7 CHANGE MANAGEMENT:

CREATING CULTURE AND EVOLVING YOURSELF

In Chapter 2 and 3, we learned that evolutionarily speaking, culture has mostly replaced genes to guide humans in the survival game. Each culture is an immense archive of ideas – what it is best to do to survive. For every decision we make, we rely on ideas from our immediate culture to give us a hint about the right course of action, e.g. embracing a certain value, dressing in a certain way, or making a certain career choice, depending on the demands and expectations of the specific culture that hosts us at that moment. Note that genes do not stand idly by, but actively evolve and adapt to support our process of adjustment, so that we can acquire the necessary culture (GCEB-Be).

In our modern era, that process of attuning is sped up by globalization because cultural borders are not only much more visible but also dynamically shifting, merging, and deepening at the same time (Chapter 1). The need to change and cross those borders has also become *a new survival skill* that humans of our time must acquire. A capacity for cultural adaption and as well as cultural creation has never been so vital. Being both a product and a producer of culture, we need to find a fine balance between (1) taking culture as a resource and (2) shaping culture for better development. This process of changing ourselves and changing others applies to all units of human societies, covering all three levels of the Inverted Pyramid Model: individuals, nation, organizations, groups or the whole mankind.

Knowing the critical role of corporate culture as business strategies (Chapter 6), in this chapter, we will touch on a number of ideas and possible routes that can help organizations to face the challenges of cultural adaptation and creation, reaping benefit from being in sync with the dynamics of culture.

THE NEUROSCIENCE OF CHANGE

Corporate adaptability and change are critical, but we can't turn away from a gloomy fact that change has a low rate of success. According to a Towers Watson study, which involved 276 organizations worldwide,[1] only 25% of change initiatives are successful over the long term. Old habits die hard. In this section, we will explore the three main reasons why: (1) The brain is lazy; (2) the brain is a "control freak;" and (3) the brain likes to imitate.

The Brain is Lazy

Ritual and Cognitive Habit

A habit is something we can do effortlessly. In our brain, habits are mediated by the *basal ganglia*[2] and the *infralimbic cortex*.[3] Tasks that require complex thinking are undertaken by the *working*

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memory, which is mainly the prefrontal cortex. The basal ganglia uses very little energy, making habits effortless, freeing up the processing power for the prefrontal cortex. This is because the brain can't store fuel. It pays as it goes. Imagine if you see a predator and still have to think about how to pull the weapon and how to use it properly. Using the weapon should become an automatic routine if you want to stay alive. In the modern time, it's critical that we don't have to think about how to brush our teeth every morning, so energy can be spent on important tasks such as how to write an important report. This is how the brain economizes energy with routines (less fuel). The brain is lazy in the sense that it tries to convert *as many activities as possible* into a habit in order to save energy. The end result is, much of our lives consists of routines, from driving to work, organizing meetings, communicating, or even managing people.

Habits are strong, persistent and hard to change. If you have doubts, just look at the fact that 90% of "New Year resolutions" fail[4]. A case in point is the story of Angie Bachman. She sued a casino for exploiting her gambling habit, while clearly knowing she had lost her control.[5] Her attorney argued that once she walked into the casino, her habits took over and it was impossible for her to control her behavior. And so, she should bear no responsibility for the outcomes. The court didn't buy it. But her law suit became a prominent test case to explain the subconscious neurobiology of (gambling) habit.

Habits not only affects procedures and rituals but also cognitive perspectives and problem-solving methods. We often see managers applying their habitual business strategies from one company to another, from one culture to another, with both success and failure. For example, Merck's CEO Richard Clark was decisive about cutting 12% of its workforce to fix the company's serious revenue shortfall, largely because operational changes, such as downsizing, were what he knew best while running Merck's manufacturing unit. Commenting on this, author Jerome Want wrote that Merck's execs should have made an effort to improve the company's culture and restore it to its former reputation instead of relying on operational fix-its.[6] At the collective level, many brands such as Nokia and Kodak also collapsed because they fell prey to sleepwalking in the success.

Strong Neural Pattern

Habits are persistent because they can become a strong neural pattern. Repeated behaviors, thought, and feelings wire the brain, creating a strong neural pathway that fires instantly and easily without too much thinking. In Chapter 4, Figure 4.4 shows us how neurons communicate. They "convince" each other to fire by action potentials, sending electrical impulses that trigger the release of neurotransmitters to reach other neurons and bring the messages. If a network of neurons fires together strongly, this process of sending signals will be extremely fast. A habit always involves such a support. If some neurons can fire with ease, we can do a certain thing with ease. Brain's plasticity enables us to perfect a certain skill to the extent that we can execute it with minimum effort, even subconsciously.

For this reason, ironically, executives and experts are among the most difficult people to change, simply because of the cumulative weight of experience, and they, including us, all enjoy a sense of mastery, i.e. doing things easily with great result. That explains why chief innovators should be *less* experienced, because they are less constrained by what usually works. Author Paul Zak offered an example from the self-driving car technology, which went through a stagnant progress for 5 years until a competitive prize was announced. Engineering students from Stanford University won the challenge and $2 million.[7]

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Trigger Returns Habit

The neural pattern of a habit is often so strong that even when the habit ceases, as long as the cue that triggers the habit comes back, so does the pattern.[8] For example, you have stopped the habit of wanting to micro-manage your staff by poking your head in their office every 15 minutes. But just the sight of someone taking a private call can reset your burning urge to assert control, kicking off the habit again. Failure to identity the *cue that triggers* our latent neural pathway of habit is a main reason that makes change so challenging. The brain is lazy, once it sees a familiar sign post, it reverts back to the old way because it is much easier to follow an old route.

The habit of negativity

The brain has evolved to keep us away from danger, but even if danger = habit, we can still unwittingly cling to it. When heart disease patients were told to adjust their lifestyle unless they want to die, only 9% modified their behavior.[9] Those who live in warzone, or poisoning corporate culture for that matter, slowly consider it a normal terrain of work and life. The current situation is bad, but change is scary, because it means venturing into the unknown – a phenomenon termed "learned helplessness" by psychologist Martin Seligman.[10] In his experiment, dogs were put in boxes with no escape route and given a small electrical shock. Initially, they would jump and try to break free. But after failed attempts, they would just lie down and take the pain, even when an escape route was *open.* A terrible situation has become a normality. We will look more into the reason why uncertainty is an obstacle to change in the section on "the brain is a control freak."

