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SPECIAL REPORT

The changing newsroom III: Principles and guidelines for managing change

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The changing newsroom III: Principles and guidelines for managing change

IFRA NEWSPLEX®

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① **Introduction**

We have to change, yes I think we as editors have accepted that. What we don't know is how to actually do it.' (Editor, UK regional daily)

The everyday reality of managing newsrooms involves finding ways to increase reach and quality, juggling time and staffing as well as keeping costs down. At the same time, the relentless call for newsrooms to develop their editorial products and redefine organisational structures means thinking through how newsroom leaders can best manage the daily business of change.

Some of these changes, like integrating print with digital, can represent more than just a change in workflows and structure. It also means deep-seated cultural change for editorial stakeholders. Getting these kinds of change programmes to be a success in newsrooms is not always easy. Newsrooms are often organisations with strong historical legacies featuring high degrees of emotional investment from editorial stakeholders. This can result in strong resistance and fear towards change, making planning, implementing and sustaining editorial change

processes daunting and difficult for newsroom leaders.

Therefore the question; **what does it take to successfully manage change in newsrooms?** has been at the heart of this research series; 'The Changing Newsroom'.

Four aspects of change formed the basis for this research series. These aspects were:
- **Aspect one: The motivation behind change**
- **Aspect two: Specific changes made to the newsroom**
- **Aspect three: Changes to personnel**
- **Aspect four: The practice of newsroom change**

The first two special reports in this series focused on aspects one to three, particularly the common themes and issues of change facing European newsrooms today. Case studies were presented which illustrated how change is planned and implemented for new editorial products and services, increasing productivity and/or introducing new IT and infrastructure.

This third and final report in the series develops the fourth aspect; the practice of newsroom change, and draws together elements of the theoretical approaches and frameworks presented in the first report and lessons learnt in the second report. The overarching goal for this final report is to present a set of principles and guidelines for the practice of newsroom change management. These principles and guidelines can be applied to any editorial change process, led by publishing house and editorial management.

1.1 Structure of the final report
In the first report, a model was introduced which formed the basis of the evaluation framework for the case studies. This model (figure 1) now returns to underpin the structure of this report as the model identifies three distinct change phases:
- Phase one: Understanding and planning change
- Phase two: Implementation
- Phase three: Sustaining change

The ten principles and their respective guidelines for editorial change management
There are many options newsroom can take to support their editorial change process. This report wishes to present what Ifra Newsplex considers the most critical principles with corresponding guidelines for handling editorial change. Therefore top ten principles and guidelines are presented over three phases of change.

All of these principles and guidelines are gleaned from the experiences of other change programmes running in a variety of newsroom change processes and have been tried and tested in newsrooms in Europe.
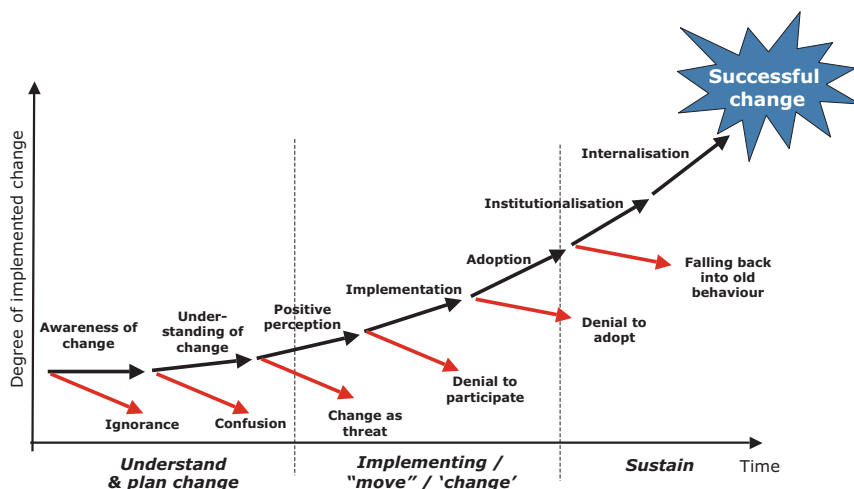
Figure 1: Change ophases and pitfalls   Based on: Greg Bounds

This report is not intended as a 'cookbook' for change which pertains to offer solutions for all problems, nor does it pretend to offer a 'one size fits all' or a 'silver bullet' approach to newsroom change projects. Instead the intention is to provide key principles and guidelines which aim to help constitute a balanced and strategic approach to managing any editorial change process.

Throughout this report the experiences of the case studies demonstrated in the second report will be frequently referred to. It is therefore strongly recommended that special reports one and two are read and digested prior to reading this report.

② Phase one: Understanding and planning change

Right now there is huge pressure for publishers to implement change. A common feeling in the industry is that time is running away and new, improved newsrooms 'should have all been done yesterday'.

As a result, the first phase of change is an area often neglected in many newsroom change processes, usually due to lack of knowledge of what is required and time and money pressures.

In addition change can be perceived in the newsroom as a tiresome activity ordered by a board of directors which will only pile on extra activities onto already stretched newsrooms. It is very difficult to implement any kind of change if there is little positive perception about it. Therefore the first section focuses on increasing understanding and planning for editorial change processes in order for editorial stakeholders to see change as part of the big picture for improving the newsroom.

This section defines 'understanding change' as comprehending both the need for change and what the change process entails amongst editorial stakeholders.

'Planning change' refers to putting in place a strategic approach to implementation and communicating this to the newsroom.

The principles for understanding and planning change are as follows:

- Principle one: Creating the case for change
- Principle two: Creating a new vision for the future state of newsroom
- Principle three: Providing and communicating direction
- Principle four: Fostering involvement from newsroom staff

2.1 Principle one: Creating the case for change

Quotes from the same newsroom:

'To be honest I don't really know how this newsroom works, we just focus on getting the newspaper out every day. There are days when I think we get the paper out because of some sort of divine intervention'
Editor in chief and change leader for a project on workflow reorganisation for layouting in a regional title (UK)

'I think it works well here. We don't need to change anything'
Production manager and change agent

'People are incapable of seeing beyond the end of their own noses, there is no big picture here.'
Project manager and change agent

Perceiving change as a solution to a problem
An important goal for the first phase of change is for editorial stakeholders to perceive change as positive. One approach is for change to be perceived as solution to solving a newsroom 'problem'. The case studies in report two showed how changing newsroom strategy and organisational structure was presented as a solution to the problems of low productivity, too high costs or a lack of quality across multiple platforms.

Often people from the same newsroom perceive the 'problem' differently or in some cases not at all, as the above quotes show. This shows how one of the biggest obstacles to promoting awareness and understanding of change is people having a very

different, subjective and emotional view of why the newsroom needs to change in the first place. This can make it difficult when presenting the change process as a solution to improving the current newsroom state.

One method to overcome this is organisational analysis, which lays out the problem of the newsroom in black and white as a starting point for spotting fundamental areas of improvement essential to the success of the change process.

Two out of the four case studies in report two engaged in varying degrees of organisational analysis prior to changing the newsroom. The first case had an editorial systems expert to ascertain primarily the IT systems within the newsroom and to discover how best to improve the IT set up. The results of this analysis revealed far more than IT problems but showed deep seated and complex organisational issues relating to a lack of vision, strategy and integration between the various departments within the publishing house.

Had the first case study ignored the advice of the external expert and only focused on the 'symptoms' of IT and ignored the underlying 'fundamental or core problems' of the organisation, it would have found its change programme only resolving the symptoms of IT and not really tackling the deep underlying organisational issues. The result being:

'Symptoms resolved do not stay resolved for long but keep coming back increasing the frustration of all involved in the change activity. Failure to isolate core problems and deal with them generally will lead to failure in the overall change effort'.[1]

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1   (Porras 1996:5)

The fourth case study in the second report had the most effective analysis which involved obtaining an:

- In-depth picture of the market position of the newspaper and the strengths and weaknesses of its brand
- Clear research on current and future audience for all channels
- Full and detailed analysis of organisational workflows and structures for all departments
- Full analysis of roles and responsibilities of newsroom staff
- Productivity analysis
- Strengths and weaknesses of the organisation set up
- Risks associated with the change
- Insights into culture of the newsroom and the attitudes of newsroom staff towards change in general

Painting a clear picture of the current status quo and what requires changing is a valuable eye-opener both for editorial stakeholders and for those planning and leading the change. Effective organisational analysis should:

- Demonstrate any areas of improvement in the newsroom which will provide and prove a good basis for the case for change
- Provide a valuable measuring tool for the overall success of the change process

For editorial stakeholders, seeing the problems of the newsroom organisation will help to increase understanding of why change is necessary in the first place and how change can offer a solution for improving the newsroom.

