real action, the effects are strong and noticeable. They are far more sustainable than the top-down plumbing brigades of world I could ever dream of. Their effects are faster. Later in the book I'll tackle the identification and engagement of these 'powerful people' who are sometimes hidden in the organization and perhaps have never been asked to help.

World II is the world of behavioural change, organizational change, culture building and culture change. Micro- and macro-social change and purposeful social infections live here. And it's home to Homo Imitans. The combination of a well-defined small set of behaviours, a relatively small group of highly influential, highly connected individuals and the presence of a social network forms the basis for Viral Change™. Viral change is truly world II territory.

The two worlds side by side

Mr Sapiens and Mr Imitans live in different places, but though they should build bridges between them and then use them every day, they should also be very mindful of their different worlds. World II objectives cannot be achieved in world I territory. Social infections (world II) are not created by posters. Revolutions are not announced. Well, not usually. Social movements and cultures are not created by training. Communication (world I) is not change.

As the figure on the previous page illustrates, the maths of world II could not be more different from the maths of world I. Attrition is to world I what build/scale-up is to world II. World II effects start small, often unnoticed, with selected behaviours being practiced by a small number of individuals.

These are then copied by people in their immediate circle of influence and create 'clusters of new behaviours': true new critical masses, copied and spread by others like an infection, eventually generating 'new norms'.

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

Let’s look at the differences between world I and world II in some real-life organizational examples. Note that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the contents of world I, but its main problem is poor scalability and sustainability, for which it needs the help of world II as we will see later on. When you look at the highlights in each column, you may have lots of questions. Don’t worry, as the rest of the book will hopefully answer all of them. For now, it’s enough to simply appreciate the differences or perhaps increase your awareness of which world you spend most of your time in.

Creating a culture of safety	
World I	World II
Health and Safety Awareness campaign (make safety understood) Safety rules and manuals Safety communication campaign Health & Safety personnel deployment Obligatory training Key intervention process Safety improvement programme On-the-job training and review Incident review and safety reports Repeated appeals from top management to change behaviours and avoid accidents Scalability: poor. Needs continuous training and repeated campaigns for rational and emotional appeal	Small set of non-negotiable behaviours leading to safety ‘Design’ and diffusion of social infection (make safety contagious) Identification and engagement of highly connected and influential individuals (‘champions’), not necessarily from management ranks Peer-to-peer conversations in the workplace and joint commitment to spread behaviours (activism) Review behaviours for sustainability Reinforcement (reward, recognition) of key non-negotiable behaviours Epidemic of safe acts Stories of success back to world I for non-viral communication Scalability: viral. Starts small, creates critical masses or ‘new norms’, new ‘ways of doing’

HOMO IMITANS

Continuous improvement and Lean Six Sigma (LSS)	
World I	World II
<p>LSS methodology in place Formal leadership training roles (Black/Green belts) Training workshops for managers and lower levels Process problem(s) identified Methodology applied Problem(s) solved Lessons learned Repeated appeals from management to improve processes and eliminate waste Repeated training</p> <p>Scalability: poor. New situation, new application of same methodology. Repetition, increasing training if needed. Often unable to embed in culture</p>	<p>Extract pattern of behaviours behind (systemic?) issues Define non-negotiable behaviours ‘Design’ and diffusion of social infection (of behaviours to improve process, etc.) Identification and engagement of champions (no formal Black/Green belts) Peer-to-peer conversations and joint commitment to spread behaviours (activism) Review behaviours for sustainability Support small community of activists Stories of success back to world I for non-viral communication</p> <p>Scalability: viral, peer-to-peer, no formal role or authority. New critical masses of individuals create new norms and culture change</p>

Creating a collaborative culture/environment	
World I	World II
<p>Webcast from CEO on the importance of collaboration and teamwork Define types of collaboration Training in cross-discipline communication Understanding people’s working styles Collaboration seminar Training programme Teamwork seminars and team building exercises Use of collaborative software</p> <p>Scalability: Poor. Retrain, team building follow-up.</p>	<p>Define and ‘translate’ collaboration into small set of non-negotiable behaviours ‘Design’ and diffusion of social infection (‘make collaboration fashionable’)⁸ Identification and engagement of champions (connected and influential, non-managers) Peer-to-peer conversations and joint commitment to spread specific and well-defined collaborative behaviours Measure progression of the behaviours’ embedment ‘Invisible’ support to champions Stories of success to world I for non-viral communication</p> <p>Scalability: viral. Collaborative behaviours become the norm</p>

⁸ I personally use these two sometimes interchangeable expressions: ‘Let’s make X fashionable’ or ‘let’s create an internal epidemic of X’. Not only does this terminology help focus on world II, but it is also strong and memorable (and it is a real representation of what we do in Viral Change™).

