

The background is a vibrant collage. It features a large, glowing lightbulb in the upper right quadrant, set against a bright orange circular backdrop. To the left of the lightbulb is a large yellow triangle. The entire scene is framed by a white rectangular area with a black border, which contains the main text. In the corners, there are black and white silhouettes of people: a person in the top left corner looking down, and two people in the bottom corners, one holding a pen as if writing on a surface. The overall color palette is dominated by yellow, orange, and white, with black silhouettes providing contrast.

How to Be a Problem Solver When Things Change

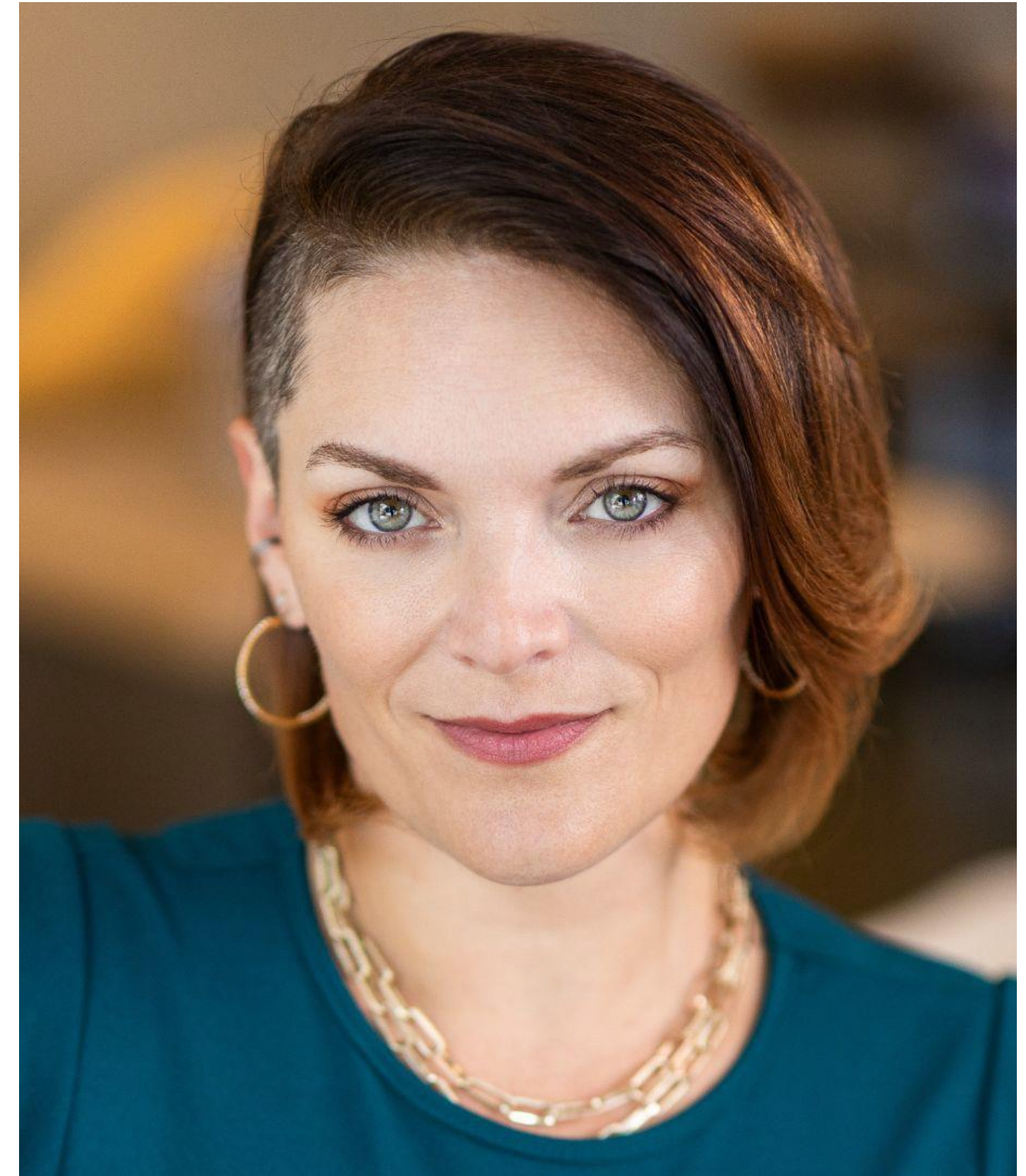
Stephanie Krell

Change Leader, Service & Enterprise Design

- ◆ Professor of Service & UX Design at **SCAD: Savannah College of Art & Design**
- ◆ Board Member for **COLLABOLUTIONS: Government and industry at the same table**
- ◆ Service Design Advisor, Educator, and Consultant at **EvolutionXchange**

Stephanie Krell facilitates the hard conversations. She believes in managing continuous transformation by utilizing a ***Change Evolution*** approach to develop readiness and an experimental culture.