2.2 Principle two: Creating a vision of the future state of the newsroom

"Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare"
Japanese proverb

In addition to understanding how the newsroom currently operates comes the crucial task of creating the vision for the future newsroom.

A vision can be defined as a picture of how the future newsroom should look. Certain types of newsroom change particularly demand a universally understandable vision which is explained to all prior to implementation. Difficult or complex changes such as total transformation or integrating multiple media are two such examples.

The importance of the vision during difficult change

Case study one in report two found it particularly important to create a sustainable vision which described their publishing house metamorphosing into a media organisation and having a more significant relationship with their audience. This vision proved to be a useful tool in the sense that it provided a lynchpin of hope, much needed in the aftermath of reducing editorial headcount. It also helps to clarify prior to strategy formulation a picture of how people perceive the newsroom to run in the future.

Having an understanding of and agreeing with the vision makes it easier to explain and to promote awareness of change with editorial staff. Without a clear vision it becomes very difficult to move forward and create an implementation strategy which is tangible, understood and accepted by staff. Importantly

the vision for the future newsroom should not be recalibrated as change is implemented but should be something which remains constant beyond the completion of the change process.

Kotter provides six criteria[2] of an effective vision:

1. Imaginable: Conveys a picture of what the future will look like
2. Desirable: Appeals to the long term interests, customers, stockholders and others who have a stake in the organisation
3. Feasible: Comprises realistic, attainable goals
4. Focused: Is clear enough to provide guidance in the decision making process
5. Flexible: Is general enough to allow individual initiatives and alternative responses in the light of changing conditions
6. Communicable: Is easy to communicate and can be successfully explained in five minutes

Most importantly, the vision should work in tandem with the results of the current status quo of the analysis. People need to feel dissatisfaction with the current state of the newsroom and feel that the vision will be instrumental in guiding staff closer towards improving and securing the future of their newsroom. Box 1 is an example of a successful vision,

Once a picture has been created of why the newsroom needs to change along with a clearly understandable picture of how the newsroom should look in the future, attention can then move to providing direction for the shape for implementation.

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2   Adapted from Hayes 2002:111

Box 1: Extract of a vision from a national newsroom in northern Europe)

The vision is a message which needs to communicated from the most authoritative person in the publishing house in order to have maximum impact. Here is an extract from a vision communicated by a CEO to all:

'The future for our organisation goes far beyond the limitations of print. Instead we will have print and digital working side by side and our armoury of opportunities increasing day by day. Our creativity, the trust we have fostered over (75) years and our place in the heart of this community can only be strengthened by our ability to get the right content through the right channel at the right time to an audience we now understand better than we ever did in the past. The result will be our name continually reinforced 24/7 across multiple channels, ensuring our sustainability for providing the best news and information service for many years to come'.

2.3 Principle three: Planning the change process

'As soon as we know we have to change, we become a coop of headless chickens running around'
CEO, weekly publishing house (South Europe)

Fear of the unknown will undoubtedly lead to resistance and for many the unknown is how change will be implemented and how the process will affect the individual. Editorial stakeholders require a clear picture of how implementation will be shaped and this means providing and communicating clear direction for the upcoming change process early on.

Few newsrooms make use of project planning tools or methodologies. Project management, for example, is rarely seen as some newsrooms do not see the value in planning change processes strategically. Change processes which affect the entire organisation need to be planned and directed in the most effective way possible. Methods like project management or reorganisation can be invaluable.

Defining the approach to implementation

One of the first elements of planning is to think through the approach to change as this will affect how the entirety of change is planned and implemented. The first special report in this series highlighted different approaches to change such as radical and incremental approaches. To recap they are briefly summarised below.

The radical approach

Different motivations and visions of the future organisation naturally lead to very different ways to approach the implementation of editorial change. Some newsrooms favour a more radical approach to implementation, as it fosters a strong sense of urgency and is often perceived as a temporary phase with a clearly defined start and end. This can be useful if change is difficult and needs to be implemented quickly. However, editorial stakeholders often perceive the radical approach as stressful and imposed on them which lowers the potential for involvement. In addition, because of the time factor, radical

approach often consists of multiple projects and activities running in parallel. This requires considerable resources as well as a well-experienced and capable change cohort (see later section on the change cohort).

The Incremental approach

Other newsrooms take a more incremental and collaborative approach to change, which favours a more evolutionary and step by step tactic with a series of consecutive activities.

Pilot schemes, experimentation and trial and error are often found in incremental implementation. The case studies in report two that carried out pilot schemes found them to be a very useful approach for increasing acceptance and reducing fear amongst editorial stakeholders.

The major risk of incremental implementation is that it can 'drag on' and lose its sense of urgency and momentum quite easily within a fast-paced newsroom.

In order to counter the cons of both radical and incremental implementation, some newsrooms have found it useful to use both methods at different times. Some kick off the neutral zone with a radical approach with a strong sense of urgency and then use pilot projects to help people become adapted to the changes over time.

Criteria to help the decision for the approach for change

Choosing which approach to take for newsroom change depends on the following:
- The nature of the change itself
- The degree of severity/difficulty of what needs changing
- The amount of time available to complete the change process

■ The amount of resources available for the duration of the change process
■ The amount of time required to put the change in action
■ The 'temperature' in terms of newsroom attitudes towards change in general

Thinking through which approach(es) to take for change will help to shape the next guideline for planning: setting clear goals.

Setting clear goals

It is sometimes the case that newsrooms may start implementation processes without any clear goal setting in the first place. In hindsight all case studies in report two understood the importance of goals, particularly those that felt they had not set achievable and realistic goals at the outset.

A goal is a term with which everyone is familiar but of which all have a slightly different definition. For change programmes it is important that a goal is something which everyone instantly recognises as a goal and not as a vision or principle.

The SMART goal acronym is particularly useful here. A goal must be:
■ Specific
■ Measurable
■ Achievable
■ Realistic
■ Time specific (or terminated)

SMART goals can then be used to show how the change process will move the newsroom from its current problematic state to its new and improved organisation with a guiding vision. The more realistic and more concrete the goal the better it will be understood and accepted by editorial stakeholders. This requires goal setting on three levels (see figure 2):

1. The overall goals of the newsroom change process

Some newsrooms have found it useful to create a 'big picture' time plan, which shows key goals, activities, and milestones that require reaching at various stages of the change process. Instead of keeping this to themselves this document has been shown to all members of the newsroom in order to promote the sense that change is being managed in a structured and cohesive manner.

2. The specific goals on how roles and responsibilities will change on a team level

The next level is to create goals that aim at specific groups, teams, departments and/or sections within the newsroom. Usually this is done on a section by section department. These goals need to be understandable by the people involved in the department/section and they also need to feel that these particular goals help them participate in a structured way in the change process.

3. The specific goals on how roles and responsibilities will change on an individual level.

Whenever change is introduced in any context, two of the first questions which stakeholders ask are 'what will **I** have to do to change?' and 'what is in it for **me**?' For change to have a positive perception, goal setting needs to be managed on an individual level. This increases responsibility and involvement in the change process. They will then be able to see how they personally will benefit from the change process.

Providing direction on how roles and responsibilities will change

Continuing with the approach of encouraging a positive perception of change, providing a clear indication of how the individual's roles and responsibilities will change is vital, particularly in the current wave of newsroom change. The present state of change in the industry demands more from newsroom time, often with fewer people.

Figure 2: Three levels of goal setting

As a result, one of the biggest causes of fear concerning change is how the change will affect the individual's job, particularly where a lack of resources is concerned.

In all case studies in report two, change resulted in an increase of either scope or number of activities for different roles within the newsroom. Case study one saw an increase in multimedia tasks in a newsroom which had reduced headcount and case study two expected editors to now take on more responsibilities for handling multi-channel work.

The third case study realised their desk editors would become change agents but also the daily business of reporters would alter as they would become far more involved in the production areas, leaving a deficit of activities for production staff.

The last case study saw how new technology and infrastructure gave rise to many changes within the editorial workflow. The result being that the newsroom staff now had to work with a layout-driven workflow as opposed to a text-driven workflow as well as integrate digital in with print.

All four case studies at some point had to handle the problem of not having enough staff or sufficiently experienced staff to handle the new expectations and responsibilities as well as maintain the daily business of a newsroom.

The fear of not knowing how their jobs were going to change made resistance to change increase in some of the case studies. During the planning process it becomes imperative to try and provide as much information as possible about the extent to which the job of the individual will change. One guideline is creating job profiles.