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

Deploying⁹ a new corporate value system	
World I	World II
<p>Communication campaign Visible presence of value system in posters Intranet presence Town Hall meetings with senior management at all sites Other stakeholder involvement Workshops cascaded down for awareness , understanding and application into specific work areas New values incorporated in a modified performance management system (performance appraisals) for all management levels</p> <p>Scalability: Poor once the cascade is finished. Success defined by number of workshops and number of people 'gone through' the program. Several follow-up conferences on values planned</p>	<p>Refined articulation of behaviours for each value: what must be visible? Choice of key non-negotiable behaviours associated with the values 'Design' and diffusion of social infection. (make behaviours [from values] the norm) Identification and engagement of champions (non-managers, some supervisors) Peer-to-peer conversations and joint commitment to (a) ensure understanding and (b) exhibit/practice specific non-negotiable behaviours connected with the value system Support to champions' community Measure behaviours' progression of spread, not the understanding of values Stories of success to world I for non-viral communication</p> <p>Scalability: high, viral. Behaviours become the norm after new, small 'critical masses' are formed everywhere</p>

World I and world II are also present in the macro-social world. Tackling an epidemic of street violence, for example, is done quite differently in both worlds as the following summary shows. These differences have tremendous implications when crafting mechanisms to tackle epidemics from a social policy perspective.

In the course of our Viral Change™ programmes, usually early on in the phase of exposing people to the techniques and the principles, there is always somebody who, for very good reasons, reacts to the world I-world II dichotomy by saying, “This is too

⁹ Note the corporate language used here and commonly seen everywhere: 'deploying'. 'cascading' or 'disseminating' (on top of 'communicating' itself). It is world I, stock economy language.

HOMO IMITANS

Addressing street violence, youth gangs ¹⁰	
World I	World II
Awareness campaign: the tragedy of violence ‘Hearts and minds campaign’ Schools campaign Street demonstrations against violence Community leaders (religious, civic) reaching out, making the case for non-violence Police posters: call in confidence Social workers’ conference Teachers’ conference Church services inviting to non-violence Appeals to families Government campaign: TV, radio Scalability: Poor. Continuous noise and presence, repeated campaigns (based upon hope of ‘changing hearts and minds’)	Identification and engagement of same age, same origin influential people (‘champions’): no hierarchical figures of any kind Recruit ex-gang members ‘Design’ and diffusion of social infection (geography, pace) Very small set of key non-negotiable behaviours, including (1) real life intervention on streets and (2) confronting defeatism (‘we will never get rid of this’) Champions’ ‘training’ Champions in action Support for and cross-learning from champions Counter-epidemic mode Stories of success to world I for non-viral communication Scalability: viral, counter-epidemic

black and white!” This is only natural. Indeed, our minds resist the categorization, as deep inside, we tend to believe that most things are grey, a mixture, a bit of this and a bit of that. That gives the mind the comfort of allowing for possibilities and often the freedom of not being forced to declare its allegiance too soon.

When people become aware of how much time they spend in the corridors of world I, they tend to panic and say, “*Hey, wait a minute. We are in world II as well. We do X and we do Y!*” However, very often, their argument is not that strong, not very convincing and even a little bit defensive.

The obvious source of misinterpretation is the concept of behaviours itself. Although I will address behaviours in more

¹⁰ The Chicago ‘ceasefire’ project is explained in more detail in chapter 6.

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

detail in chapter 4.1, let's clarify something here straight away. When a cascaded-down communication programme takes place, perhaps gratuitously labelled 'change programme', and workshops start popping up like mushrooms, there will be lots of discussions and interactions between people, lots of note-taking and lots of action points agreed upon.