Formerly with Walt Disney, Universal Creative, and Accenture Federal Service, leading design at the intersection of innovation, impact, and transformation.



The state of the workplace



96%

...of companies are undergoing
some form of transformation.

*walkme.com



75%

...of leaders say that their org will
likely transform in the next two years

*zoom



... of change efforts fail



Situations I have encountered

... a leader who's logic was clouded by their personal vision and ambitions.

... a team too afraid to do what's right (lacking safety)

... too lazy to make the effort (lacking incentive)

... a decision made with zero supporting data (corporate structure)

... "it's always been done this way so why change now?" (legacy mindset)

... unable to see or predict future outcomes (lack of foresight)

... waiting until someone else does it first (fast following)

... or my fave.... the 'executive smoke screen'



DISCUSSION:

What other catalysts have you encountered that have caused major instances of change crisis?



**Everyone wants change, but
nobody wants to change.**



Change is:

- **Transformation:** A fundamental change in the character of an organization, system, or service.
- **Innovation:** The introduction of a catalyst for change, focused on creating new value or significantly improving existing functions.
- **Evolution:** The idea that change is a gradual, continuous, and often inevitable process of development and adaptation.
- **Adaptation:** A response to shifting conditions or environments that requires adjustment of behavior, structure, or strategy to survive or thrive.
- **Disruption:** A radical, unplanned or sudden break from the expected or the status quo that forces rapid change
- **Progress:** A shift from a current state to a desired future state.



AGILITY

OVER

ADAPTABILITY

DISCUSSION

Is it possible to build an agile/experimental mindset if you are missing any one of these three elements, or do you need all three to succeed?

GOALS

SAYS

THINKS

**PAIN
POINTS**

**Experiment
Mindset**

**EMPATHY
MAP**

DOES

FEELS

DRIVERS

Four Pillars of Change Agility

1. Alignment turns resistance into momentum:

Shared understanding replaces confusion with commitment, uniting teams around a clear direction.

1. Structure drives readiness:

Clear governance provides the stability that allows teams to adapt quickly without losing velocity.

1. Mindset influences culture:

Reframing uncertainty as opportunity sparks curiosity, builds resilience, and eliminates change fatigue.

1. Connectivity orchestrates the experience:

Visualizing end-to-end connections and handoffs reveals hidden dependencies, turning fragmented work into a unified service ecosystem.