Change Means Loss

In the brain's langage, change involves the loss of all investment in the past. *Loss aversion* is rooted in evolution. For our ancestors, losing one month of food stock could result in starvation, while the reward of gaining one month of extra food stock would only be some more rest. This psychology explains why until this day, the impact of losing is twice as powerful as the impact of gaining.[11] It's better to not lose $5 than to find $5. Our brain hates loss, because it is lazy and does not want to spend energy in an unnecessary way. As a result, we have a hard time letting go of a project we know deep down will fail, just because we can't let go of the emotional and financial sunk cost. We also struggle to end a bad relationship because we can't come to term with the idea that the whole thing was for naught. Our brain automatically chooses to avoid loss, because loss avoidance means the least perceived change, even when the other choice is essentially identical, just with different framing.[12]

Change Means Effort

To win over loss aversion, the brain has to make an incredible effort to override the tendency to hold on to the past. Change is challenging because *it takes energy*. The brain is just 2% of our body but uses a huge 20% of our energy, burning about 10 times the rate of other muscles. Consider this famous job interview question: "A bat and a ball cost $1.10. The bat costs $1 more than the ball. What is the price of the ball?" If your answer is 10 cents, then your autopilot System 1 is at work. We discussed these two modes of thinking in Chapter 4: System 1 (fast, implicit, and binary) and System 2 (slow, explicit, and plural). In this case, your brain operated with System 1, saving your energy, but also giving you a wrong answer. A correct solution needs to involve System 2, which will cost you more effort. While good decisions are made with input from *both* systems, as soon as a behavior becomes

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automatic, the cortex starts working less and less, pushing easy, habitual routines to the basal ganglia and lets System 1takes over, allowing mental resources for something else.

Switch Cost is Costly

When switching from one task to another, time and energy are involved, and this phenomenon is called *switch cost.* Even when you are a skilled worker, switching takes a toll on productivity, which is why multi-tasking is not effective,[13] and shifting between tasks can cost as much as 40% of your productive time.[14] If a simply task switching can be so costly, we should now understand why a change of behaviors, or fundamental changes that involve values and emotional attachment can be a daunting task. This means neurons have to fire new pathways, building up different connections, "convincing" new neurons to join the network.[15] Switch-cost is often connected with *backward inhibition* – the notion that a task has to be suppressed to allow new task to be completed. It means we have to put in extra effort to win over the old neural pathways, it means roadblocks, and it means pain. No pain no change, no pain no gain.

Frequently, *small unpredictable changes* are what cost the most amount of energy. Successful changes are more likely when the change is major, at points where old routines stop, such as during holiday, when a baby is born, or during merges and organizational restructures. However, without *a sense of urgency*, people may be motivated with the bright future that changes will bring, but they can (sub)consciously cling to this blissful phase of inspiration, because it feels good and no action (i.e. cost) is required. In fact, it takes an average of 66 days to change a simple habit.[16]

So to conclude, change is challenging because the brain is lazy. Strong neural patterns enable us to execute ritual and cognitive habits effortlessly. A trigger can activate the pattern even when a habit has ceased. Even when habit means danger, strong neural patterns can still keep us in the loop of self-harm. Change costs energy, and it means not only a loss in what has been invested in the past, but also an immense task in overriding old habits and building new neural pathways.

The Brain is a "Control Freak"

No News is worse than Bad News

Our brains are prediction and sense-making machines. The ability to make decision based on prediction quickly, even subconsciously, has helped our ancestors through millions of years on the savannah. For this reason, the brain constantly tries to detect errors or gaps between expectation and reality. Unexpected signals in the environment produce intense bursts of neural firing, drawing energy to the event, and *away* from the prefrontal cortex. This also means information and certainty are vital. Ambiguity is a brain killer, because it triggers the amygdala with fear. We experience *more* stress when we don't know than when we know for sure that bad things are coming.[17] Those who knew their positive medical test's result for Huntington's disease – a serious brain damage – suffered less from depression than those who lived with the uncertainty.[18] Similarly, it is more stressful wondering whether you'll get sacked as a result of organizational change than knowing for sure you will need to prepare for another job.

When consequences are unpredictable, which is essentially a feature of change, the brain constantly sends out the signal that something is wrong. Dopamine – a neurotransmitter that plays a

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critical role in attention – floods the *striatum* – the brain's action center. Logically, you're going to spend the *most energy* when the outcome is the *least predictable*, in the same way as spending the most time with the most difficult problem. Since the brain can't store fuel, such an investment of energy is costly and can't be sustained long, so the brain naturally tries to come back to normal – a state called *homeostasis,* defined as the natural movement of any organism towards equilibrium and away from change.[19] The brain naturally resists change because change itself means uncertainty, stress, and discomfort.

Uncertainty + Prediction = Worst scenario

In the short-term, stress is good (e.g. eustress, as opposed to distress). Eustress swings us to action effectively. However, long-term uncertainty will distort our views and can eventually lead to burn-out, which is often the case of organizational change. You are left speculating why your name is not included in a certain email, why you don't get invited for a certain meeting, and why the manager suddenly seems to avoid eye contact with you, etc. When fear is triggered, we see threats where they don't even exist. When we speculate with fear, we speculate *the worst,* which makes uncertainty even more stressful.

It is important to emphasize that there are many changes we embrace, such as meeting new people, having a dream job, or winning a work assignment in a great country. The kind of change we find challenging has to do with uncertainty. This is the reason why we feel safer in a car than an airplane because we erroneously think we have more control if our own hands can put on the steering wheel.

The Brain Likes to Imitate

The mirror neuron was discovered accidently when an Italian scientist raised his hand to eat an ice cream in the lab, and noticed that the brain cells of a monkey activated. It was strange because the monkey didn't move, but its motor neurons caught the signal and "lit up." The monkey's mirror neurons fire at *seeing* the movement, despite the fact that the monkey didn't move at all.[20] The discovery is: Mirror neurons fire in both situations, when we act, and when we see someone else acting.

While the role is still debated,[21] some scientists argue that mirror neurons in human subconsciously pick up *movement, emotion,* and even *intention.* When communicating with others, our brains mirror their body language, feeling, and thought. This is the basis of empathy, a fundamental requirement to connect humans, enabling us to understand others' pain and happiness. Being on the same wavelength has biological basis, because our thoughts can sync without us uttering a word. From an evolutionary point of view, mirror neurons help us to learn from each other by imitating, to bond with each other by reading mind, and to evolve culture – an evolutionary strategy to advance among humans as social animals. For this reason, mirror neuron has been considered the neuron that "shapes civilization."[22]

The nature of mirror neurons means that cultural change has to win over the tendency of mirroring old habits. During a change process, there will be polarized actions, feelings and thoughts. People tend to absorb and move towards the most powerful ones, not entirely because these behaviors,

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emotions and patterns of thinking are right, but because they have, among other reasons, the support of mirror neurons. Different outward expressions and values will compete at conscious and subconscious levels, negotiating the direction of change. This explains why cultural building has to be executed at the grass roots, headed by influential people, and modeled by the leaders.

