

Project 7

Online Course Design – Change without Pain

Context

This course was developed while I was an instructional designer for Unext, Inc. in Fall 2000.

Conditions

I was the instructional designer on the course development team, responsible for the overall course project. I worked with a team of professionals which included a graphic artist, multimedia creator, online editor, and user experience analyst. While managing this course project, I collaborated with a project manager and a senior instructional designer (course director). I was ultimately responsible for the quality and effectiveness of the course as well as the completion of the project within a specific timeline.

Scope

This course design and development project comprised the entire scope of the traditional instructional design process, Analysis through Evaluation. Once completed, the course was included in the course catalog of Cardean University, an accredited online business university. This course received an Lguide Editor's Choice Award for outstanding online courseware in Fall 2001.

Role

My role was that of instructional designer. I was responsible for the overall course project, especially the instructional aspects of the design. I designed interactive activities, structured the content presentation, and coordinated the work of media, editorial, subject matter experts, and user experience professionals.

Included Excerpt

In this portfolio, I have included a draft version of the overall course design plan and several annotated screenshots of the online course. The design plan describes the content, the pedagogical approach, and several early concepts for interactivity we used in this course project. The screenshots show several of the important instructional features we built into the course.

CHANGE WITHOUT PAIN

SHORT COURSE SUITE DESIGN

DRAFT 1

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Course Overview

This Cardean course suite presents a new take on implementing change in organizations. To change successfully, organizations should stop changing all the time. The suite, largely based on Eric Abrahamson's (Columbia University) Harvard Business Review article, *Change without Pain*, discusses how many companies are now experiencing change burnout and need a different approach from "we must always be changing." Abrahamson calls this approach dynamic stability. The suite introduces participants to dynamic stability and provides strategies and tools for implementing it.

Short Course Format

The following are short course characteristics we expect to implement in this suite:

- Approximately 6-8 hours in length.
- Capitalize on use of the internet for engaging, relevant course-related activities. This will be more limited than in courses like Get the Net. We do not anticipate any data scraping activities.
- Promote community among course participants through use of online discussions and/or chat.
- Personalize content when possible.
- Frequent use of real world examples, but no use of PBL scenarios.
- Very minimal instructor facilitation and involvement – primarily self-directed learning.
- Emphasis on the practical more than the academic.
- Frequent opportunities for participants to “do something” with the content, not just memorize terms and concepts.
- Use of short-answer “deliverables” to assess student comprehension of content.

Course Audience

The audience for Change without Pain includes managers and other corporate employees who appreciate the problems of change and who want a better approach to managing organizational change. The course is not intended for people who want a "Change Management for Dummies" course that gives an overview of what change management is and 10 easy steps for dealing with change resistance. Instead, this course focuses on a strategic perspective of change.

The audience is expected to desire an "exec ed" seminar type of experience in learning about change -- i.e., something that is relevant, entertaining, allows them to be active in their learning and apply learning to their own work situations, uses a variety of activities, is challenging (but not too much work), and includes many real-world examples.

Course Suite Goals

The Change without Pain suite seeks to accomplish the following:

- Disabuse people of preconceived notions about change (e.g., change is good, therefore more change is better; companies must always be changing to be successful)
- Provide strategies and tools to help people think about and implement Abrahamson's dynamic stability approach to change
- Convey Abrahamson's wit and wisdom about change to course participants

Change without Pain

Learning Outcomes (high level)

Upon completion, the student should be able to:

- Better appreciate the richness and complexity of change
- Discuss change initiatives in terms of dynamic stability
- Describe ways to implement dynamic stability using the tools of tinkering and kludging
- Assess your own company's approach to change in terms of dynamic stability

Course Topics

Intro:

Case (or animation) that presents a change situation in which course participants make recommendations for implementing change. It's actually a "straw man" case in which change, or at least radical change, is probably not the solution. This case is intended to raise students' awareness about their notions of change and disabuse them of preconceptions that change is always good.