1. Alignment:

change fails when teams interpret priorities differently

The Story of **BLUE**



Architecting Clarity Across Silos

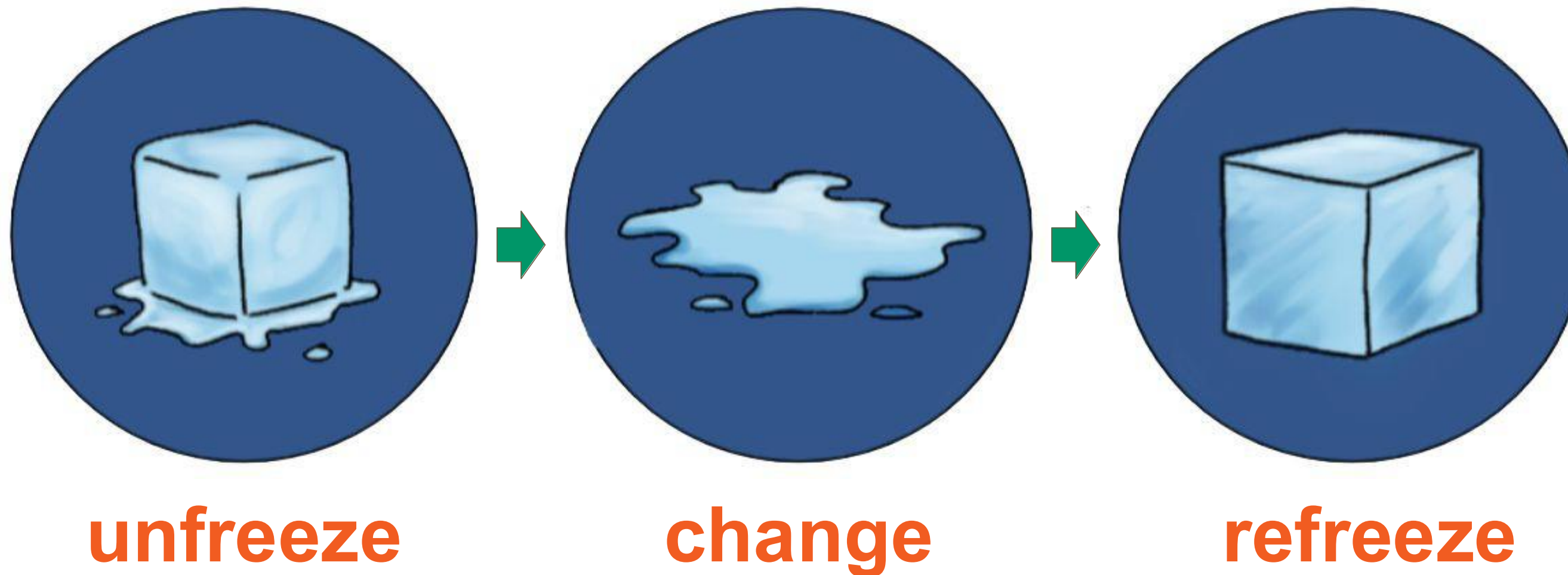
CHANGE TRIGGER	WHAT IT TELLS YOU	WHAT'S NEEDED?
Decisions are slow or circular.	Priorities and criteria aren't shared; interpretation varies by team.	Cross-team alignment - Clarify direction, common criteria, and decision rhythms.
Teams are operating in silos.	Customer experience fragments at handoffs; ownership and insight are disconnected.	Internal connectivity - Map journeys, unify touchpoints, and strengthen cross-functional collaboration.
Your digital and brand experience feels disconnected or dated.	Signals don't match current expectations; trust, clarity, and perception erode.	Structural maturity - Modernize UX flows, elevate brand cohesion, and improve content and interaction quality.
New tech initiatives feel bolted on.	Novelty drives decisions; value is unclear; users lack trust and control cues.	Mindset evolution - Use discovery research, journey mapping, and facilitated workshopping to identify purposeful, trust-centered opportunities.
You're entering a new stage of scale.	Startup habits no longer fit; systems lag behind the organization's maturity curve.	Governance maturity - Build scalable systems, patterns, and brand/experience, governance.