To conclude, change is challenging because the brain wants routines (lazy), certainty ("control freak") and imitation. In the next sections, we introduce a model of change management called STREAP-B. It covers the most fundamental aspects of a change process, taking into account the reasons that make change so challenging. STREAP-B stands for: Safety; Trigger; Reward; Emotion; Alignment; People; and Behavior.

THE "S" OF STREAP-B: SAFETY

Change can trigger both interest and fear. If we expect something positive, reward pathways will be activated and we are motivated to change. However, when change signals uncertainty, loss, and fear, we see the unknown future as threat and consequently want to avoid it. This is the reason why Chapter 4 emphasized the downside of a bias towards negativity in cross-cultural management. When we assume that cultural differences and diversity bring about problems and business cost, we tend to resist efforts to change the situation and bridge the perceived gap.

To understand the unpredictable but potential benefit of change, the brain has to operate with System 2 which enables us to obtain a fine, plural, and complex thinking pattern. Similar to differences, change does send off an alarm (System 1), but as long as we can involve the cortex to join the force of judgement, System 2 will activate. This process can only occur when there is *no threat*, and there is *time*. Fear of change shuts System 2, letting loss aversion, knee-jerk reactions and habits take priority. To deal with fear caused by differences, we seek similarities (see Chapter 6). To deal with fear caused by change and uncertainty, we create *safety* – the "S" in STREAP-B.

Identify Safety Issues

The first step in changing an old, or building a new culture is to eliminate threat when people talk about the future and the changes ahead. Simply asking: "What can't you talk about in here?" and then "Why can't you talk about it?" can reveal a great deal of fear issues. Studies have shown that when we label negative feeling or fear, the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex activates and reduces the amygdala's activity.[23] In other words, consciously recognizing fear can *decrease* their impact.

In general, there are 5 primary concerns that tap into the brain's emotional system: (1) *status,* i.e. position in a hierarchy; (2) *certainty*, i.e. ability to predict future; (3) *autonomy*, i.e. sense of control; (4) *relatedness*, i.e. sense of attachment with other; and (5) *fairness*, i.e. perception of fair exchange.[24] According to this SCARF model, a psychological safety should be in place that enables people to think, talk, share, and make decision without being held back by fear. For instance, performance-driven culture is full of fear for status and fairness reduction because managers use rating system and punishment as a way to assure productivity. An example can be found among top GE executives who ranked employees by performance and let the bottom 10% go. Mirror neurons pick up fear, and it can be detrimental around the time of performance appraisal, layoff, or organizational

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change. It shouldn't be a surprise that employees who knew they were ranked were less productive than those who didn't.[25]

Here is another example of how a lack of safety can stop even the most powerful element in change process: *openness*. When there is no safety net, the freedom of expressing one's idea can turn into constant criticism, *disguised* as openness. A culture of honesty without mutual understanding, sympathy and trust will end up with a hostile battlefield. Some will be hurt, many will become vulnerable, while others can act arrogant, and anyone can be opportunistic with the shared information made available via the so-called "openness."

The scandal with Google helps us to understand the paradox of openness and fear. In August 2017, a Google engineer released a 10-page anti-diversity manifesto in which he claimed that women just aren't cut out to work in tech like men are, and that the company's policy is politically correct. As the memo leaked, circulated, and caused frenzies, he was promptly fired. This subsequently led to a heated debate in which some critics accused Google of shaming dissenters into silence.[26] In the end, his claims about gender are easy to confront, and firing him created threats among those with conservative views. When certain values are hidden, fear can create pockets of underground resentment, while at the same time, giving leaders the *illusion* of change at the surface.

Clarity

Concrete information, even negative information, is vital to calm the amygdala down. Since the brain likes to control, a black hole is worse than a known disaster. While too much information disclosure can be harmful, communication in the process of building culture should be transparent and crystal clear. This includes informing stakeholders about the process, expectation, and consequences. A 2015 study of 2.5 million manager-led teams in 195 countries found that workforce engagement improved when supervisors engaged in daily communication with direct reports.[27] Since change is unpredictable, backup plans should be available, outlining what will happen if things fall apart. A good example is how the new CEO of ABB managed to save the company from bankruptcy and consistently sent 150,000 employees an email every week to communicate clearly and honestly about the situation and the solutions. There was also a feedback system, which allowed the CEO to incorporate responses in the next weekly email.

Choice

The ability to make choice is connected with autonomy, a sense of control, and, hence, safety. We love to make our own decisions, or at least, we love to think that we can do it. In fact, the presence of extra choices, especially when they are very costly, makes the target choice more acceptable. We see this tactic in pricing plans, which offer 3 choices instead of 2 because customers tend to pick the middle one.[28] However, too many choices can be harmful, because it also triggers uncertainty.

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Control

The opportunity to be in charge of ourselves is critical in reducing fear, and thus, it is a big motivator. A 2014 survey found that nearly half of employees would give up a 20% raise for greater control over how they work.[29]

Re-evaluate Competition

Performance-driven companies that prioritize stakeholder's values above all else often encourage fierce internal competition. Benefit withstanding, internal competition can cause fear if eustress turns to distress. Employees who feel pitted against one another can devote valuable time and energy trying to figure out how to outshine their peers, or worrying about lagging behind, instead of trying to figure out how to best contribute to projects.

Trust

Mistrust activates the amygdala. In an fMRI study, untrustworthy faces (higher inner eyebrows and pronounced cheekbones) were shown for only milliseconds – enough for the amygdala to react, but not enough for the participants to consciously make a decision. Their brain subconsciously picked up mistrust signals without them knowing it.[30] This is worrying if we link it with the fact that consciously, 50% of managers don't trust their own leaders.[31] In other words, half of the corporate world is working with suboptimal brains and conscious fear, let alone the amount of subconscious anxiety.

Trust is a strong predictor of national wealth, since people are more likely to undertake long-term investments – which largely rely on mutual trust that both sides will fulfill their obligation.[32] Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies reported 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout, and each employee earned an additional $6,450 per year.[33] In a PwC's survey of 1,409 CEOs from 83 countries worldwide, 55% of them think that a lack of trust is a threat to business growth.[34] This number is high, but still baffling, if we assume that almost half of the CEOs don't share the same view.