Making changes to job profiles

Creating new or amending job profiles along with one-to-one consultation in line with Human Resource Management is a simple yet underused method to help editorial stakeholders understand their new roles. As any significant changes to job profiles need to go through several stages of consultation and agreement particularly in hard change such as redundancy programmes, it becomes par for the course. But any change, which has a significant effect on how people work, requires some kind of one-to-one discussion and documentation. In editorial change processes, where it is possible to negotiate changes to the role, this document becomes a contract of agreement between, for example, a journalist and his editor. This is particularly useful in the case of creating a multiple media newsroom if there is scope for defining with staff the extent to which they need to change. This approach will increase a sense of ownership and involvement from editorial stakeholders and can help to increase acceptance within the newsroom.

Communication planning

"The problem with communication ... is the illusion
that it has been accomplished"
George Bernhard Shaw

Quotes from the same newsroom:
"We tend to go for email here. People can read it when they are ready"
Managing Editor, national daily newspaper, central Europe

"He (section editor) is sitting right next to me and he'll still sends emails to me"
Journalist ; national daily newspaper, central Europe.

"I sent her an email. It's not my fault if she didn't read it"
Production manager after sending a set of change goals to a designer via email.

Making an effective communication strategy part of the planning process of change is rarely a strength found in any industry. There is, though, some irony in the fact that although newsrooms are at the forefront of the communication industry, we are guilty of being some of the world's worst communicators inside our own four walls. Many newsrooms tend to rely on passive communication channels such as email or intranet for important messages or even in some cases relying on the grapevine when personal communication in small groups or one to one would have been more successful.

Instead, taking a strategic approach to communication means for every key messages there needs to be consideration and planning behind it. For all types of change in editorial there are five factors and related questions which need to be considered.

1. Role of sender
   Who will give out the message and how will their role in the organisation help/hinder the messages effectiveness?

2. Timing of message
   Will the message arrive too early/late for editorial stakeholders to digest the content?

3. Content of message
   Is the right message aimed at the right people? Is it too much/too little/easy to understand?

4. Channel
   Do our current channels of communication operate effectively or should we try new/different ones for this change process?

5. Follow up
   Will we need to repeat the message to ensure all have understood?
   Do we need to put in place any feedback structures if people have questions to ask?

Planning the direction for the change process means breaking down the vision into something more tangible and accessible in a strategic manner. This involves deciding the approach to change and how it will affect resources, creating a clear system of goals on multiple levels, from the individual up to the whole newsroom level. Working out and explaining how change will affect people's roles and responsibilities and also how to communicate key messages throughout the change process is crucial for this first phase of change.

2.4   Principle four: Involvement
'Real commitment can only be gained by giving people the chance to become actively involved, to contribute their own experiences. Every employee needs to know that his contribution to the project is important and is valued. Thus, people will develop a sense of ownership for the project, which, in turn may serve as a major source of motiva-

tion when it comes to the inevitable problems and barriers"
Recklies

"Forget it, they won't want to get involved'
Editor when asked who would be interested in becoming part of a change agent team.

Quite often during the planning phase, the newsroom can end up being on the receiving end of the order to change and feel that change does not 'touch' them. Understandably, this can result in a reluctance to act on the change, take ownership and get involved. The side effects of this are seen when the time comes for change to be implemented. Stakeholders may not perceive change as positive, may not understand how it affects them and instead wish to get on with their everyday business and not have to handle change.

The final guideline for understanding and planning change focuses on increasing involvement prior to implementation.

Awareness building sessions
Alongside communication and direction, promoting awareness of change as early on as possible is a valuable element of involvement. But involvement should encourage editorial stakeholders to provide feedback via discussion and debate. One way to facilitate this is via awareness building sessions.

A recent and successful example of this was seen in a UK regional publishing house whereby editorial stakeholders went through a session on multiple media integration.

During these sessions everyone understood the message of change on

the same level, saw evidence of the need for change and what it entailed for the newsrooms. Also reporters and production staff got the chance to 'play' by engaging in exercises designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of what multiple media meant for storytelling before any learning specific skills. This resulted in newsroom staff having the opportunity to voice their concerns and see change from different perspectives but most importantly get involved in change and see the benefits of digital for their own stories.

Awareness sessions, which encourage discussion and debate, are more likely to result in higher degrees of involvement from stakeholders and encourage enthusiasm towards change. Some newsrooms have found following up these session with a focus group structure to be useful.

Focus groups
Focus group sessions can also be additional key method for improving involvement. One example is seen in a newsroom in Scandinavia, which has a regular session on a weekday afternoon whereby anyone can come and talk about a hot topic and explore a new idea or just discuss their concerns. Other newsrooms have more specific theme-led focus groups and employ guest speakers from the industry to show and tell their own experiences. The result being that editorial staff found themselves more in the loop and therefore more likely to accept change and also offer solutions which can help to improve the overall planning process.

Involvement in 'hard' or radical change'

Encouraging involvement is easy in some change cases than it is in others. Case study one found ways to involve staff in 'hard change such as staff redundancies by having more than one, one-to-one consultation utilising HR managers and the editor in chief. Although editorial staff were unable to control the change they still have the opportunity to discuss and raise concerns with members of staff in a private environment.

Other editorial changes, such as a new editorial system, are often implemented without any consultation or involvement from staff at all. Ironically change programmes perceived as 'hard', such as complex, lengthy, radical or emotionally difficult processes, seem to go hand in hand with fewer principles of involvement when in fact it is these changes that can cause the most resistance in newsrooms. When dealing with new production workflows and improvements to their editorial system, case study three found themselves
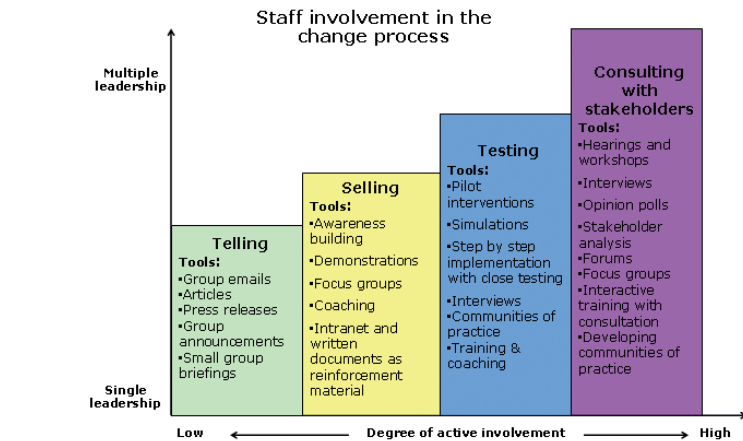

Figure 3: Levels of activities for increasing staff involvement   Source: Adapted from Nauhaimer 2006

dealing with resentful and unhappy staff, largely because of the nature of the change and its resultant redundancies but also because 'no one asks for my opinion'.

One European national newsroom handled their problem of involving staff in hard change with editorial system change by providing small group demos of the system for all staff and allowing time for a feedback session, so any

member of staff could contribute his opinion, ask questions and feel that he was valued as part of the change process. This information was also useful to editorial management who required different perspectives of the new system, which was subsequently put in place with less resistance than expected.

Involvement of external to editorial parties

Wherever possible it is crucial to involve not only editorial stakeholders but also external to editorial parties, such as union representatives, human resource management and marketing/advertising/circulation departments as much as feasibly possible and as early as possible. If the external to editorial parties are for the change, they can provide invaluable assistance to the planning phase of change.

To summarise: giving enough consideration how editorial stakeholders will become involved in change, regardless of its nature, is an integral part of successful change programmes. Figure three summarises different activities for increasing involvement in newsrooms depending on level of involvement possible.

2.5 Summary: The planning phase

All four case studies in special report two came to the similar conclusion that they should have spent more time on understanding and planning change. Therefore the nature of this first phase of change demands the most focus, attention and care.

Understanding and planning change requires more than just comprehending the motives behind change and creating a to-do list. Getting all editorial stakeholders on the same page in terms of seeing change as a solution to a newsroom 'problem' and how it will drive the newsroom towards a better future are key to fostering clear understanding and acceptance of change.

Planning change means building structure into change processes both on a strategic level but also on a cultural and emotional level through communication planning, resulting in more security for editorial stakeholders around the

unknown of implementation. Planning and communicating goals and creating involvement strategies will also help to increase the levels of acceptance of change. This approach makes change more than just a planning exercise but instead makes change accessible, understandable and more attractive not only for those who will be acting on the change process but also for those involved in creating and driving the change process. Significantly, for many newsroom change programmes, understanding and planning change means finding ways to reframe change as positive so that implementation can commence with less of a dark cloud hanging over it.

