

# YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 36

People can react in different ways to unexpected change in their work. By understanding a model of change, you can influence them in more effective ways...

## Influence Change...

*"Ch-ch-changes. Where's your shame? You've left us up to our necks in it"*  
David Bowie Lyrics from Changes



"Bowie"

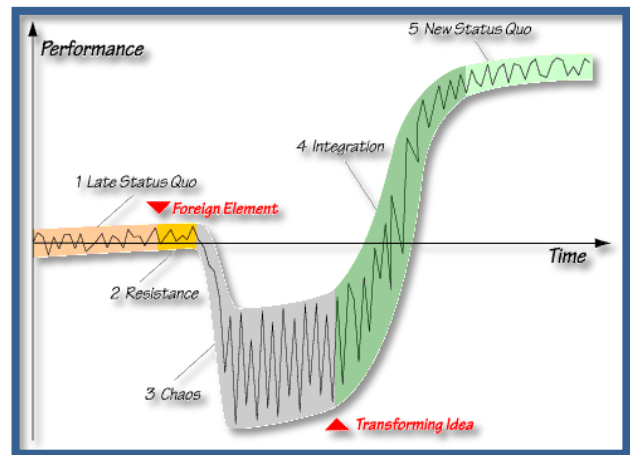
*Do you respond to unexpected change as effectively as you might?*

Just after six this morning we awoke to a shock wave from (we discovered) an explosion at a distant petrol storage unit. Two hours later, we received a call to tell us that the dance instructor providing the entertainment for our daughter's birthday party was ill.

Two unrelated events, but in terms of unexpected change, they are both a "foreign element" disrupting the status quo of our life. How can creative leaders cope? Time for a model. In this case, the Satir Change Model as shown in the next column. Knowledge of this model and the stage we are in helps us to use appropriate responses to change, so that we can learn and grow from the experience.

©Diagram ~ Steven M. Smith

Let's consider the Satir process using our



party situation:

### Old status quo

The party is organised and all is well. Now along comes that "Foreign Element". Time for...

### Resistance

At this point, there are some standard ways we could resist the foreign element, which may or may not be valid: deny it has happened and hope for a miracle ("Perhaps a parent is a choreographer"); dispute the need for change ("We'll muddle through"); avoid communication ("Why did we answer that telephone?"); blame others ("Why couldn't she have got out of her sick bed"); hope the change disappears ("She may feel better this afternoon"); propose ("We could cancel the party").

The closed mind of resistance makes it difficult to be constructive about the change.

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## Chaos

We are in the midst of the change. The status quo has gone and we are unsure what to do. If the fuel depot explodes we might act in unusual ways, release strong emotions and show stress symptoms...but hey, our problem is only a party. We swear, we decide we can't cancel it and then ask "What can we do?"

Then my wife has the "Transforming Idea". "I know, you could do your improv comedy workshop with them." I now race through noncommunication ("Sorry, I didn't catch that"), hope ("You didn't mean that?"), denial (Head under the pillow) and dispute ("It's twenty, ten year old girls!") in short order. But I settle on propose ("Yes I could, I guess") and will blame her if it all goes wrong.

## Integration

What the transforming idea does is to provide a route out of the chaos, it helps us to see the situation in a new light and we integrate it in to our life. Integration might be different for different people. Perhaps the transforming idea is a small step that makes change work. Or we adapt ourselves to the new situation or we identify the value of the new idea, ("Actually, it might be fun").

As we integrate change, we accept it, begin to see new possibilities. We learn from our mistakes and we improve on the transforming idea. Eventually it becomes the...

## New status quo

Now we have moved to the new status quo. We may occasionally wish the dance instructor would miraculously appear, but can accept the situation. Of course you will

have different changes in your life and may be at different stages in each.

## SO

The Satir Change model helps to explain the stages people typically go through when unexpected change occurs (which of course may be positive). This table may help you deal with change in your own life or with others [developed from work done by [Dale H. Emery](#)].

Stage	Action to help people (or you) through stage
1. Old status quo	Whilst this may feel comfortable, people may be in a rut. Encourage them to make small changes, provide opportunities to broaden horizons, move work assignments and expose to information from external sources.
2. Resistance	Be clear on benefits of change. Acknowledge pain but highlight the behaviour (denial etc). Involve affected people in planning the change, assign ownership of parts of the plan to those affected. Identify where new skills may already exist.
3. Chaos	Acknowledge fears; remind that it won't last forever. Encourage ideas for improvement. Enable frequent opportunities to communicate. Be visible. Encourage self help support teams. Praise new behaviours.
4. Integration	Try things out one at a time, not all at once. Praise a lot. Celebrate small successes.
5. New status quo	Enjoy it and look for new challenges so you don't slip in to a rut.

However, a danger of a model like this is that people assume the model predicts what must happen. In fact it indicates what typically happens.

**It does not have to be this way!** Often the resistance and chaos phases occur or are extended because people introduce the

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foreign element poorly, communicate it badly and do not provide support for people undergoing the change. By reversing this, people can adapt to change faster.

## ACTION

- Keep a copy of the table close by. The next time unexpected change hits you at work, see if you can use some of the strategies.
- The next time you plan change, think about how you might introduce it, communicate it and support people.

## TO CLOSE

So how did the party go? Well give me twenty adults doing improv any day, but with the help of a whistle and some improvisation of my own (a quick game of the newly invented "puck" football) my daughter declared it a great party. Success!

\*\*\*

Some of you may remember my son once called a moving walkway a "flatulator". This morning I met him after church and he told me excitedly about the fuel depot explosion. "Yes, it blew up and shot things up in the air, like... aspirinoids!"

My definition of an aspirinoid is an asteroid that hits you on the head and cures your headache.

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*Contact John or Kate Brooker:*

*Speak: +44 (0) 20 8869 9990*

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