The 'employee engagement' industry, having a ball, claims that all this is 'behaving', i.e. doing something practical and therefore surely an ingredient of world II. I can hardly disagree with the fact that verbal behaviour is a form of behaviour. However, the question is whether that 'talking-behaving' (world I) is conducive to 'new behaviour-behaving' (world II) or simply remains an information interchange between brains (and some hearts). Understanding and planning for behaving is not behaving¹¹.

Another point of 'conflict' usually comes from one-to-one interactions aimed at change. For example, is coaching (world I) successful? Of course it can be, depending on quality, etc. Far be it from me to say that the one-to-one quality interactions between individual and coach are useless or that they will not result in substantial behavioural change in the coached individual. But as a social infector, coaching does not rank very high as a mechanism for social change as it is hardly scalable. I would not discourage coaching for managers and leaders and it can be a good use of time or resources. However, unless you have the budget to coach 90% of the corporate population (surely a nirvanic scenario for some), I don't see how this is going to change the culture of the organization anytime soon.

¹¹ Organizations spend more time preparing for doing than actually doing. We should remember the riddle: Five frogs are sitting on a log. Four decide to jump off. How many are left on the log? Five, because there is a difference between deciding and doing.

HOMO IMITANS

World I and world II are co-existing worlds. And in order for them to benefit from each other, they need to be linked and work together. But before that can happen, you need to make sure that your expectations from each world are correct.

In the example of the safety culture, there is no suggestion whatsoever that you stop any safety training or any awareness and sensitization campaigns. Nor does it suggest that you avoid any strong declaration from senior management about the inexcusable state of safety in the firm. But all this in itself does not have the power to change the organizational culture unless individuals actually exhibit concrete safety behaviours which are mimicked and copied by others in a way that becomes the norm and permanently changes ‘the way we do things here’. What is intellectually acquired and emotionally hosted through training and awareness can fade at the speed of light unless it is translated into behaviours which are socially infected and scaled up.

Similar arguments apply to the other examples. A process-improving system of training such as Lean Six Sigma¹² (LSS) may have its place in the organization’s world I. However, when specific behaviours impairing continuous improvement are identified (which hopefully is a clear aim of the exercise), the only way to then change the culture to one defined by continuous improvement ‘as a way of living’ is large-scale behavioural change, not large-scale training.

¹² Under the LSS umbrella there are some variations. I am using it here in a generic way to describe continuous improvement programmes, substantially based on training, directed by specific role-holders (trainers, Green/Black belts, etc.)

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

Same for the case of the value system in need of ‘deployment’. Please do not stop the CEO or leaders at any level from articulating loud and clear what the values are, and why and how these values will lead to success. And please, use any traditional, web 2.0, or social media communication system to make sure that these values are explained explicitly in all the corners of your empire. However, if you really want to be remembered for more than your posters, your videos, your PowerPoints, your workshops and your contribution to the unstoppable sales growth of Post-its, please do me a favour and think ‘infection’ and ‘epidemic’. For that, you need to add world II ‘activism’ to the mix and find a way to spread the behaviours associated with the values so that they become ‘the culture’. You may have your Homo Sapiens ‘engaged’, but you need your Homo Imitans to make it real¹³.

The following real-life case highlights very common challenges seen again and again in post M&A or re-structuring situations. It shows how difficult it is to leave world I territory and the risks of not trying seriously (or not knowing how to do it).

¹³ People always say, “Let’s communicate the objectives and their rationale, let intelligent and well-paid people digest and ‘apply’ these, let them interpret a pre-cooked and communicated set of behaviours (for example, pre-defined in a new vision for the firm) and then our people will behave accordingly. Behaviours will happen as a consequence of the communication about behaviours...” Really? Behaviours, the currency of world II, cannot be disseminated or made scalable in world I.

I reorganize ergo sum

A reorganization has taken place. A new structure amalgamating old divisions is in place and now the ways of doing must change. The Big Consulting Company has left (well, not quite, they never do) and there is a myriad of PowerPoints and fresh materials articulating the new structure, the new operating model and the new processes and systems in extreme detail.

Senior management cascades this information down through all the layers of the organization (from VPs to directors to managers) in a series of workshops. It's all very rational, sophisticated and legitimized by the enormous budget used to reach this point.