The following is a set of key questions which those managing change need to ask themselves in order to ensure the first stage of change management has been thought through.

- Why are we doing this change?
- Where do we want to be in 6/12/24 months?
- How can we generate a sense of urgency/importance?
- What are our priorities?
- What are our milestones?
- What are our three layers of goals? (newsroom/team/individual)
- What can our first initial small steps be?
- What are the benefits for the individual?
- What will be the anticipated obstacles?

③ Phase two: Implementation

If managed well, implementing change can become a period for creativity, problem solving, breaking down old barriers and evolving the newsroom. However, the course of implementing change never did run smoothly, even when a seemingly watertight planning procedure has been created. Unexpected results and reactions to change during implementation process can lead to this phase going awry.

Greg Bounds (see figure 4) outlines the two major pitfalls of implementation; the first being stakeholders refusing to attempt the change in the first place and the second, falling back into old behaviour. These pitfalls are usually seen in the first few weeks to months of the change process.

One of the reasons why people do not attempt participation in implementation are problematic implementations in the past, a lack of knowledge of the current change process and/or a feeling that the newsroom lacks the ability/skills/leadership to change. In addition, there can be the obstacle that change is just another latest senior management fad instead of a way to truly develop the newsroom.

For the pitfall of falling back into old behaviour, the most frequently experienced results are inability to reach targets set out during planning, change fatigue amongst editorial stakeholders and difficulties in getting change to 'stick' within the newsroom as box 2 shows.

In order to make implementation successful, managing editorial change needs to include how to engage editorial stakeholders in attempting the change in the first instance and secondly encouraging staff to continue to practise the change.

This section provides three principles to encourage editorial staff to attempt and to adopt change during implementation.

- Principle five: Leading the change: The change cohort
- Principle six: Letting go: Allowing the newsroom to move from the old to the new
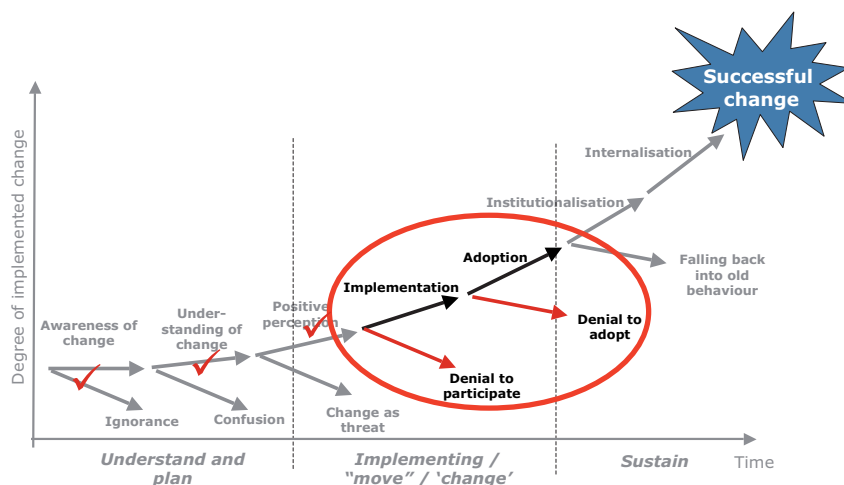- Principle seven: Handling the first phase of implementation: neutral zone

Figure 4: Phases and pitfalls of implementation   Based on: Greg Bounds

Box 2: A common problem when implementing change in newsrooms
The case of breaking news
In line with many other publishing houses, this newsroom decided that print reporters would learn how to handle more digital media themselves, with the support of an online production department. Reporters would now focus on delivering basic text for breaking news and uploading it after it had gone through a quick check from the newsdesk editors.

Once the reporters had received some basic training in how to handle breaking news the change began. Over the first two weeks around 40 % of newsdesk reporters tried it once, 40 % out rightly refused or ignored the new activity and 20 % attacked breaking news online with gusto.

Three months later the picture was quite different. 30 % of newsdesk reporters had actively engaged more than once, 60 % were quietly ignoring it and forcing web production to carry out the activity and 10 % had attempted the change more than once. The results were lower than anticipated and editorial management had concerns over how change could be sustained long term.

3.1 Principle five: Leading the change – The change cohort

'We don't really put a lot of thought into the change team, we just throw people in together and they work it out'

Editor, Weekly title, UK

'It is undoubtedly true that if you choose the right people to lead the change process on the ground then you will be able to handle anything thrown at you'

Publishing house CEO, Germany

Newsrooms that successfully manage change implementation are ones with a group of people working together but fulfilling different roles and responsibilities. In this document this group is defined as change cohort and should represent a collective of individuals who are driven to make the change succeed both on a strategic and cultural level.

Exactly which roles should be placed within the cohort depend largely on the type, duration and level of complexity the change process.

The following table[3] in figure 5 provides the top roles required for a change cohort.

Change Agents

Supporting the Implementer means creating the role of change agent: a well-known structure used in many other industries during change but not so much in the publishing industry.

The difference between an implementer and change agent is that the implementer oversees the entire process and defines the role of change agent, usually to someone on the next level down who works more on a daily basis with newsroom staff. The change agent

Role	Responsibilities
Sponsor (e.g.CEO/Board/steering committee)	Authority to make the change happen
	Controls overall resources
	Involved in the formative stages of change
	Announces the initial message/vision for the need to change to all stakeholders
	Provide indications of what the change process will involve
Implementer (e.g. Editor in chief, section editor, production manager, external support)	Implements the change and reports to sponsor
	Responsible for feedback to the sponsor
	Ensures the success of the change on a daily basis
	Often manages the daily editorial tasks in tandem with change processes
Change agent (e.g. department heads, lead journalist, external support, project manager)	Overseen by implementer
	Responsible for the 'nitty gritty' daily business of implementation
	Responsible for handling the 'emotional well being' of editorial stakeholders.
	Provides regular feedback to Implementer
Advocate (e.g. can be a reporter, production staff member,)	Leads with experimentation with the new change such as leading focus groups or pilots
Opinion leaders	Influencers, not a defined role per se but need to be involved in the change process wherever possible.

Figure 5: Example of roles and responsibilities for the change cohort

is responsible for ensuring that staff understand the process and can handle the new activities in the best possible way. The importance of this 'front line' role is critical in newsroom change as the capabilities of the change agent can have a major impact on success or failure of the change process.

These capabilities should consist of the ability to organise and lead the change tasks in a systematic fashion and include leadership qualities such as motivating staff, good listening skills and the ability to spot and solve problems quickly.

Buchanan and Boddy have carried out a study on the effectiveness of change agents. On that basis, they they compiled a list of important competencies of change agents, which can be used as a base for identifying the characteristics

needed for effective newsroom change agents[4].

Ten key competencies of newsroom change agents

1. Clearly understands and agrees wholeheartedly with the need for change
2. Can see the bigger picture of the need for change and how it will affect the whole organisation, not just editorial
3. Understands how the strategy for change will pan out over time
4. Can set clear and realistic goals for their 'section' to start realising the change process in systematic fash-

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3   This table is adapted from Cameron and Green 2004

4   Adapted from Recklies http://www.themanager.org/ Strategy/change_agent.htm

ion and can provide regular updates on progress to the implementer

5. Can be flexible to handle unexpected changes or setbacks to the change programme

6. Well respected and trusted amongst peers both as a newsroom worker and as change agent

7. Team building skills, can delegate responsibility and has the ability to bring people together regularly for discussions, reviews, etc

8. Can communicate effectively using the right channel for the right message

9. Understands the need for and has strong interpersonal skills including listening, negotiating, collecting appropriate information, identifying the concerns of others, and managing discussions and meetings.

10. Stimulating motivation and commitment in others involved.

External support in the change cohort

All the case studies in report two opted for external support for either training or consulting as they felt they did not have the expertise or experience in handling large scale change processes. For other newsrooms considering whether or not to bring into external support it is important to understand that the degree of involvement depends largely on the nature of change.

External support is particularly useful for the following situations.

■ There is a lack of knowledge and experience of leading change processes within the cohort.

■ The message for change needs to come from an external support

■ Bad news such as headcount reduction and redundancies need to be conveyed and managed

■ There is lack of credibility and trust in internal staff managing the change process.

■ Change has, in the past, had a poor reputation in the newsroom

Summary: Key points for the creation of change cohort

Whether or not implementation will be successful largely depends on how effectively:

■ The 100 % backing of all sponsors is clearly provided from the outset

■ Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined

■ The right people are placed in the right roles

■ The implementer and change agents fully believe and engage in the change process

■ The implementer and change agents are supported throughout all phases of change

■ Resources such as adequate budget and enough time are provided to the cohort

■ If required, the right level of external support is put in place

When a successful change cohort leads implementation it can make the difference between the change being successful and change being stonewalled by editorial stakeholders. This is particularly the case for handling resistance and the first phase of implementation.