In most cases, voluntary changes are only possible with trust. It is the moment people shift their outward expressions and values because they believe they are safer or better off with the proposed change. A critical prerequisite for trust is fairness. When a change is perceived as unfair, people are ready to *lose* rather than accept the gain from unfairness. We should recall here the ultimatum game, in which the first player is given an amount of money, and told to give some to the second player. The second player can accept or refuse the split. But there's a hitch: if the second player refuses the offer, both leave empty-handed. A rational mind would prompt the second player to accept whatever given to her/him, because refusing it would mean a "lose-lose situation," both end up with none. Interestingly, in order to punish the greedy partner, most people choose to refuse when they are given unfair splits (less than 30%).

The indication of this game is: when treated unfairly, people can sabotage to punish, even if that means their own loss. It is worrying if we link this with the amount of unfairness in the corporate world, for example, the gap between employees and executives in terms of salaries and privileges.

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During the process of culture change, such as merges, many CEOs are rewarded with bonuses even when it means employees lose their jobs.

To conclude, safety is the first and foremost condition to support a sustainable change in culture. Safety issues are status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness. Strategies to create safety include identifying safety issues, being on the same page (clarity), enabling self decision making (choice), fostering autonomy (control), keeping check of internal competition, and building trust.

THE "T" OF STREAP-B: TRIGGER

A trigger is powerful, because it brings back the urge to fall back into the old patterns even when the habit has ceased. In this section, we will identify the habit loop and briefly learn a method to change a habit by learning a new routine.

The Habit Loop

In his book *The Power of Habit,* business reporter Charles Duhigg wrote that a simple neurological loop at the core of every habit was identified by MIT researchers: *a trigger, a routine,* and *a reward*. In order to make a change, we need to identify these components.[35] For example, whenever I turn on my laptop (trigger), I check my Facebook newsfeed (routine), because it feels great (reward) to keep updated with what is going on.

To change my habit, I first need to identity the trigger, bearing in mind that they can (re)activate habits uncontrollably. The second step is to react to that trigger by experimenting with different rewards. For example, whenever I turn on my laptop (trigger), I will work on a challenging task when my mind is still fresh, such as learning 5 new foreign words, or whenever I feel the need to check social media, I will make a cup of my favorite tea. This process is to *test* different hypotheses to determine which craving can replace my old reward of "feeling so great" when scrolling down my Facebook newsfeed. By knowing the trigger and rewards, I can try to change my routine to reach the same reward, or to have very different rewards that are no less satisfying. According to Duhigg, in order to rid of a habit, we need to acquire new ones: "You have to keep the same triggers and rewards as before, and feed the craving by inserting a new routine."

Cultural Habits

The method of Duhigg doesn't quite apply to cultural habits. Identifying triggers and rewards is often challenging, especially at the collective level. For example, some people tend to have a habit of thinking that "foreigners are less productive at work," despite being shown strong evidence against it. It takes time, usually with the help of scientific research, to know the triggers that prompt such a habituated thought. The reason is because a trigger in this case can be both conscious and subconscious. Is it their skin color, their accent, conscious bias, or subconscious experience that triggers the prejudice? In the same vein, rewards of such thinking habit can be diverse, ranging from self-assurance (e.g., "I feel good because I know I'm right") to simplicity (e.g., "The reason is simple,

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'race' it is. So I don't have to do difficult thinking on trying to figure out why foreigners are not good workers.")

Note that triggers are often embedded in the memories that shape our current thinking. Every thought we have at this moment is the consequence of many in the past, be it short-term or long-term memories. When we truly want to change, we must open it up, and it can be both wonderful recalls and a terrible can of worms. A person with prejudices against foreigners may be triggered by various cues from constant stream of media that casts immigrants in a negative light. By investigating the long-term memories, this person may figure out that her/his bias comes from a bad experience with a foreign teacher during childhood, or from a movie in which foreigners are portrayed negatively. In many cases, triggers are formed *accidently* and *subconsciously*. For example, a person got sacked when (s)he was in a big glass office. This feature secretly became a trigger that makes her/him nervous whenever (s)he enters a glass structure, without understanding why.

Here is another example: An employee grew up with disciplined parents and teachers who often told him exactly what to do. Later in his life, he responds more to a hierarchy, commands, and clear instructions, as these are the triggers for him to work best, which is a reward. If, out of nowhere, he is given autonomy and asked for contribution, the chance is great that he would stumble over this unexpected freedom and responsibility, his mind would search for familiar triggers so that he could employ the familiar routine. In such a case, to change these entrenched value and behavior, it is much better to focus on the reward. If the employee could see that different triggers are to ensure that he would have the same reward (get things done effectively), he would be more likely to change.

To identify a trigger, it is important to look at the *past* with critical eyes. Knowing that certain memories are (sub)consciously holding us back can help to facilitate the change of routine. However, calling out a trigger hidden within memories should be balanced with a focus on reward, which is the discussion in our next section.

THE "R" OF STREAP-B: REWARD

Seeking pleasure and avoiding pain is important for survival, and that is what the brain constantly does: maximizing reward and minimizing punishment. Sometimes, these two emotions compete for preference. A simple case would be when we have to accept a small pain to get closer to a large reward. From "eating a hot curry" to various doctrines of religions or organizational culture change, people always seek to balance the reward and the pain, short-term and long-term. This is also the principle behind the old adage: No pain no gain.[36]

Eyes on Prize

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the ACC is part of the brain that helps us detect errors and conflict.[37] Studies have shown that when we are in pain and do *not* focus on it, the ACC detects a conflict (in this case, a distraction) and gets activated. We get in the mode of reasoning. The beautiful consequence is: We think more, and we feel *less pain*.[38]-[39]

Taking indication from those studies, focusing on the negativity of cultural change and differences is like putting a magnifying glass on the downturns. On the contrary, focusing on the

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positive side can bring benefits, as this mentality reduces the psychological burden of problems and helps us cognitively. In a change process, problems should be seen as side posts on the road that leads us one step closer to the reward. IBM's former CEO Thomas Watson once said: "The fastest way to success is to double your failure rate." Helping the brain to focus on reward will make it *recode* the meaning of failure. Furthermore, people don't want to show their ignorance when asked to change and learn something new. That is why change should be recoded as an opportunity to master new skills.