(1) The 'small' detail of how people are actually going to work together in the new regime...is not in 'the slides'

A key component for successful change is that people not only understand the new structure (they are now de facto part of it) or the new processes (they all make sense on paper), but also that they actually behave differently. Suddenly, they have to share information with people who they have not worked with before. They can no longer draft their business plan in the cosy isolation of their office with the assistants of their three loyal lieutenants. Now, they have to 'co-develop it' (sic) with a dozen of interconnected 'stakeholders' who didn't need to know about each other before (or if they did, they pretty much ignored each other without the sky falling down). There is nothing in the colossal stack of PowerPoints left behind by the Big Consulting Company that even touches on explaining, suggesting or helping with how people are going to behave differently. Why? Because the Big Consulting Company operates in world I and in world I, the availability of the information is an end in itself. After all, if new B is better than old A, Homo Sapiens will do B. 'OK, and if not, we'll train them.'

(2) So they make an attempt to define which new behaviours are needed

Their management team has become acutely aware of ‘the small detail’ mentioned above and now develops a series of exercises to define the kind of behaviours that may be needed.

The output of the work done during a few off-sites states that behaviours need to be (and here a long list of familiar things is mentioned): well-understood, interiorized, made ‘your own’, applied by people empowered to do so, not imposed. They need to be logical, sensible, credible, ethical, good, positive, etc. And they plan to leave it to managers to figure out what those behaviours may be because they do not want to be seen as dictating. Towards the end of the last session a perceptive member of the team points out: *“However, when you put all those things together and multiply them by 1,000, we still wouldn’t have any guarantee that behaviour communicated equals behaviour made real, i.e. behavioural change.”* The team agrees to follow up on this in the next session.

(3) But just when you are getting somewhere, somebody says that another thing is needed ‘first’

Your HR people decide that behaviours need something else first. People first need to change their mindset or their attitude, or behaviours ‘obviously’ won’t happen. (Incidentally, The Big Consulting Company also did not leave behind any PowerPoints on how to change a mindset.)

I have a problem with this. In my previous life as a practicing psychiatrist, I never saw a mindset or an attitude, let alone treated one. So when people say to me that we need to change our mindset, I look very puzzled and humbly ask, *“What’s that?”* I have seen behaviours, lots of them, but never a mindset. I suspect that a mindset or an attitude is a label that we can use when describing a cluster of behaviours that we see. If we say that our neighbour has something against foreigners or women (‘bad attitude’), it may be because of the things he says or does. I can see/hear those, but not his attitude.

This argument causes long debates at the leadership team meetings. Everybody agrees about the need to change the mindset (none of them having read this book or *Viral Change™*), but because nobody actually knows how to do this, the ‘mindset’ is left pending.

(4) The team then decides that for behaviours to be ‘real’, they need to be reinforced (gratified, acknowledged, rewarded) or they won’t stick

Agreed! Any behaviour that has no reinforcement, whether in your external world (it is physically or psychologically rewarded) or somewhere in the intimacy of your brain (it is psychologically consistent with what you may call your values, beliefs or moral system), will tend to fade.

Given the nature of the reorganization (driven by cost-cutting, consolidation and ‘new dynamics between stakeholders’), the management team now decides that it is actually up to them to define which behaviours are needed and that they cannot leave these open to multiple interpretations. A new list of behaviours, renamed ‘leadership behaviours’ is created and it reads:

Learning from each other	Customer focus
Being inclusive	Empower others
Taking ownership	Being open
Do teamwork	Sense of urgency

Problem is, none of those eight ‘things’ are behaviours of any sort, since they can be interpreted in as many ways as there are people on the payroll.

Nonetheless, to ensure these ‘behaviours’ are reinforced, they agreed to add them to the new performance appraisal system. This way, they said, it will be clear to managers that these behaviours are not only required, but an official part of their performance evaluation, with its compensation implications.

The adding of ‘behaviours’ to the performance management system (performance appraisal) is the default position in many organizations that think that the listing of such behaviours next to the goals and objectives solves the problem.

One year later...

One year later, post-reorganization (and a few million dollars and Post-its lighter) an internal employee satisfaction survey

highlights some problems: lack of clarity of the new structure, lack of clarity of responsibilities, persistence of coexisting cultures (described as ‘the consolidation never took place, we are still working as before’) and pervasive communication problems. How the story continued from there is not relevant. The journey of management trial and error, intuitive grasping of the need for behaviours, the quick fix of performance management, the incredible waste of managerial time and reorganization-but-only-on-paper are incredibly common in today’s corporate life.