A. The Times They are a Changin' (Changing Times)

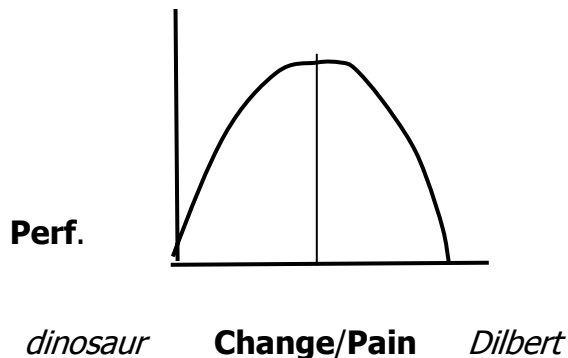
1. *Main Page (not a full module, but simply an Introductory* – This section briefly describes change management fads from the 1950s to today. Includes a discussion of stasis, job enrichment, quality circles, TQM, and reengineering. Classic change management "truisms": "Change is always good," "Big change means big pain," and "Too much pain means resistance" are challenged. A need for balance is posited. This may include some Dilbert-like cartoons to show some of the drawbacks to a typical approach to change.

In the News & Discussion: For this course, each topic provides a different article or an excerpt from an article, annotated to initiate discussion, with an embedded focused discussion forum. The full text of the article is available from the margin for interested students. For this topic, we provide an excerpt from: "The Fad That Forgot People," by Thomas Davenport, **Fast Company**, Issue 1, November 1995. Reengineering became fundamentally changed when it became the latest management fad. One of the original creators of "reengineering" explains how and why.

B. For the 21st Century--A Balanced Approach

1. *Why/How to Do It* – The old way of looking at change was to think that if a corporation had experienced a long period of no change, then it was due for a period of enormous change. This may have been appropriate for the 1980s and 1990s, but it is no longer appropriate today. As a result of the pain, chaos, and outright failure of many earlier change efforts, experts in change management in the 21st century propose alternative approaches. The course presents three approaches: Gary Hamel's old and new balanced approach, Beer and Nohria's Theory O and Theory E balanced approach, and Abrahamson's dynamic stability approach. Dynamic stability is the focus of the remainder of the course.
2. *You do it* – Take an organizational stress test and find your company's position on the performance vs. change/pain curve. Once plotted, review recommendations for leading your organization to a more balanced approach.

Performance/Pain diagram -- deals with rate of change & level of change



3. *Explain it* – Two questions asking student to summarize the topic content.
4. *Got it* – Feedback from service agent.
5. *Reflect* – Resources may include web sites/ articles related to the effects of too much or too little change. Students will be challenged to “Think broadly about your company and reflect on whether or not change is balanced. How is it now and how would you like it to be?” Student posts to the course-wide threaded discussion forum will be encouraged (not required).

In the News & Discussion: For this topic, we provide an excerpt from:

“Learning for a Change” by Alan Webber

Fast Company Issue 24, page 178

<http://www.fastcompany.com/online/24/senge.html>

Ten years ago, Peter Senge introduced the idea of the "learning organization." Now he says that for big companies to change, we need to stop thinking like mechanics and start acting like gardeners. Excerpts from an interview with Peter Senge regarding his new book, "The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations" (Doubleday/Currency, March 1999)

C. Dynamic Stability

1. *Why/How to Do It* -- In today's rapidly evolving global market, any period of inertia is likely to mean organizational disaster. The periods between the massive changes must also be productive. This is where dynamic stability comes in. It involves being both dynamic *and* stable. To be *dynamic*, the organization must continue to make changes—smaller changes based on internally available resources, such as people, processes, and technology. Tinkering and kludging are introduced as tools for achieving dynamic stability.
2. *You do it* – Course participants will list 10 changes that their company has implemented in the past two years, then rate the severity and duration (painfulness) of those changes. Students will be given tools (EXCEL spreadsheet) to plot these changes over the past two years. This plot will then generate a graph of the pace of change at their company. The spreadsheet can be provided as a downloadable “Take-away” with which they can plot future change initiative plans as well. Through the course-wide threaded discussion forum, students will be asked to relate this graph to where the company was placed on the Dinosaur/Dilbert graph earlier.
3. *Explain it* – Two questions asking student to summarize the topic content.
4. *Got it* – Feedback from service agent.
5. *Reflect* – External web site resources may include ones describing the general pace of innovation, and the need for pacing – the cost of running too fast, expanding too rapidly, etc. Students will be asked to reflect upon questions such as, “How does the dynamic stability concept make sense in relation to the students experience in their own companies in recent years? Have they experienced this (in other terms, maybe)? If not, do they recognize a need for dynamic stability in the organizational strategic planning?” Student posts to the course-wide threaded discussion forum will be encouraged (not required).

In the News & Discussion: For this topic, we provide an excerpt from a relevant article (TBD).