It is essential to remind people who are in the process of change to *imagine* the end result. When we are stuck with an endless analytic mode of pros and cons, it also helps to tackle the problem starting with the positivity. Author Srinivasan Pillay offers a solution: "Okay, let's accept that you are stuck. Now, let go of that. Please imagine how things would look like if both sides got your way in a manner that served the company's goals. How does that look like? Now, work backward from this optimistic point where problems have been solved."[40]

Mental training has incredible self-fulfilling prophecy power, especially among professional athletes. They would act as if they had already won the competition, using their dominant body language. Our muscles will get stronger just by imagining exercise (i.e., sitting still for 11 minutes, 5 days a week, for 4 weeks, as conducted in neurophysiology research).[41]-[42] Since imagining an action stimulates the same brain region involved in the actual conduct of that action, imagining future success can enhance people's motivation to achieve it.[43]

The takeaway is, leaders should encourage people to imagine, visualize, talk about, and discuss the end and desirable result of the change. It's good to imagine possible roadblocks too, and how to overcome them. Mental rehearsal is also a technique used to train special navy forces. By continuously running an activity in your mind, when the real situation occurs, you are better prepared for it. In short, *imagery acts as a precursor to action.*

Create Small Achievable Goals

Another strategy to trigger the advantages of reward is to break goals up into *smaller tasks*, create *micro-deadlines*, or write an *achievement lis*t (NOT to-do-list), so that there are more reasons to celebrate and feel rewarded when a task is done. Cultural building is a long process and the end result is often abstract and far away. Note that the brain likes short-term rewards, such as eating sweets. This kind of reward can be so strong that it distorts long-term rewards, such as maintaining a healthy body. Each time we feel rewarded, repeated release of dopamine make us want to have that experience again. And because the brain wants to have that experience again, it is easier to learn a little bit more. This neural basis has led to a strategy of breaking a long-term mission down to small achievable tasks, thus cultivating many small, *short-term wins* that can propel us to bigger success. It's essentially the idea that the power of progress[44] is what make success beget success. So, focus on progress, not perfection. A case in point is how the Rocky Flats project - the largest nuclear cleanup in the world history - was completed 60 years ahead of schedule, $30 billion under budget, with cleanup levels exceeding federal guidelines by a factor of 13.[45] The leadership at Rocky Flats steadily created "small wins" that helped motivate steadily positive changes in the underlying culture.

Neuroscience gives us some insight. Interestingly, we learn more from success than from failure. The brain cells *increase* their selectivity for the association to be learned, and *decrease* it after

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an incorrect trial.[46] In an experiment,[47] students won money for right answers and lost money with incorrect answers. For those who lost, there was an activation of the anterior insula. This feeling of regret leads to "avoidance learning," i.e. we focus on avoiding the mistake in the future. This is fine, but since the focus is on "avoiding mistake," what we did well does not deserve the right attention, and we don't learn much from what has done right. In the next round of experiment, students were allowed to look back at their answers and understood where they had gotten it wrong. During this process, their brains activated the reward circuit in the ventral striatum. Interestingly, this process looked similar to how their brain reacted when they won from correct answers. Thus, making a mistake is only rewarding when people have a chance to review the mistakes and learn from them in a safe environment, because the brain sees this opportunity as a reward.

Time of Reward

Most companies tend to think that salary is the main reward. The problem is, salary is paid at a fixed period of time, and it becomes a habit (fixed ratio and fixed variable). Many other rewards also transform into entitlements to be expected, and that is the problem. What makes social media, shopping, and Pokémon-Go so addictive is that reward is set at *variable ratio* and *variable interval.* You don't know what and how much (i.e. ratio) of the reward you will receive, and you don't know when (i.e. interval) you will receive it. So you continue to act, just in case. Let's recall here that dopamine – an arousal hormone and neurotransmitter that gets us ready for action – spikes because we *anticipate* rewards, and the nucleus accumbens that involves motor functions become *inactive* when people actually receive money.[48] This means chasing rewards is a reward in itself, and it can be more exciting than getting the reward. The principle of variable ratio and interval should be applied for reward in a cultural change process as well. Surprising employees with a dinner, a prize, a bonus, or a compliment will reinforce the desired behavior effectively.

Type of Reward

Companies can spend up to 2% of payroll on reward and recognition programs but this cash-focused approach is not always effective. Rewards should be *tangible, unexpected, personal,* and *public*. At Zappos for example, employees are given $50 to nominate a co-worker who embraces the company's core values to the fullest.[49] The "hero of the month" was surprised with a song performed by her/his colleagues, receives a covered parking spot, a $150 Zappo's gift card, and a cape to proudly wear. However, specific cultural values should be taken into account, since team-reward can be more appropriate in certain contexts.

To conclude, reward strategies for cultural change include focusing on the positive, imagining the end result, imagining how to solve a potential problem, recoding failures as necessary side posts, reframing challenges as opportunities to gain, creating small achievable goals, and making reward unexpected, tangible, personal and public.

THE "E" OF STREAP-B: EMOTION

The rise of science during the Renaissance put consciousness and cognitive process at the center of "being human." As a result, emotion became a distraction and a sign of vulnerability. Only recently,

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with the seminal work of Daniel Goleman on Emotional Intelligence (EQ),[50] we started to view emotion as the driver of decision making and behavioral change.[51] The Latin root of emotion is *movere,* meaning "to move." In essence, emotion is the base of motivation and the very reason why we want to change.

The Role of Emotion in Decision Making Process

300 years ago, the father of modern philosophy René Descartes said: "I think, therefore I am," which we have equated with "I am *rational*, therefore I am." However, neuroscience has proved that separating emotional and rational elements is impossible. System 1 operates with fast decisions, based on binary gut feelings, emotions, and ingrained habits, while System 2 operates with slow decisions, plural, complex, and conscious. System 2 needs input from System 1 to reach the final destination. That input is emotion. Without emotion, one can't make a good decision. Evolutionary speaking, the limbic system was developed millions of years *before* the cerebral cortex, so the later relies heavily on the former to act effectively. The regular story of cold, rational thinking in our pop cultures, sciences and criticism is misleading, because no so-called "rational thinking" can be made *without* input from emotional feeling. Humans possess an incredible capacity of integrating thinking and feeling. We can feel that we are thinking, and think about feelings.

In *Descartes' Error,*[52] Anthony Damasio described the case of patient Elliot, who had a lesion in his orbitofrontal cortex – part of the brain that balances emotional input in decision making. One would think that without emotional/irrational "burden," Elliot would find it much easier to think purely based on facts. It was the contrary. His business acumen went haywire, as he eventually lost his career and family. He would spend too much time analyzing the pros and cons of a simple matter such as buying product A or B, lacking that final nudge of emotion as a prompt to make decision. Reflecting on Descartes' famous saying, for Elliot, he (only) *thinks*, and therefore, he is *lost.*

Thus, emotions drive decisions and movements. In one of the previous sections, we mentioned the ultimatum game, in which most people choose to be empty-handed when given an unfair share of the profit. Fairness is the driving emotion here, with the purpose of punishing the greedy partner. In fact, emotional branding[53] in marketing relies mostly on emotion to sell because people never just purely employ logic.