The management team never managed to leave the safer paths of world I so skilfully mapped out by The Big Consulting Company. They wanted to explore beyond that map, but they didn’t have a good toolkit. They thought of changing mindsets, but didn’t know how. They retreated further into world I with a list of well-intentioned aims written down in HR documents. They didn’t change the culture and their people were confused even after one year.

This story is real (the company a subsidiary of a Fortune 500 company) and dozens if not hundreds of similar stories are taking place every day in corporate life. I, for one, sympathize more and more with revolutions.

Formal and informal conversations and the two worlds

Why could information not travel through the social networks of world II? It could, it does so all the time. Those nodes in the social network (remember, that’s you) are not mute. They talk and pass information between them. It is called conversation. Conversations are to a social organism (the organization, the firm, the social group) what chemical reactions are to the biological organism. They represent the difference between life and death. There are formal and informal conversations. Formal conversations mainly (but not exclusively) use world I organizational devices such as meetings, teams, committees, forums, conferences, etc. By definition those devices are there to provide borders (objectives, deadlines, topics, styles, desired outcomes...) so that what happens in those conversations has a

HOMO IMITANS

purpose. Good management needs this kind of framed conversations and a great deal of the efficiency of the organization depends upon their smooth functioning.

75% of what is written, taught, learnt and praised in Best Practice Management is about framed conversations. 75% of what keeps the organization alive (or what could kill it) does not take place in those kinds of conversations, but in informal ones.

● ● ●
Conversations
are to a social
organism what
chemical
reactions are to
the biological
organism. They
represent the
difference
between life and
death.

● ● ●
The organization needs both conversations. A healthy social organism is one with a good balance between the two. When framed and formal conversations completely dominate life, the environment becomes progressively predictable, stiff and bureaucratic. Trying to domesticate all conversations politburo style is not a good idea, but it provides management with an illusion of control that is very appealing...if this is the kind of leadership you want. The other extreme, complete de-formalization of conversations, would not provide any valid structure for any efficiency of any sort. But balance is truly a fine-line concept. Most of our organizations are imbalanced towards the framed conversations, because that's what we have management toolkits for.

Informal conversations not only use world II structures (the social network), but they are also their real oxygen. Cut their air supply a bit and bear the consequences.

Ideas travel through both the social network of world II and the formal communication channels of world I. When ideas hit the highly connected nodes in world II, they may spread faster and in a viral way. However, the viral spread of ideas or viral communication alone does not equal change.

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

A word of caution. In the social media era, it is now fashionable to add the word ‘viral’ to anything of some scale to make a big thing of it. I will comment on this in chapter 4.2 when addressing influence.

Ideas spreading through the informal conversations of social networks could be viral (or not) in similar ways, depending on the structure of the network and the proprieties of the hubs and nodes¹⁴. The ideas also have their own laws depending, among other things, on their ‘stickiness’ and the kind of reaction they generate¹⁵. In this respect, even when using world II highways, these ideas have all the characteristics of world I currencies and their associated lifecycle. Send the same ideas again and again and receptors may switch off, both in world I and world II.

If, like me, you are in the business of change—i.e. transforming organizations so that they are a fabric of conversations that create individual and collective wealth (my definition, not necessarily yours) while learning how to use ‘world II technology’ (my goal as well) in the process—you will need behaviours, not ideas. All ideas are welcome, but the travelling of ideas (viral or not) is not change.

Let me also mention two other components. They are of importance to both worlds, as they provide a natural bridge between them. The first one is stories. As you will see in chapter

¹⁴ Rumours travel via informal social networks and as such adopt some of their properties. At some point, loosely connected gossip suffers a threshold change and ‘a new truth’ emerges of a size no longer easy to control. Rumours, positive or negative, can only be ‘caught’ before their threshold change transition. At that stage, a world I communication could re-address their content by a counter-campaign. The only way for management to pick up the rumours before the point of no return, is to listen to the organizational chatter. The best way to do this is to be part of it. Unfortunately, a great deal of world-I trained managers still dismiss the importance of the untamed informal social networks, rejecting it as ‘un-focused’ or ‘non-purpose’ stuff. Socially-inept managers discover their blindness all too often too late and at their own cost.