D. The Tools--Tinkering & Kludging

1. *Why/How to Do It* -- The tools of tinkering and kludging promote dynamic stability via a continuous improvement process of relatively small change efforts. These efforts are aimed at adding value through the reconfiguration of existing practices and business models. Tinkering involves changing one aspect of an existing practice. Abrahamson describes kludging as “tinkering with a college education.” It involves more complex and larger bits and pieces. Some of these—such as mergers and acquisitions—may come from outside, but usually the parts of a kludge are assets (such as functional skills or technologies) found lying around in the organization's own basement.
2. *You do it* – Course participants will visit the GE corporate Web site with the task of gathering information regarding strategic planning and change initiatives, as evidenced by the public corporate information. The goal is to identify the strategic

plans and vision of GE (their plans and opportunities) that may involve using tinkering and kludging to achieve sustainable change – periods of dynamic stability. Participants will be guided through press sections, annual reports, letters to stockholders, etc. How does one of the world's leading companies achieve “change without pain?” Other possible corporations we may point to for interested students: Intel IBM, etc.

3. *Explain it* - Two questions asking student to summarize the topic content.
4. *Got it* - Feedback from service agent.
5. *Reflect* – References will include readings and web sites related to the concepts of tinkering and kludging, examples of corporations using internally created solutions to challenges, using for existing pieces (or “off-the-shelf” solutions) instead of reinvention. Some links may point to articles or papers regarding the need to look within for solutions. The course participant will be asked to think about the evidence that could be used to support either the implementation of, or a need for a more balanced approach to organizational change, based on corporate communications and information from their own company. The student will be asked to reflect upon a question, such as, “If an external observer were to read the information on our corporate website, what perspective would they get regarding change efforts at this company?” Student posts to the course-wide threaded discussion forum will be encouraged (not required).

In the News & Discussion: For this topic, we provide an excerpt from an article discussing Jack Welch's dynamic period as CEO of GE (article TBD).

E. Change Without Pain

1. *Why/How to Do It* – Change has been with us forever, and it always will be, but the idea of change itself is changing. Companies are increasingly aware of the need to combat chaos, cynicism, and burnout by using change tools that are less disruptive. Oscillating between big changes and small changes helps ensure dynamic stability in organizations. This section will present ideas about the best change principles to carry into the new century, often the same change principles trumpeted in the popular press, but now freshly viewed through the lens of “dynamic stability.”
2. *You do It* – A visit to CEOReview.com to read a summary of one or two books, including one of the most popular books, such as, “Reengineering the Corporation ...”, or “What Leaders Really Do”. The student will be asked to look at the main points made by the author, and how they can see seeds for the dynamic stability perspective in most of these books. They will be asked to consider how the course concepts can apply to some of the main principles of the text(s). Responses could be encouraged in the course-wide discussion forum.
3. *Explain it* – Two questions asking student to summarize the topic content.
4. *Got it* – Feedback from service agent.
5. *Reflect* – Resources are provided for further exploration of current trends in the popular change management field: articles, web sites, streaming video form CEO's, etc. The student is asked to choose the (two?) most relevant concept(s?)

from the course and apply it (them?) to their own company situation. If they were in charge of strategic change planning, what is the first thing they would do to move their company toward dynamic stability? “Is Change Without Pain a realistic possibility for my company?” Student posts to the course-wide threaded discussion forum will be encouraged (not required).

In the News & Discussion: For this topic, we provide an excerpt from: “The Enduring Skills of Change Leaders” by Rosabeth Moss Kanter **Leader to Leader** No. 13 Summer 1999

<http://www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/L2L/summer99/kanter.html>

Years of study and experience show that the things that sustain change are not bold strokes but long marches -- the independent, discretionary, and ongoing efforts of people throughout the organization. Real change requires people to adjust their behavior, and that behavior is often beyond the control of top management. Yes, as a senior executive, you can allocate resources for new product development or reorganize a unit, but you cannot order people to use their imaginations or to work collaboratively. That's why, in difficult situations, leaders who have neglected the long march often fall back on the bold stroke. It feels good (at least to the boss) to shake things up, but it exacts a toll on the organization.