3.2 Principle six: Letting go: Allowing the newsroom to move from the old to the new

Sandwiched somewhere between how a newsroom currently operates

and before it attempts change for the first time, is an oft-ignored phase of transition called 'letting go'. This is a period whereby the informal newsroom organisation[5] is bubbling over with the awareness that things may never be the same again as the old ways of working will soon be gone. Because handling this time period rarely features in the strategies of publishing houses, it can be overlooked, to the detriment of the overall change process.

Figure 6 shows the psychological reactions towards change individuals often experience and publishing house and editorial management tend to not acknowledge. These reactions towards change can have a major part to play when change is not attempted and adopted.

Shock and denial often feature when change is announced and planned and the principles provided in phase 1 of this document will help the newsroom manage this stage. This section starts by outlining the depression phase which often accompanies implementation. If acceptance of the change process is low or the change is perceived as radical, imposed, complex or emotional, often a feeling of depression characterises the mood within the newsroom at the outset of implementation for the majority of newsroom stakeholders.

Characteristics of the depression phase

This phase is characterised by Hayes as the stage whereby the reality of change kicks in and people begin to grudgingly

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5   This term "informal organisation' was defined in the first report of this research series and refers to the culture or subconscious of the newsroom where values, politics, power, emotions and informal leadership rule.
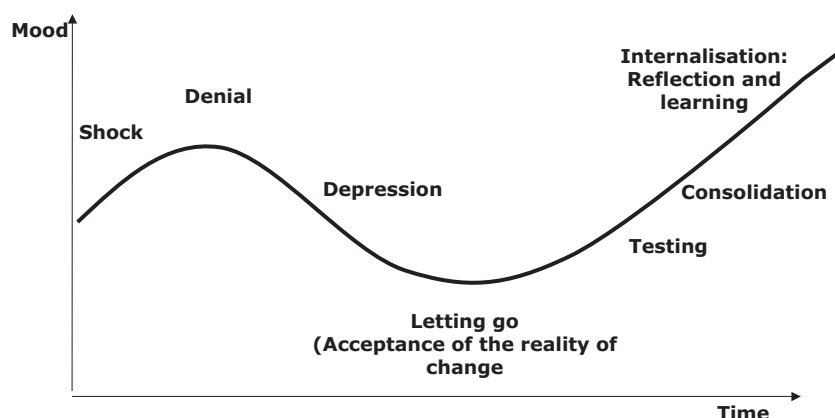
Figure 6: Psychological "moods" during change   Based on: Hayes 2002: 151

accept that change is inevitable. This is often met with the feeling that the situation of change is beyond the individuals' control. Emotions such as anger or sadness are prevalent. Interestingly it is this stage that people either leave the situation or some people give up on the idea of change and talk of maintaining the old ways of working. This stage can be the most difficult to manage on a daily basis and measures to support this phase of transition need to be both on a strategic and psychological level.

Strategic measures
- Increase communication on all levels
- Review editorials awareness of the change process
- Highlight the positive implications and consequences of the change process

Psychological measures
As well as extolling the virtues which change will bring in the future, 'dealing directly with the losses and endings'[6] at the time when change is initially implemented is crucial for the culture of the newsroom.

The following is a checklist to go through when needing the manage endings on a psychological level[7]:
1. Has enough listening time and support been given to those who are experiencing difficulties with letting go of the 'old' newsroom?
2. Have we found ways to compensate people for their losses?
3. Have we clearly defined which newsroom activities are over and which are not or are people still not clear?
4. Have we found ways to 'mark the ending'? (some newsrooms have newsroom 'wakes' or parties to celebrate the old organisation)
5. Are people allowed to take a piece of the past newsroom with them? (This is particularly important if a newsroom is being rebuilt or moving to a new location)
6. Have I made it clear how the endings we are making are necessary to protect the continuity of the newsrooms or conditions on which the newsroom depends?

Allowing the newsroom to let go of the old ways of working in a sympathetic

manner is a characteristic of a new type of leadership which newsrooms require due to the nature of change they are currently facing. The balance between the strategic thinking of implementation and the psychology and the culture of the informal newsroom organisation is invaluable at this stage. Allowing time and supporting editorial stakeholders with clear measures will help the newsroom go through its natural process of grieving and move towards attempting change for the first time during the neutral zone.

3.3 Principle seven: Handling the neutral zone
"The first few weeks will be a nightmare but we will do it"
Editor, central European newsroom

What is the neutral zone?
In every editorial change process the first few months of implementation can be defined as the neutral zone[8]. Bridges defines this time period as a natural process within change whereby the organisation:

"…(goes) through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn't fully operational"[9]

Figure 7 shows how the neutral zone is situated between the letting go of the old ways of working and the new beginning of the organisation. For newsrooms it means attempting new editorial activities for the first time, trialling the change and if all goes well, moving closer to adopting change. Some examples are the first few weeks after a new system has been implemented, putting into place multimedia skills after training, trialling new

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6   Bridges 2005

7   This checklist is adapted for newsrooms from the one provided by Bridges 2005:37-38

8   This term was coined by Bridges 2005

9   Bridges 2005:5

editorial workflows and getting used to newly built infrastructure. On average the period can last up from two weeks up to one year, again depending on the following factors:

■ The nature of the change
■ The size and nature of the news-room.
■ The amount of resistance from edito-rial stakeholders

■ The quality of leadership and change management from the change cohort

Box 3 shows an example of how the neutral zone can become problematic when coupled with poor change man-agement during the planning phase.

Change management during the neutral zone means putting in place guidelines, which focus on helping the newsroom move the process of change to adopting change.
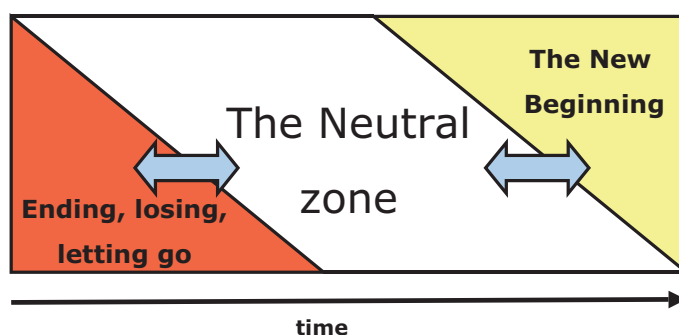

Figure 7: Three phases of personal transition   Source: Bridges 2003

Box 3: Example of the neutral zone
One newsroom rebuilt its newsroom to increase the effectiveness of commu-nication between central decision makers during the day for multi-channel publishing. The staff were widely against this change and had voiced their concerns to editorial management. The concerns were that newsroom staff did not believe that only moving chairs and tables around was enough to truly solve the problem of communication. Many staff members believed that this change was only attempting to treat the symptoms which staff believed to be nothing to do with where people sat but more to do with the fact that the structures of the newsroom and the culture weren't conducive to communication. Another point staff were unsure on was how their roles and responsibilities were going to change (if at all) in the new newsroom layout. Although voiced, these con-cerns were largely ignored by editorial management who instead focused their energies on new technology, new furniture and who should sit next to who in the planning process. On the day of the move staff were positioned in their new seats and for the next few weeks attempted to try the new set up, however it became apparent early on that there was no need to actually be in these new seating positions so slowly the newsroom started to move back into their old seats over time. At first this went largely unheeded by editorial management until about three months later nearly 80 % of the newsroom had gone back into their old seating positions and weren't using the new technology or tools for digital storytelling. Editorial management at this stage gave up and the newsroom went back to how things were before the change process. Three months later editorial management decided it needed to introduce another change of newsroom seating. Again the process failed and staff soon resumed their old seating positions.

Ensuring activities are achievable
Successful newsrooms, which handle the neutral zone well, are often ones which start with a review session and return to their original goals set out during planning and ascertain if they are actually achievable. This is particu-larly useful when issues arise which can affect the change process. Delays with technology, rebuilding infrastructure and poorly planned resources are some of the most commonly seen issues which can veer an editorial change process off course during implementation.