1. Structure:

lowering threat through small experiments

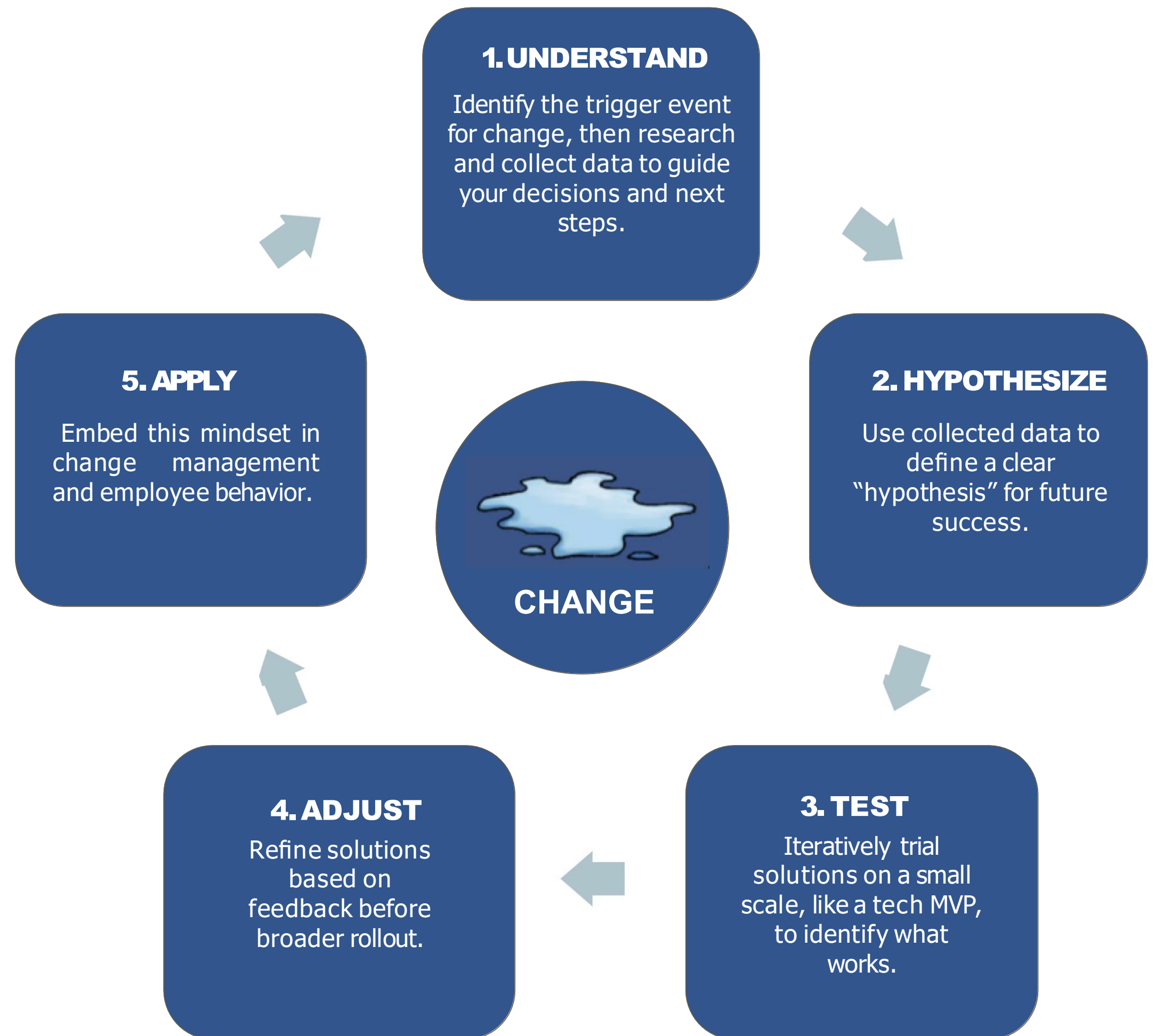
Historical model for change:



Kurt Lewin's Change Management Model

Change Agility Model: building experiments that enable speed

- **Consent-based decision making:** Clarify who owns decisions so problem-solvers don't wait for permission.
- **Iterative Sprints:** Break large initiatives into testable MVPs to validate assumptions early.
- **Stability + Flexibility:** Clear guardrails give teams the psychological safety needed to pivot without panic



3. Mindset:

understanding the human
reaction to sudden disruption

The reasons why we resist change are misunderstood. Neuroscience shows our brains interpret uncertainty as threat, triggering energy-conservation behavior.

Why not design for that biology?

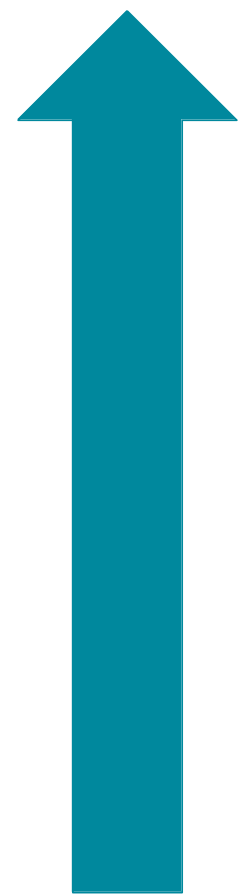


The Humanitv Trust Stack

by Dana Cox

How do we lower biological threat?

By systematically building emotional trust through a layered system for cultivating an experimental mindset.