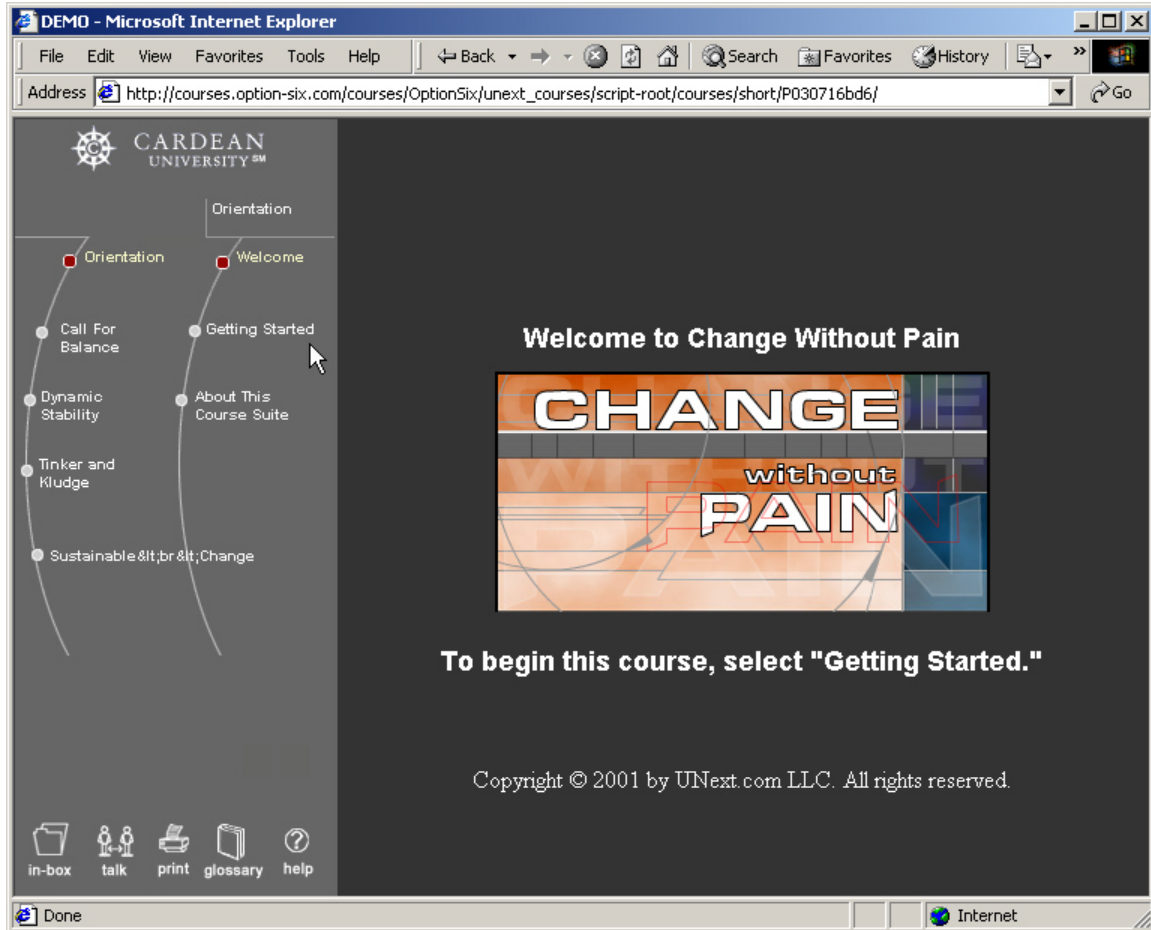
Course Issues/Questions

1. How do we make sure Abrahamson’s voice really shines through and enlivens the course?
2. Should Abrahamson be referred to in third person? This seems awkward.
3. Need to get the course to enhance—more than summarize/repeat—Change w/o Pain article.
 - come up with new examples other than those in the article *
 - elaborate on ideas beyond what the article presents *
4. Can we legally use the term “Dilbert?”
5. Include ideas about how to determine when there is too much or too little change?
6. Explore ideas about dealing with change resistance (why people don’t want to change)?
7. What are Eric’s “best change principles?” *
8. Need a draft of the “straw man” case to use at the beginning of the course. *
9. What are take-aways that will people have from the course?
10. Can we create better tinkering or kludging tools?
11. The “five steps of dynamic stability” tool?
 - Create opportunities for “leave behinds?” Collect students’ experiences or comments about change.
 - a questions database that helps the discussion become a community of practice

* need Eric’s input for this

INSERT PROJECT PLAN HERE

Figure 1. Change Without Pain Main Page



This is the main page for the course. The Change Without Pain course is actually a suite of four short courses. Each course within the suite is designed to be completed in 1-2 hours. Each short course can be selected using the outer arc of links in the navigation panel on the left side. The inner arc provides links within each course. This welcome page provides direct links to background information about the course suite and access to any of the four short courses in the suite.