Some newsrooms have found value in reducing the complexity of activities during the first few months and creat-ing a system of easily reachable goals which can help to reduce the fear factor for newsroom staff, particularly if there are many unsettling changes occurring at the same time (see box 4)

Testing the change activities
The account of getting the sports desk onboard in box 4 also demonstrates the importance of allowing the newsroom to trial new activities at an appropriate pace without overloading resources. This signifies the start of the testing phase (see figure 6) whereby stakehold-ers move from depression, attempt the

Box 4: Getting the sports desk on board during the neutral zone
The sports desk described themselves as 'allergic to technology ' and were finding the whole concept of multi channel working to be difficult. This coupled with the launch of a new editorial system at the same time had created a wall of fear amongst not just the sports desk but throughout the newsroom. The change agent was tasked with the role of increasing the involvement of the sports desk during implementation. Instead of imposing change activities, the change agent asked the sports desk to create their own ideas for content bearing in mind their resources. Three easily manageable multimedia ideas were offered with the feasibility of implementing one new idea per month. The first ideas was blogs, the second idea was audio and the third being the most complex; video. The idea of one sports writer creating one blog over the course of a month whilst at the same time getting to grips with the new system meant that the sports desk were themselves involved in the change process, maintaining their own control of what was realistic and at the same time could ensure that the change activities were correctly prioritized (in this case the new system was the priority). Over the period of six months the sports desk became more involved by continuing to practise the changes and add new activities gradually and the implementation phase was successful

change and see for themselves how it could work. Although this stage represents a turning of the tide in terms of reactions towards change, as Hayes notes, this stage can still be easily thwarted as emotions such as resentment, anger and confusion could be apparent. This can mean that if any little thing goes wrong, such as the technology, the tendency can be to give up immediately.

Measures
- Creating the space and time for trial and error
- Establish pilots for new products, workflows, etc., in order to start developing the process
- Encouraging risk-taking and experimentation
- Wide publication and celebration of new achievements.

Task management teams
Supporting attempts to trial and adopt the change, require measures put in place to handle situations when things go wrong.

In the neutral zone there is often the tendency for newsroom stakeholders to assume that if one element of the process is not working out everything else will be problematic and the entire process will be doomed. Fixing these problems early on is paramount in getting through the neutral zone and restoring faith in change.

Employing the concept of task management teams can be useful at this time. This is the creation of temporary teams set up to deal with the problem in hand in order to reach the solution quickly. They are either formed externally to or within the newsroom or a joint arrangement between the two. This structure can also be useful for increasing involvement for specialised

areas. One example was the set of a task management team for handling video. In one newsroom video had a bad reputation in and out of editorial as it was only racking up around 70 hits per day online at the start and staff were reluctant to get onboard. Instead of just allowing video to slowly die out, the change manager decided to get a small group of editorial staff together, engineered to include antagonists, opinion leaders in the newsrooms and protagonists to create a community of good practice and work out why video was an issue and ensuing solutions for improving the situation. With a clearly defined time scale the group had the chance to get to grips with video and learn why video was failing and instead create a raft of simpler, less TV-like, features- style video which had far higher appeal. The result was the start of an increase in web traffic, results of which were widely broadcasted around the newsroom.

The team were not then immediately disbanded but carried on to support the rest of editorial acclimatise to the new activities. Most importantly, the team consisted of editorial staff who were able to see for themselves that the change was not necessarily something which could be dropped just because of its apparent failure at the start, but instead they needed to co-create a solution.

Task Management teams (TMTs) work well at the outset of implementation and can remove the fear and increase involvement and ownership of the change process. TMTs are also set up in tandem with providing staff with the right skills and abilities to act on the change via a training programme.

Skills training

One of the most commonly heard complaints about how change is managed from journalists is the lack of training and support for them to do their new role. This is particularly the case for new systems and multimedia work. Too often a reporter is given a video camera with no instruction on how to story-board, shoot or edit and is expected to create a BBC-standard video in a couple of hours. The results are usually poor, the journalist is de-motivated and the chances of attempting the change again are lowered. For new systems and technologies, often a quick demo from a Superuser in the newsroom is all that is provided which for the majority of newsroom staff far from adequate.

When considering skills training, the following are factors which should be taken into consideration:

■ Allow plenty of time and space to try out the new activities by ensuring the duration of the training is long enough to encourage thinking and practice time. Also groups should not be oversized in order to maximise input from participants.

■ The training sessions should be conducted in a proper training environment away from the newsroom to encourage discussion on the change process and to avoid disruption.

■ There should be clear learning outcomes which will show how performance will be improved.

■ The contents should be tailored to the demands of the vision, newsroom and the change process.

■ The new skills will need to be used immediately after training to avoid participants forgetting what they have learnt

■ Editorial management will need to be responsible for ensuring participants put in place their new skills on a daily basis

■ There should be follow-up coaching to ensure the new skills are sustainable (see phase 3 for more on coaching).

Not understanding the nature of change and subsequently not handling the neutral zone effectively can lead to the newsroom change process becoming unstuck in its early days of implementation.

The neutral zone demands various measures be put in place in order to avoid this period becoming unmanageable and difficult, resulting in people dropping out of the change process and giving up. These measures include tooling-up editorial staff with the right skills, finding procedures to increase involvement whilst at the same time ensuring the original goals and activities are suitable for the pace of change. A combination of these measures and the message that the neutral zone is a normal and essential part of the change process will increase the chances of editorial stakeholders attempting new activities.

3.4   Summary: The implementation phase

The goal of implementation is to get change off the ground by encouraging editorial stakeholders to attempt the change and then practise it so many times until it becomes adopted into the daily business of the newsroom. What often stands in the way of this goal is the psychological reaction of fear and resistance towards implementation.

Resistance is frequently perceived as the reason why so many change processes run into difficulties, however resistance is a natural part of any change process both in and out of the newsroom. How resistance is **handled**, not resistance itself, is what differentiates between implementation processes which succeed and those which run into difficulties.

Managing change during implementation means handling how people are reacting to and engaging with the change process as well as organising and leading the various change activities. Measures such as creating a cohort of individuals who are capable of engaging and driving change through with the involvement of editorial stakeholders are crucial. Depending on the nature of change, driving change can demand huge amounts of resources and energy dedicated to implementation. If all members of the cohort are not onboard at the outset then it will be difficult to get the newsroom through implementation.

One of the more overlooked tasks of the change cohort is to support editorial stakeholders 'let go' of the old ways of working. This requires a type of leadership which can focus on the human elements of change, such as the grieving process which is often silent but nevertheless very much apparent in newsrooms and if ignored can harm the first stage of implementation; the neutral zone. This 'shaky' time of implementation needs to be normalised and utilised in a strategic manner with measures such as ensuring goals and activities are realistic and task management teams are set up if delays or problems will occur which can slow the process down. Preferably editorial stakeholders should also be involved in reconfiguring change activities if times get tough.

The neutral zone can also be supported by setting up procedures which encourage experimentation. This can help increase creativity and remove some of the fear surrounding making mistakes during implementation. Finally, it is far easier to encourage stakeholders' involvement and attempts at the change if they are armed with the right knowledge and skills which they can go back to and use immediately in the newsroom.

If planned out and handled well implementation need not only be a fraught time of stress and 'fire fighting' but instead can represent some of the most creative time periods in a newsroom history. Once the first few weeks or months of implementation are over, the newsroom starts to get to grips with the change process and the change starts to become normalised. This is the time when the focus turns to sustaining the change process long term.

④ **Phase three: Sustaining the change process**

For a change activity to be truly successful and sustainable in the long term, it has to no longer be classified as change per se within the newsroom. To achieve this, the activities of change must become institutionalised within the daily business of editorial, resulting in what Bounds terms as internalisation of change (see figure 8).

Institutionalisation and internalisation can be considered the end-goals of sustaining organisational change. Hayes summarises this state as 'Reflection and learning is a cognitive process involving reflecting on what all the activity and emotion has really meant. It is at this point that learning and personal growth, which may benefit future transitions is recognised'. (see figure 6 for its position on the newsroom 'mood' graphic).

The major pitfall during this phase is that change is either suddenly dropped after a few attempts or just gradually disappears and becomes forgotten over time. The old ways of working sneak back in and one year after implementation, people wonder what really did change and what was all the fuss about in the first place.

This section offers the following principles to help guide the newsroom change process avoid these pitfalls:
- Principle eight: Stabilising the change process
- Principle nine: Mentoring and coaching
- Principle ten: Reviews and continuous improvement

4.1 Principle eight: Stabilising the process and being careful when to move on

Maintaining the structure of the change cohort

As soon as it starts to become apparent that change is being adopted and normalised in the newsroom, the signal comes to disband the change cohort. This action is of huge significance in the newsroom as it sends out the message that change has been completed. The danger here is that editorial stakeholders may think "oh now that is all over, we can back to the old ways'. In addition, although the change activities may be over such as project planning, implementing core activities, the change itself may not yet be 'set'

thoroughly in the newsroom and it may be too early to disperse the cohort. Instead the cohort needs to remain for as long a period as possible, being a lynchpin of support within the newsroom for editorial stakeholders. In some newsrooms the change cohort becomes a permanent fixture of the newsroom and handles new change activities over time as well as sustain current change programmes.