COMMITMENT

CONNECTION

CONFIRMATION

CONSISTENCY

CLARITY



4. Connectivity:

how agile problem-solvers navigate uncertainty without losing direction

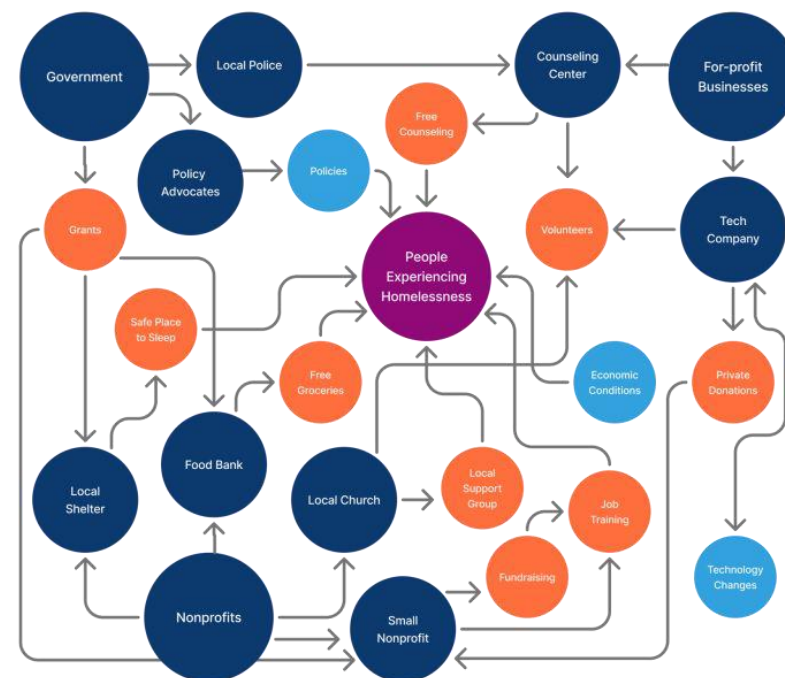
1. ORGANIZE	2. VISUALIZE	3. UNDERSTAND
Actors, Factors & Tools	Frameworks in Chaos	Inputs, Outputs & Relationships
Map how people, processes, and technology are connected across the ecosystem.	Apply lightweight structure to stabilize the environment and drive forward momentum.	Trace the domino effect to identify high-impact catalysts and leverage points.



1. Ecosystem Map

THE MACRO VIEW

A network diagram of nodes (actors, tools, factors) connected by arrows.



What it maps: The big picture—actors, environment, tools, and systemic relationships.

When to use it: When priorities pivot and you need to see the entire landscape before acting.

2. Journey Map

THE HUMAN VIEW

A linear timeline with emotional highs/lows and touchpoint phases.



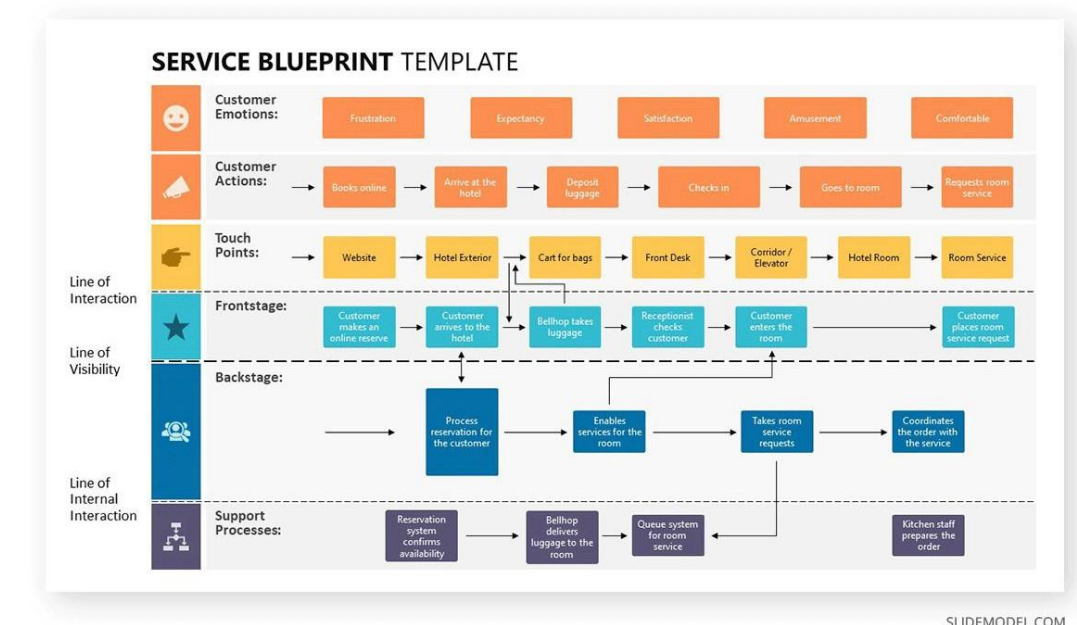
What it maps: The end-to-end experience from the perspective of the human (customer/employee).