The main structure of this course suite was dictated by a standard course template. My design team had full control over the content, but not the overt pedagogy.

Figure 2. Change Without Pain Content Structure

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "DEMO - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The page is from Cardean University and is titled "How It's Done". On the left, there is a navigation menu with a circular path of icons and labels: Orientation, Call For Balance, Dynamic Stability, Tinker and Kludge, Sustainable & It, Again, Feedback, Explain It, You Do It, How It's Done, Why Learn It?, and Call For Balance. The main content area has a heading "How It's Done" and a paragraph of text: "Prior to the 1980s, it was widely recognized that organizational stability was a virtue and not a vice for organizations. Prescriptions for change used to be to unfreeze the organization from its current state (period of inertia), change it to its future state (through creative destruction), and then refreeze it there in order to return it to stability. A graph of that approach might look like this:". Below this text is a graph titled "Infrequent Change". The graph's vertical axis is labeled "SIZE OF CHANGE" and the horizontal axis is labeled "TIME". The graph shows a bell-shaped curve with a peak. The area under the curve is divided into three sections: "Period of inertia" (the flat start), "Period of creative destruction" (the rising and falling slope), and "Period of refreezing" (the flat end). To the right of the graph, there is a section titled "ARTICLE" with a link to "The Enduring Skills of Change Leaders". Below that, there are two video thumbnails with text: "When did some of the major shifts in change management occur? Play video with transcript View transcript only" and "What is happening now in change management circles? Play video with transcript View transcript only". At the bottom left of the page, there are icons for "in-box", "talk", "print", "glossary", and "help".

The pedagogical approach we followed for each course in the suite was based on the cognitive apprenticeship learning theory. First, we explained why this information was important (why this is important to you), then we explained concepts with simple opportunities for students to practice the content (watch me as I do), then we gave the student an opportunity to try to apply the concepts themselves, in a structured activity (you do while I watch), and finally, we provided support for them to apply the concepts in their own work environment (you take the skill home with you).

Each page in the body of the course consists of expository text, instructional graphics, video clips of the expert – the content sponsor (professor), and both linear and interactive animations.

Figure 3. Change Without Pain Conceptual Animation



One way we used animations was for conceptual explanation. This animation was used at the beginning of the first course (A Call for Balance) to explain why a balanced approach to change was needed. In the animation, we used an analogy of planning major construction on a busy highway in an “all at once” or a “one lane at a time” manner. We compared this to changing an organization in a “destroy and rebuild” or a “tinker and kludge” manner.

My role as lead instructional designer was to generate the animation theme, decide what we were going to teach, and how we would teach it. I guided the rest of the design team as they created the script, storyboard, and graphic treatments.

Figure 4. Change Without Pain Interactive Animation

Select each change event that your organization has experienced in the past two years and observe where your organization falls on the change/performance graph.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS
MORE
LESS

CHANGE EVENTS

- Company merges with another company
- Company is acquired by another company
- Company experiences serious financial trouble
- Company acquires another company
- Company experiences significant layoffs
- Company relocates
- Executive leadership changes
- Company experiences labor disputes
- Company goes public
- Stock price tumbles
- Decision is made to outsource
- Company enters new market segment
- Division is spun off
- New division opens
- Management level changes are made
- Significant growth occurs
- Major systems (hardware/software) changed
- Your department reorganizes
- Company experiences product liability/recall
- Company experiences negative press
- New product is introduced
- National leadership changes

SCORE
175

PERFORMANCE
TOO LITTLE? TOO MUCH?
CHANGE

Explanation of Position

Reset Checkboxes

Another way we used animations in Change Without Pain was for interactive concept exploration and practice. This interactive animation was used in the “You Do It” section of the first course (A Call for Balance). We wanted the student to decide for themselves whether their organization had undergone too much, too little, or just enough organizational change in the past year. We used an approach similar to the “Life Stress Test” survey – we named the activity the “Organizational Stress Test.”

To use the Organizational Stress Test, a student simply clicks off the organizational change events they have experienced in the past year, watches the “expected organizational performance” level on the accompanying graph, and selects feedback using the “Explanation of Position” button.

My role as lead instructional designer was to generate the activity concept, create an initial paper prototype for conceptual testing, and guide the rest of the design team as they created the text and graphic treatments.