Emotions help to make *moral* decision. Without an emotional guidance of right and wrong, businesspeople risk becoming cold-blood psychopaths. In fact, one in five corporate executives are psychopaths, roughly the same rate as among prisoners.[54] Characterized with a profound lack of remorse, emotion and empathy (feeling for others), nevertheless, these "snakes in suits"[55] mask themselves well and are considered ambitious and successful.[56] The rise of high-flyer psychopaths has recently been addressed as an effort to understand what caused the 2008 financial crisis. The lack of emotion is what makes executives opt for wrong decision during major cultural change and restructuring programs. For example, they may favor a cost-benefit analysis approach without considering people's emotions. By doing so, they would lose talent, harness a socially irresponsible and inhuman business culture. Business schools play a crucial role in choosing to either cultivate or modify this cold-blooded calculative reasoning mentality.[57]

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Story Telling

Since emotions are used to enhance memories and influence behaviors, business storytelling has emerged as a critical strategy to drive cultural change. Data can persuade people, but it doesn't inspire them to act.[58] When we look at a Power Point slide full of data, the brain regions for language are activated, turning words to meaning. But when listening to a well-told story, the whole brain lights up because all senses are awake with details of the story. For example, the olfactory cortex activates when people see the words "perfume" and "coffee."[59] The *same* region of brain also activates when people *enjoy* perfume and coffee. This means hearing and imagination have the same neural effect as actual experience. For survival purposes, humans have evolved to remember experiences better than unrelated facts. Storytelling is powerful because it influences us the way our actual life experience does. Hence, change should be in the form of stories.

Empathy vs. Perspective-taking

Empathy is made possible by mirror neurons,[60] which enable us to *feel what others feel*. It is a powerful mechanism that connects humans together. In fact, watching 40 seconds of videotaped compassion can reduce anxiety.[61] Empathy is a critical stage to deal with hostage situations by FBI. Their technique goes: (1) Active listening; (2) Empathy – feel what others feel; (3) Rapport: they feel it back; (4) Influence; and (5) Change. We can apply this model in business setting with various active listening strategies that lead to empathy. For example, in fear-free meetings, employees voice their opinions or concerns while managers only listen with absolutely no interference.

However, too much empathy can make you confuse others' feeling with own feeling, and thus, may distort clear thinking.[62] To compare, perspective-taking, or *cognitive* empathy, is the ability to *think about what others feel,* and often occurs after emotional empathy.[63] These two processes activate different brain regions and prompt differences in behaviors.[64] During a cultural change, it is more vital to understand others, imagine what you would do if you were in the situation, and find common ground and consensus rather than simply being overwhelmed with similar feelings.

Dealing with Undesired Emotions

Emotions are not helpful when we show wrong emotions in the wrong time, or with the wrong intensity. This is the reason why mindfulness has become a booming practice in corporate's everyday life. Just 15 minutes of mindfulness a day enables people to make better business decisions.[65]

There are many techniques to manage emotion. Here is a technique developed by the author after a long time of practicing mindfulness, summarized in three letters: OAK.

"O" means *observe.* When unwanted emotions rise up, take several deep breaths. Long exhales mimic the process of relaxation. Long inhales provide oxygen to the brain for better cognition processes. Now try to "look" at your feeling as if you are another person, and describe it. Notice your physical state at that moment: the heartbeat, the sensation on the skin, the feeling in the stomach, etc. Look straight into your emotion, and separate it from who you are. Talk with yourself and others about your emotion. This is important because suppressing emotion backfires, affecting memories and creating a threat response in others.[66] Instead of holding back, name the emotion. Labelling emotion

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calms the amygdala down and activates the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex – the brain's breaking and self-control system.[67] For example, say "there is anger," instead of associating yourself with the emotion as in "I'm angry." Observe your thought. Consider thoughts as actors on a stage and you are the audience, watching how they appear and disappear, *without* following them.

"A" means *analyze.* "Step back and ask why" is a powerful approach to deal with unwanted emotions. It allows us to distance ourselves from the event and think about the reasons behind it rather than fixating on the consequential emotion. "A" can also mean *anicca* – a Pali word for impermanence. This is an essential doctrine of Buddhism, which asserts that all things are transient and temporary. Understanding *anicca* helps us to decide if we should react on an emotion right here right now, or can we wait a little longer to see it from different perspectives. If many of the worries we had in the past seem ordinary today, then the same can apply to some of the worries we have today, because they may mean a lot less after a while. In other words, *if it's not urgent, analyze, and wait.*

"K" means *kindness.* After you have calmly observed the emotion and tried to come up with all possible explanations, if you still have to act, do it with kindness, for the sake of both yourself and others. By choosing not to *react* to the knee-jerk emotion, you have allowed emotion to be a critical input and not a destructive power. By acting with kindness, you have stopped the vicious spiral of tit-for-tat between battling amygdalae. It's important to remember that emotional attack is not always the best strategy. Wanting to attack means it's actually you who is under emotional attack.

Mindfulness is a great tool to practice concentration. A moment of distraction, doubt, or anxiety can shatter a wining possibility, as seen in the famous Mind Ball game.[68] In this experiment, there is a large metal ball on the table with a magnetic field under it. Players wear a headband that picks up their electrical signals from the brain, and use them to control the position of the ball. Their goal is to push the ball, purely by their thought, to roll towards the opponent and fall in their lap. What happens very often is that players tend to *lose* when they almost *win*, i.e. when the ball is closer to the table edge of the opponent's side. The anxiety of winning interferes with control, and stops them from staying "in the zone." The ability to focus at critical moments is common among top sport players, successful business leaders, and other high-achievers.

Create a Happy Work Place

We often see success as a goal, and happiness is the consequence, "success creates happiness." However, this means every time we reach success, happiness is there for a moment and gone, because another goal (success) means happiness is again at the end of the striving road – a road that we need to travel without joy, since joy is yet to be rewarded. The end result is that our working life consists of roads separated by happiness "markers," but never *full* of happiness.

But that's not how the brain works. When we are in positive moods, energy is not wasted in dealing with fear and stress. The brain's error detector ACC increases its activity with positive mood, hence, facilitates problem solving.[69] Statistically, happiness leads to a spike of 12% in productivity.[70] The fact that only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged at work[71] explains why 87% of employees support a position called Chief Happiness Officer[72] – a title created by the founder of Woohoo Inc. Thus, the formula needs to change. Instead of seeing success as a goal, we'd better see happiness as a *goal*, and expect success to follow as a *consequence*.[73]

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Happiness is partly in our genes. Genetic variation explains about 33% of differences among individuals.[74] But let's recall GCEB-Be, with the fact that (1) behaviors can turn on or off a certain genes; (2) the brain is plastic; and (3) the impact of culture and environment is immense. Mirror neurons are there to pick up happiness and make us feel the same way, even subconsciously, because emotion is contagious. That's the benefit of an optimistic leader, because her/his emotions prompt followers to mirror the same neural circuits.