Not overloading the newsroom with new activities

One important task of the change cohort is to ensure the common mistake of overloading the newsroom too early with new change activities (either in the same change program or by introducing a whole new change programme), is avoided.

One example is a newsroom left buckling at the knees six weeks into creating an integrated newsroom when the managing editor unexpectedly introduced a raft of new products which were to be created from the same number of people who were having to find ways to balance already stretched resources with new workflows for online content creation. As this change was only announced during the implementation phase, it had not been factored in to the overall planning phase. These new activities nearly pulled the entire change process down as the staff could not take the extra work on board so early into its new organisational set up. As a result, the original change process had to be slowed down, meaning the original goals could not be met on time. The lesson learnt here is to understand that new newsrooms require time to adjust to the new organisational set up and should be allowed to do so on both a cultural and practical level.
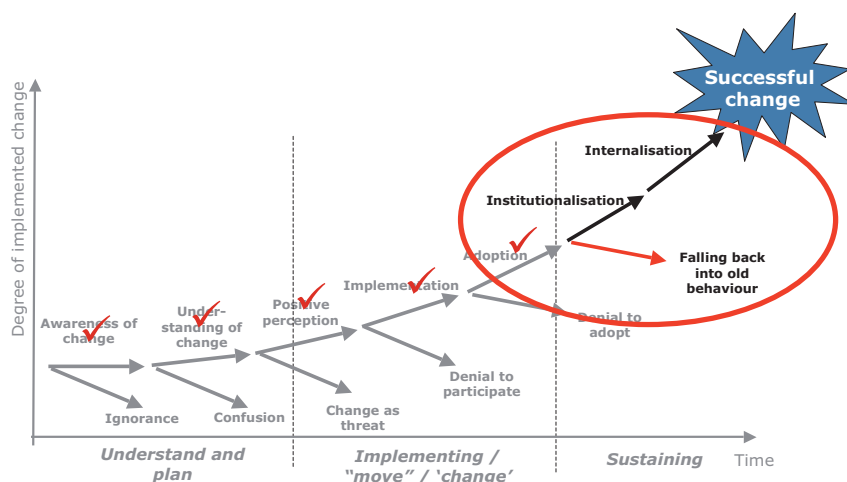

Figure 8: The final phase of change   Based on: Greg Bounds

4.2   Principle nine: Mentoring and coaching

Some changes can take months and even years to be truly accepted by staff. This can particularly be the case for traditional newsrooms having to undertake the philosophical shift towards handling multiple-channel publishing. If a change process will take a long time to be adopted by staff, then it makes sense to put in place a mentoring and coaching process for six to twelve months to ensure support on a regular basis and a structure to ensure problems are caught and dealt with early on.

The following table in figure 9 shows are different examples of mentoring and coaching systems put in place for different types of editorial change processes. Each of these newsrooms was reluctant to allow the mentoring process to be managed on an ad hoc basis and instead put in place a strategically planned and regular mentoring and coaching system.

Mainly internal members of the change cohort who were supported by external advisors on how to set up and lead a coaching and mentoring programme carried out the coaching.

4.3   Principle ten: Reviews and continuous improvement

Alongside mentoring and coaching, formal systems of review and continuous improvement can be useful for sustaining editorial change.

The foundation for any review process means working out the degree in which the originally desired future state is starting to become actual on a daily basis in the newsroom.

Reviews: assessing the status and progress of change

The criteria for reviews should be set out as early as possible into the change process. One of the most successful forms for evaluation is the question framework. This framework needs to focus on certain factors and have various questions relating to these factors which will give as round a picture as possible of the overall editorial change process. The table in figure 10 shows an example.

Frequency of reviews

How often a review process should occur depends on the nature of change. Building regular reviews at key milestones will help to ensure there is a consistent picture of how the change process will be successful. When the change process comes to an end there should be a large-scale review which should help to improve the next stage of change or next change process.

Who should carry out reviews?

Change agents and implementers usually carry out regular reviews and evaluations. However, obtaining an objective picture of the change process will be difficult if the same staff carry out the process. For larger-scale reviews it makes sense to engage an external support who can see how the change situation is running with fresh eyes and can work closer with the change cohort to find solutions to problems. As well

Type of editorial change	Mentoring and coaching programme (examples)
Multiple-media newsroom: Section editors with new responsibilities for cross-channel planning and publication	Weekly one-to-ones between section editor and editor in chief (time scales depend on size of newsroom) Monthly content review sessions with external training and consulting partners Change agent monthly coaching on issues of leadership and ad hoc problem-solving sessions with external change management support Small group reporter sessions on practising new workflows in neutral environment (every two months) Content clinic for photographers to have their content reviewed by industry specialist (every two months)
Implementation of new editorial system	Small group refresher training and problem-solving sessions per month with external supplier and trainer. Weekly one-to-ones between editorial staff and trainer to run through any on the job technical problems Service hotline between editorial and super-users in every section
Aftermath of redundancies	Change management 'drop in' session for all staff to attend held on a regular day every week: A free-for-all session for anyone wishing to discuss how the change process with the implementer and sponsor.
New responsibilities for production staff	Weekly one-to-ones between production staff and change agents. Involved reviews of tasks and refreshers on new workflows

Figure 9: Example of measures put in place for mentoring and coaching for different types of editorial change

Factor	Questions
Vision	How close are we to reaching our vision?
Time	Has the change process kept within its original time boundaries?
Planning	How close to our original plan are we and why have we veered off course?
Goals	Have the editorial wide goals been reached?
	Have the team/section/department goals been reached?
	Have the individual goals been reached?
Leadership	How has the change cohort supported the change process?
Involvement	To what degree where editorial stakeholders involved?
	To what degree were external editorial parties involved and notified and how did this contribute/hinder the change process?
Communication	How communication has been carried out and whether or not it was effective
Daily business versus change process	Have we balanced the daily running of the newsroom with change well?
Support	Do our change agents feel supported?
	Where our support mechanisms successful/not successful?
Problem solving	What problems arose during implementation and how were they handled?
Results and current position	What tangible record do we have of our success so far?
	What evidence is there that change is starting to become sustainable?
	Are we ready to move to the next stage?

Figure 10: Extract from a review structure used in a regional newsroom

as show up points missed, the view of an external advisor can help the acceptance of the results of change as they can help to add a sense of credibility which may help to reduce doubt about the success of the change process when the results are released to a sceptical newsroom.

Publishing the results

It is far easier to sustain positive momentum about editorial change when stakeholders are able to see the progress with their own eyes. Making the results transparent and accessible is a must for ensuring editorial stakeholders and also external to editorial parties (such as unions and human resource management) see the benefits of the change process. This can reduce the risk of animosity and resistance towards change which can occur late in the change programme just as easily as at the start.

Some newsrooms have found large group announcements of the results followed by some kind of celebration to be a very useful way. This is because celebrations firstly mark the importance and significance of both the change process and its success and secondly, they send out the clear message that all the hard work done by editorial stakeholders has been acknowledged.

Continuous improvement and controlling

An essential aspect of reviews is continuous improvement and controlling the change activities. The difference between reviews and controlling is that reviews present the big picture results of the change process and controlling looks at how to tweak and improve the change activities and develop the process long term.

The Japanese system of Kaizen offers a useful framework for thinking through how to set up systems of continuous improvement. This means putting in place a regular and cyclic procedure which focuses on the importance of reassessing the progress of change (carried out in reviews) and then planning and designing tweaks to the change process based on the results of the review. Once these tweaks have been implemented they are then re-trialled and evaluated and so the cycle continues (see figure 11).

Box 5 shows an example of how a newsroom put in place a system of continuous improvement and control.

The account in box 5 shows how the most effective system requires mini reviews as well as large scale reviews, a group of volunteers within the newsroom who are responsible for ensuring that the long term quality of change can be maintained and that change can be improved. This solidifies a consistent approach to involvement throughout the editorial change process, from planning to sustaining change.

Box 5: Continuous improvement procedure to sustain new production workflows

This regional newsroom had been through a tough time with getting production staff to use new templating instead of drawing all pages from scratch. In addition (and similar to the third case study in report two), reporters had also started using a layout-driven workflow instead of a text-driven one. Production staff had created a full library of templates and reporters had got to the stage whereby they had trialed and were now starting to use the news workflows on a regular basis.