When to use it: When change causes friction, confusion, or breakdowns in stakeholder engagement.

3. Service Blueprint

THE OPERATIONAL VIEW

A 3-tiered grid showing Frontstage, Line of Visibility, and Backstage.



What it maps: The backstage operations, processes, and systems that power that experience.

When to use it: When budgets or resources shift and you need to trace operational dependencies.

SO...

WHERE DO WE START?

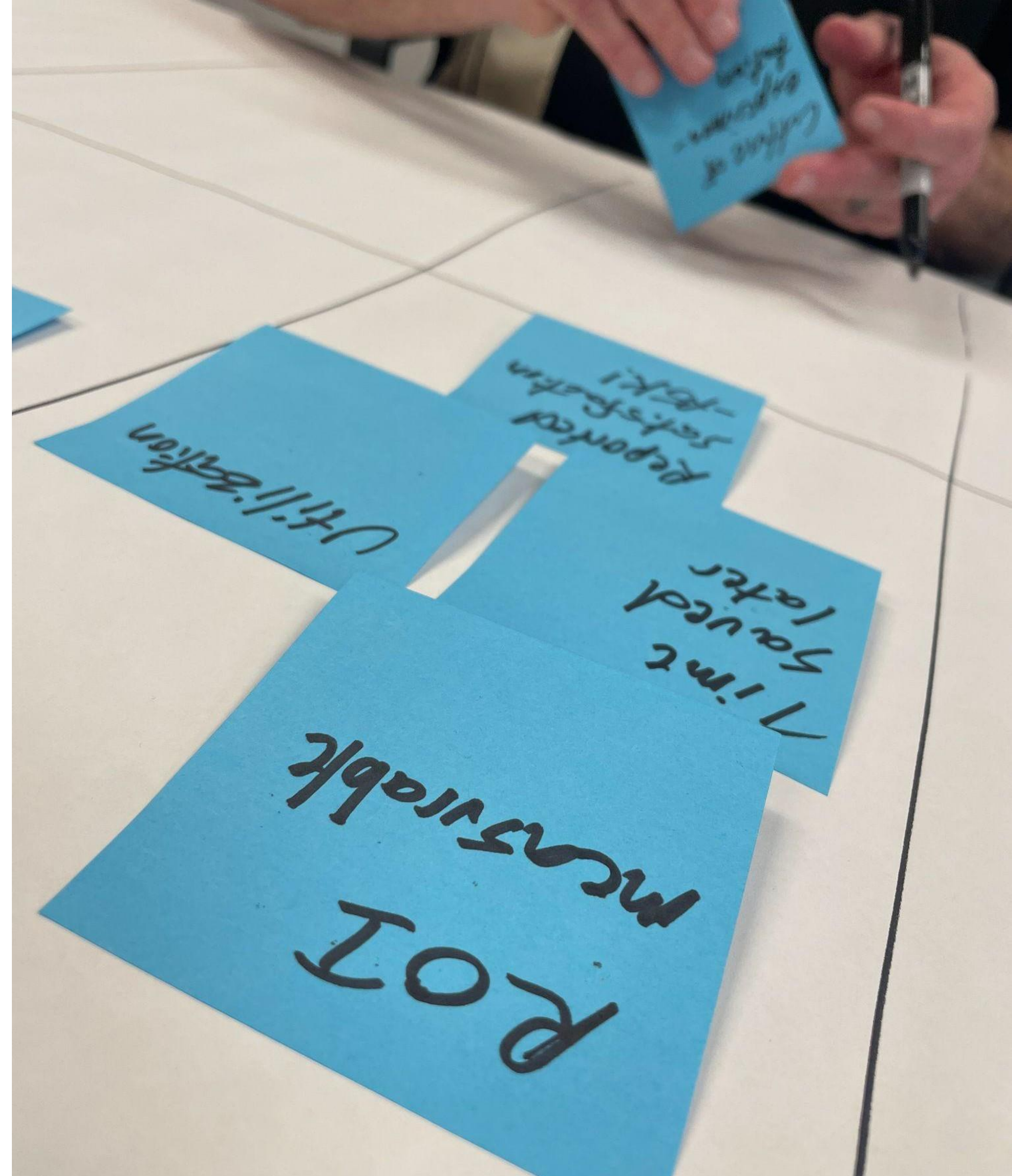
PCM Framework

Progress Catalyst Model

Traditional change management treats transformation as a reactive crisis. PCM provides a lightweight, repeatable framework to organize chaos into a clear, strategic path forward.