However, it is impossible to avoid unwanted emotions. In fact, the best formula to thrive is a combination of both, as long as positive emotions outnumber negative ones. This is to *balance out* the evolutionary bias humans have towards negativity (i.e. bad things attract our attention more for survival purposes.) Good can only triumph by force of numbers or perceptual *reframing* of the situation. The latter is a crucial strategy during change process, as it allows us to have more than one way to view an event.

Taking one step further, the simplistic good-bad, positive-negative dimension is outdated, since emotions interact dynamically with complex results. In a study, people who experienced both happiness and sadness ended up better off than those who experienced one emotion only,[75] probably because they are in the optimal zone of eustress. When sadness or anger is caused by injustice, it is not useful to stuff it up, but allow it to drive behavior to be the change you want to see. "Full engagement" at work is a good example of combining all sort of emotions into a powerful synergy of forces: the thrill of hunt, the pleasure of feast, the eagerness to revenge, the warmth of trust, and to a certain extent, the fear of disappointment. Advocating this holistic view, some researchers have compared "wholeness is to psychology" with what "enlightenment is to spirituality."[76]

To conclude, no good decision is made without input from emotion. Emotion is what drives people to change. Emotion strategies for cultural change include storytelling, balancing empathy and perspective taking, controlling negative emotion, acting with kindness (OAK), and creating a happy workplace with eustress.

THE "A" OF STREAP-B: ALLIGNMENT

In Chapter 1 and 6, we have discussed the crucial role of similarity in recognizing our ingroup, i.e. who we can trust. For this evolutionary reason, we have evolved to quickly recognize and exercise favorable bias towards those who look, act, think, and hold the same values as we do.

During a change process, managers and outsiders often want to distinguish themselves immediately in an attempt to prove their quality. They may ignore the screaming amygdalae of the staff, who haven't got sufficient time to understand the new strategy, to give a voice, to build trust, and to see their own benefit in the change. Knowing how the brain works, it is much more sensible and effective to be "on the same page" and acknowledge what "works well here" before convincing people to change.

Alignment or similarity can be recognized at all levels of social connections: Backgrounds, work benefits, hobbies, interests, emotions, and values, etc. Author Andy Habermacher even suggested a common enemy or a common threat to put people in the same boat, to fight together.[77] At

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the Alliance of CEOs in 2006, Jeff Rodek – Chairman and CEO of Hyperion Solutions said: "Every business needs one company to beat. Pick an enemy!" He recounted his FedEx days where everyone in the company was told, "Every time you see a brown truck (UPS), they're taking food from your children."[78] While this may involve a question of ethics, from evolution's perspectives, it makes sense. When a harm is inflicted by an outsider on an ingroup's member, there is increased coupling between left orbitofrontal cortex (emotional control), the amygdala (emotional detector) and the *insula* (emotional context for physical experience).[79] The brain is highly sensitive to outgroup attacks on ingroup members because it poses an existential threat to the whole collective.

THE "P" OF STREAP-B: PEOPLE

Everyone in the company should be a change agent, i.e. identifying problems, finding solutions, and carrying the change. However, change leaders are those who orchestrate the whole process. Many companies make a classic mistake of appointing HR manager for the task, seeing culture building as just another HR project. This approach often recruits the wrong change leaders and risks the lack of both top sponsorship and bottom-up involvement.

Change Leaders

Change leaders should be influential people, simply because their attitudes, emotions, and behaviors will be picked up by others with the help of mirror neurons. Other candidates are up-and-coming managers who see changes as opportunities to reach their ambition and career development.

With the mirror neurons in mind, change leaders are those who demonstrate desired behaviors and lead the change by examples. The mirror neurons in the brain of the followers will be subconsciously activated, prompting the same behavior. In short, the old adage "walk the talk" has a solid neural basis.

Top Sponsor and Bottom Involvement

A change process should have support from both people in the boardroom and those by the rank and file. Without commitment from the executives, there will be no sense of urgency, no guiding vision, no alignment with the company's goals, and no watchful eyes for chaos. Similarly, if lay people don't own the change process, corporate culture will only exist on paper. In his book, author Jerome Want described several cases in which change was facilitated ineffectively.[80] With Verizon, it was a half-hearted attempt to change *without* the involvement of the top twenty officers. However, these senior managers had behaviors that were in complete opposition to the cultural change efforts taking place in the management ranks just below them. On the other extreme, at Time Warner, in order to change the company's slow-moving bureaucracy, CEO Jerry Levin made a 45-minute video staring himself, outlining his thought, and had it distributed to everyone. Both cases ended up with failure, because either the top or the bottom was not involved.

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THE "B" OF STREAP-B: BEHAVIOR

In Chapter 2, we discussed how repeated behaviors, regardless of being voluntarily or forced, can slowly change the structure of our genes, brain, environment and culture. The "foot-in-the-door" tactic tells us that once people agree to go with the first step, they would feel an inner need to go all the way through, making their attitude consistent with their behavior.[81] In other words, we change our values to fit our past and current behaviors. The implication is, we can reshape a culture by changing behaviors (GCEB-Be, Behavior – Culture pathway)

Since changes don't just start from within, for those who are tasked with building a business culture, this is good news. We don't have to wait until we are 100% sure about the change, since acting can compensate that doubt. It's noteworthy to mention here that Jewish tradition typically focuses more on religious *practice* than religious belief.[82] This is rooted in the idea that repeated behaviors will eventually lead to a change in attitude. One may not believe in God initially, but the rituals that (s)he follows day in and day out will bring her/him to God. The mind leads the action, but action can change the mind as well. We are what we repeatedly do (Aristotle).

Break the Pattern with "As If"

More often than not, what we often describe ourselves is only a *snapshot* of who we are at a particular time and place in life,[83] for example, "hot tempered but honest," "good at art, bad at science," "easily get provoked," etc. We are then told to embrace this true self, lovingly accept this genuine version of our authenticity, and let it define us forever. The fact is that when snapshots become *labels*, they will drive our behavior and guide our decisions, creating our life's patterns, slowly transforming incidents into habits, changing temporary emotional dispositions into more permanent characteristic, and constructing the so-called personality. In other words, the "true" self is nothing other than the result of self-fulfilling prophecy, and of patterns that have been built up over time. You have *become* an "easily provoked" person because that is how you have behaved and who you believe you are, but it is not who you are, or all that you can be.