¹⁵ Seth Godin, a generator of endless ideas, has written extensively about the viral nature of some of those ideas. See: <http://sethgodin.typepad.com/>

HOMO IMITANS

4.4, they are the true accelerator of change. Or, as I have called them before, the true WMDs. The second component is leadership and I will deal with it separately in chapter 4.5. Leadership has a dual role. In world I, it serves as a reference, as agenda setting, as commanding (in different degrees). Formal leadership sits here. In world II, leadership is completely distributed amongst the individuals with high connectivity and influence. The formal leadership needs to operate backstage and it needs to learn how to do it. Both stories and leadership deserve their own special attention.

Summary

In the following table, I have summarized the two worlds' characteristics.

I want to end this conversation about the worlds the same way I started and that is by reminding you of the mother of all problems in the change management business: the mixing up of both worlds and their possibilities and outcomes. In a nutshell, communication (world I) is not change (world II). Behaviours (world II) cannot be changed by presenting them (world I).

The business of change (processes, goal-directed initiatives, adoption of a technology, a culture of safety, innovation, collaboration, customer centricism, etc.) is a world II business (with all the aid possible from world I) and is a world of social infections, not of broadcasting. If you are a leader, you should be in the infection business, not in the broadcasting business. Because of the (behavioural) infection mechanism, world II is easily scalable. Viral Change™ orchestrates the infection so that the desired goal(s) is (are) achieved by a true epidemic. More on this later.

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS

World I	World II
Communication	Behaviours
Currency: Information	Currency: Action
Facts, information, knowledge Vision, goals and objectives Intentions, declarations Directions and guidelines Methods, tricks Rational appeal, 'a logic'	What people do or don't do (actions) Visible Reinforced or not Acceptable, unacceptable Increase frequency or fade Consequences of behaviours dictate their life
Packaged Presented, verbal, written PowerPoint world Traditional or social media (video, audio)	Exhibited Displayed, demonstrated, lived Associated to a (cultural) context
Passed on, cascaded (down), distributed Linear, algorithmic pathways (Big issues, big programmes) Big is beautiful	Copied, imitated, followed Heuristic Non-linear (Small intervention, big impact) Small is beautiful
Quality, quantity of information From origin to destination(s) Emission to receiver	Mechanisms of influence (Hierarchical, peer-to-peer, 'people like us', friends, friends of friends) Social contagion Conformity mechanisms From origin to critical mass
Information channels Vehicles Email dominance (flow, block, saturation)	Social network Social diffusion (receptive/resistant/not affected)
'Stock economy' (empty/full recipients) Destination and receiver model Success is state of container plus number of them (depleted, filled in)	'Connect economy' (layers and networks) Infection and epidemic model Success is magnitude and stability of the social infection
Big Splash, 'tsunami'	'Butterfly effect'

HOMO IMITANS

PUSH	PULL
Hierarchy primed	Heterarchy driven
Organization: plumbing system	Organization: network, organism
Effectiveness based upon repetition (‘communicate, communicate, communicate’) Predictable patterns	Effectiveness based upon viral spread (‘small fires, different places, whole mountain on fire’)
Maths of attrition Large targets → small impacts (‘lost in translation’ metaphor) Effectiveness decreases down the pipes	Maths of build-up/scale-up Small number of people → large critical mass Effectiveness increases through network spread
Ideas conveyed Advocacy	Ideas infected as actions Activism
‘Communication packages’ primary factual	Information by-product = stories, primarily experiential
Traditional hierarchical leadership: top-down agenda setting and/or command-and-control (depending on levels of control exercised)	Unconventional: (1) Formal world I leadership → backstage leadership (2) World II leadership → Distributed
Cascaded-down, stepwise change management: Big initiative x all management layers x communication channels = Traditional Change Management (gate/stage)	Viral: Small set of behaviours x small number of people x networks of influence = Viral Change™
Awareness and sensitization ‘Stimulation, Motivation’ Education Rational/emotional appeal Training	Behavioural change Ways of doing Culture building New social norms Culture change
Famous inhabitants: Homo Sapiens	Famous inhabitants: Homo Imitans



SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 – A TALE OF TWO WORLDS