Editorial management were concerned that over time the newsroom would find a way to work around for the new workflows as these changes had not been met with much enthusiasm. As a result, the change cohort set up a system of review, control and continuous improvement. An informal review for half an hour was set up for at the end of every day to check how production staff had got on with the day's work of creating templates and building pages. This spotted issues such as too many templates being made, technical problems with design and complaints about stalling of creativity from production staff. This was gradually lessened to once a week and to every two weeks as soon as evidence was seen that improvements were being made. Reporters had every two days one-to-one review sessions, going through their work to check for word limits and also ensuring that coaching was given on the quality of writing as a new style was not demanded. Again, over time the frequency of reviews were lessened.

With the results of these mini reviews, the cohort created a set of scenarios and solutions together with journalists and production staff and gave responsibility for ensuring new measures were implemented. Again, over time, these measures were reviewed and tweaked until nearly two years had passed and all felt comfortable with the changes.

4.4 Summary: The sustaining change phase

Newsrooms that have strategically handled change have found that support does not end at the start of implementation but needs to last well into the daily running of the change process. In any type of editorial change process there needs to be put in place a way to safeguard all the hard work carried out during planning and implementation but at the same time with enough flexibility to ensure the change process can be improved as time moves on.

The more deeply the changes are felt within the newsroom, the longer it will take for people to adapt and therefore the more attention needs to be paid to handling how people are reacting to and moving with the changes both on a team and on a individual level. In newsrooms this means avoiding skipping essential steps and creating routine systems for reviewing change, continuous improvement and the ability to mentor and coach people through not just difficult times but providing an environment whereby change can be associated with developing the newsroom long term.
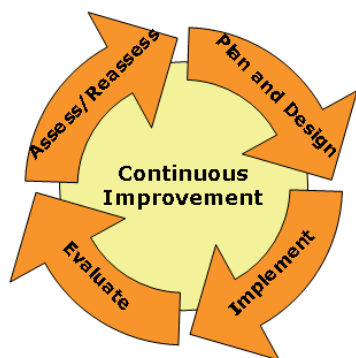

Figure 11: The Kaizen cycle for continuous improvement   Source: http://www.kaizentek.com/company_wordkaizen.html

⑤ End piece: What does it take to make to successfully manage change in newsrooms?

The final part of this research series returns to the first question raised in the introduction: What makes a newsroom change process successful? If change is a must in order for newsrooms to grow and develop, then effective change management is necessary in order to bring change from paper into practice.

Ten principles with guidelines have been presented in this report which show how by taking a strategic approach to handling change in newsrooms, change should represent an opportunity to evolve the newsroom and make it fit for the future.

To help consolidate the information presented in this research series this summary presents figure 12, which provides a bird-eye view of the major activities for any kind of editorial change which pulls together the major activities and success factors which need to feature as part of any editorial change programmes.

In addition this final summary presents seven success factors of change for any editorial change process.

Success factor one: A clear understanding of the need for change and the vision for the future newsroom

The first factor is to ensure all involved in the process can see the case for change in the first instance. This means analysing and diagnosing what needs improving in the newsroom and at the same time having a clear picture of how the future newsroom should look. Information should be shared throughout the newsroom to ensure that all editorial stakeholders are given the same picture of why change is valuable and necessary.

Success factor two: High levels of involvement and communication with the editorial stakeholders from the outset

Instead of a luxury often tagged on to the end of editorial change process, increasing involvement and approaching communication should be seen as a tool to boost acceptance as early on as possible. This ensures editorial stakeholders are not just (un) willing bystanders but instead get the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and dig into the change themselves thus increasing ownership. Involvement principles include facilitating discussion, creating communication policies and plan awareness building sessions and create an environment whereby editorial stakeholders can start

to work with and/or experiment with the change wherever possible.

Success factor three: A clear plan for implementation, available to all

Providing an indication of why change needs to occur is not enough. The 'how' becomes imperative in order to familiarise people with the change process and reduce fear and ignorance. The roadmap, which should include clearly demarcated resources, time points and goals, is invaluable for both editorial stakeholders and those leading the change process. All involved at this stage should see how change will affect not only the newsroom see how the change benefits and affects them on a team and individual level.

Success factor four: A 'watertight' team of people to lead the change

Choosing the right people to manage the change process, assigning clearly roles and responsibilities and ensuring enough resources have been allocated, will prove invaluable during implementation. Understanding how the role of Implementer and Change Agent will play out during the change process is also crucial for creating feedback, promoting engagement and encouraging
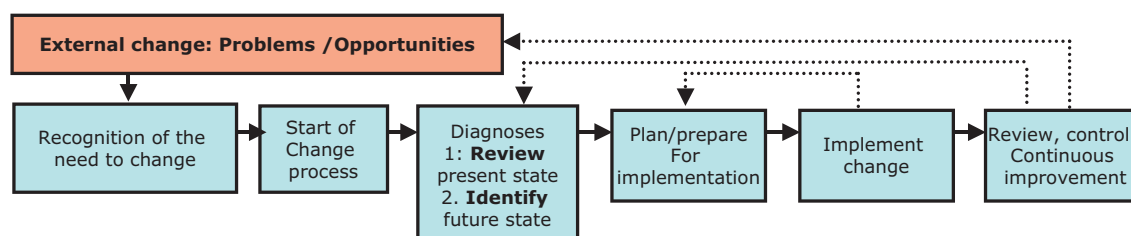

Figure 12: Key steps in the change process

effective leadership within the newsroom. Ensuring that all members of the change cohort are fully engaged with and believe in the change is vital, as it will create a natural impetus for newsroom staff to get involved and start to action change.

Success factor five: Understanding the pace and nature of implementation

Implementation is the time for practicing change and finding out which of the change activities work and what needs improving. Understanding the nature of the phases of implementation from letting go of old ways of working, through to the neutral zone, is key in order to put in place a strategy for how to handle it. Framing this time as the neutral zone is useful for newsrooms as it allows for experimentation, creativity and underlies the importance of making mistakes and the ability to learn from the experience. It also helps to reduce the fear which often surrounds implementation in newsrooms.

In addition to realistic implementation goals and plans, editorial stakeholders require support in terms of training and coaching for new skills. This will increase the chances of editorial stakeholders attempting and adopting the change activities long term.

Success factor six: Acceptance of change should be increase instead of trying to reduce resistance.

Resistance has the reputation of being the enemy of change processes. However, resistance is a natural part of change and if listened to, can provide useful and valuable feedback on obstacles which the change agents

and implementers missed out during planning.

Ignoring how the informal organisation or culture of the newsroom can impact on the change process is folly, just as is trying to work against it. Working with increasing acceptance will have a far more effective impact than trying to stamp out resistance. This means understanding the odds of newsroom change and finding ways to create structures to support the newsroom move from one phase to the other on a psychological level.

Success factor seven: Change must be sustainable in order to be successful

Sustaining change is as (if not more) important as the first phase of change: planning. In many newsroom change processes, sustaining change, like planning, tends to get sidetracked or lost in rush to close the change process and get back into the 'normality' of the newsroom. Sustaining change needs to allow editorial stakeholders get to grips and to instuitionalise the change activities at a realistic pace. Instead of rushing through this phase of change and overloading newsrooms with new activities, the emphasis should go on treating this final stage as a learning curve, one

that creates foundations for the change process and helps to solidify it.

Creating formalised processes, such as coaching and mentoring staff, reviews and systems of control and continuous evaluation, can help to sustain change. But truly internalising change can often take longer than expected, particularly deep-seated change, which shakes the core of what working in a newsroom means today.

Final note

This research series has endeavoured to give an overview of the types of change newsrooms are going through, how it affects editorial personnel and how these processes are implemented and managed. The accounts, strengths and weaknesses and lessons learnt from four case studies and other newsrooms from Europe have underpinned the ten principles of managing change which show the crucial overlap between managing strategy and tasks and handling the cultural aspects of change such as emotions and values (see figure 13). Both of these sides play equally important roles in getting editorial change processes off the ground, successfully implemented and sustained for any kind of newsroom change programmes for today and whatever tomorrow will bring.
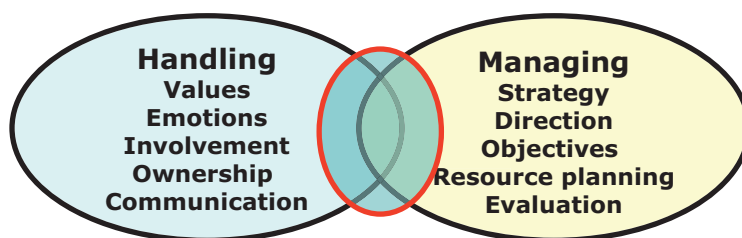
The crucial overlap between....

Figure 13: Balancing the elements of the change process

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