A contemporary view of the self emphasizes impulse, process and change.[84] You are not a single, unified being but complex, multifaceted and changing constantly. The brain's plasticity enables us to represent multiple cultures in our mind and switch between values simultaneously. This makes change possible, as long as the new pattern wins over the old habitual reactions.

In their book *The Path*, Puett and Gross-Loh advised people to intentionally break the pattern, even if that goes against the emotion at that moment.[85] For example, you are in a long-simmering resentment with your colleague. The first step is to acknowledge that the problem is *not* because you two are incompatible, but that your communication has fallen into a pattern. Both you and he have responded to the genuine emotion of anger, irritation and apathy. To break this pattern, you need to see him as a complex, multifaceted person with a pleasant side. And so do you. There is a more tolerant side in you that would not mind talking to the pleasant side of him at all. Ask yourself "Can I act *as if* this side of me is talking to that positive side of him?" If the answer is "yes," you are off to a good start. You may begin with a friendly greeting, even though that would be the last word you want to utter. You may want to force a deliberate moment of silence the next time you want to snarl.

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The chance is big that your colleague will react differently to that "as if" behavior, and that means both of you stand a chance to break away from the dangerous pattern. Puett argues that by actively working to shift ourselves "as if" we were different people in that moment, we may open up infinite possibilities that we did not know existed. Thus, fake it until you *become* it.

Identify and Reward Desirable Behaviors

To change by behaviors, desirable behaviors needs to be identified. For example, if the desirable behavior is "people should talk directly to each other," it would be formally labelled "Direct with Respect." In combination with trainings, leaders would consciously mentor employees and demonstrate their "Direct with Respect." They would reward employees with a "thank you" when the targeted behavior was shown. This strategy was employed for six months in an $8 billion company, and a cultural pulse survey revealed a significant reduction in the number of employees leaving the company (from 12 to 6%). Customers clearly noticed a change in service and the company's market share on certain products grew by two points without the addition of new features.[86]

Here is another example. Violence is a daily routine in high security prisons. But when the warden in a Californian prison approved an 11-day trial of the Compassion Game, the culture started to change. Gang leaders identified themselves as "compassion ambassadors" and inmates as "compassionistas." They earned points by logging in compassion acts such as sharing food and helping to clean up each other's cell. The 11-day trial observed 4600 acts of compassion and zero violence.[87] The game changed people significantly, for example, a women known as "evil" changed her name to "Tinker Bell" – a sweet, sassy, and tiny fairy who always has her friends' back.

A Good-enough Decision is Good Enough

It's not wise to be stuck in the analysis stage, since it means you are just rearranging the problem in different ways. From neuroscience's point of view, making a decision helps to bring about control. There is no need to make a perfect decision, but a *good-enough* ones. It calms the limbic system and engages the prefrontal cortex.[88] Trying to make the absolute best decision can have the opposite effect, since being a perfectionist can be stressful. Again, focus on progress, not perfection.

Use Action Orientation

Making a decision to change does not always mean people will automatically act accordingly. More often than not, a decision is hard, and we are left with a state of cognitive dissonance – conflicting between attitude and action. We may have decided to create a culture of transparency, but the extra effort and problems that will occur in the process of doing so don't just disappear because of this decision. This is when psychological processing assists us to start viewing the choice we made more favorably, helping us to follow through the decision easier (see Chapter 2). Research has shown that after making a decision, an action-oriented approach with clear course of what-to-do will increase our preference for the choice we made.[89] It increases the left frontal cortical activity and decision commitment.[90] In other words, we will evaluate a choice with action plan much more favorable and commit to it much stronger than the one without.

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To conclude, in this chapter, we have discussed the neurobiology of change and the challenges we face in change management. Following the STREAP-B model, organizations can touch on the most fundamental aspects of change and selected strategies. A collective such as a company is not different from humans as a species or individual persons in the sense that its culture is both persistent and evolving. We may find it difficult to change, but we are *built to adapt,* and we are the only the species that can do so *deliberately.*

SUMMARY

1. Change is challenging because:

- The brain is lazy. Strong neural patterns enable us to execute ritual and cognitive habits effortlessly. A trigger can activate the pattern even when a habit has ceased. Even when habit means danger, strong neural patterns can still keep us in the loop of self-harm. Change costs energy. It means a loss in what has been invested in the past, and an immense task in overriding old habits and building new neural pathways.
- The brain is a "control freak." It constantly detects errors to avoid danger, and then tries to come back to status quo. Change tends to bring uncertainty and the brain resists it.
- The brain likes to imitate. Mirror neurons reinforce habits because we tend to (sub)consciously pick up cues and imitate each other.

2. The STREAP-B covers the most fundamental aspects of a change process, taking into account the reasons that make change so challenging.
3. The "S" of STREAP-B means "safety." It is the first and foremost condition to support a sustainable change in culture.

- Safety issues are: Status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness.
- Strategies to create safety include: Identify safety issues, be on the same page (clarity), enable self-decision making (choice), foster autonomy (control), keep check of internal competition, and build trust.

4. The "T" of STREAP-B means "trigger."

- It is part of a habit loop that consists of (1) trigger, (2) routine, and (3) reward.
- To change a habit, different routines have to replace in order to achieve the same or better reward.
- To identify trigger in complex cultural habits, we need to look into our memories and expect that triggers and routines can associate subconsciously.

5. The "R" of STREAP-B means "reward."

- Complex neural pathways allow us to choose reward even when it means a bit of pain.
- Reward strategies for cultural change include: Focusing on the positive, imagine the end result, imagine how to solve a potential problem, recode failures as necessary side posts, reframe challenges as opportunities to gain, create small achievable goals, make reward unexpected, tangible, personal and public.

6. The "E" of STREAP-B means "emotion."

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- No good decision is made without input from emotion. Emotion is what drives people to change.
- Emotion strategies for cultural change include: Storytelling, balance empathy and perspective-taking, control negative emotion, act with kindness (OAK), and create a happy work place with eustress.

7. The "A" of STREAP-B means "alignment."

- It creates similarities and ingroups.
- Alignment strategies for cultural change can be based on all aspects of life such as common enemy, background, interest, values, vision, etc.

8. The "P" of STREAP-B means "people."

- Change agents should be influential people, top management with the involvement of the rank and file.
- Change agents' attitudes, emotions, and behaviors will be picked up by others with the help of mirror neurons.

9. The "B" of STREAP-B means "behavior."

- Our thoughts and feelings can change as a result of our behaviors. Hence, cultural values can change as a result of collective behaviors.
- Behavioral strategies for cultural change include: see one's self as evolving, fake it until one becomes it, identify and reward desirable behaviors, make good-enough decisions, use action-plan to motivate behavior.

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