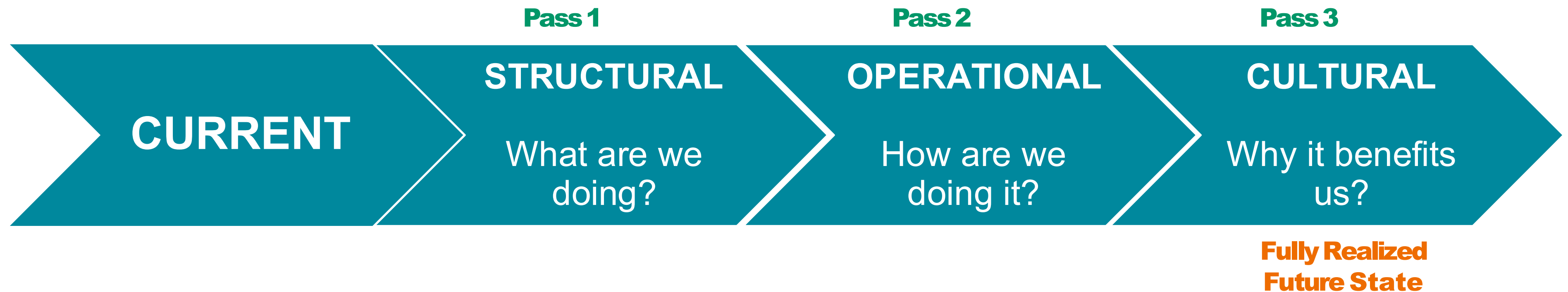
4 Steps to Activate Any Change:

- 1. Identify the Pillars:** Define the core high-level workstreams/stages required to reach the goal.
- 2. Prioritize the Workstreams:** Arrange key focus areas horizontally from left to right by priority or sequence.
- 3. Detail the Action Steps:** Break each component down vertically into tactical, top-to-bottom actions.
- 4. Map Dependencies:** Draw connections across steps to establish the exact execution order and reveal hidden friction.

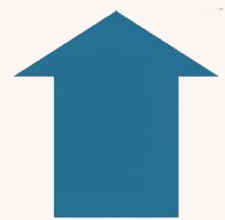


Anatomy of an PCM Framework

A strategic initiative can become large and unruly, often needing to be broken down into digestible elements that allow for more tactical planning and execution.



Value



INCREASES



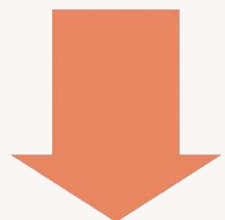
Clarity



Collaboration



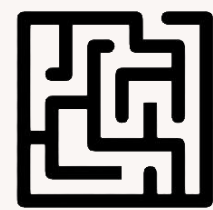
Preparedness



REDUCES



Time



Complexity



Cost

What it IS...

Clarity around significant steps that need to occur to achieve progress

Defined iterations so that work isn't left open ended

Shared tool that provides all stakeholders with clarity about steps in the process, ownership, and expectations for success and momentum

Provides a collaborative and holistic approach that spans anyone involved in the work to be able to assess and adjust steps based on external factors

What it ISN'T...

Does not capture end-2-end detail process or workflow

It is not a map or document for systems management

Does not capture sentiment, experience, or customer journey

Let's give it a try!

Scenario:

You've been asked to bring homemade cookies to a party this Saturday. Someone has a peanut allergy.

You have a busy week, and it's already Monday. The recipe has to be from scratch (no store bought or premade dough cookies).



ACTIVITY (30 min)

- **Step 1: Define Future-State Objective**
- **Step 2: Determine Stages & Timelines**
- **Step 3: Action Steps**
- **Step 4: Dependencies**
- **Retrospective**



Step 1: Define Future-State Objective

Understanding where you want to be is the first step in understanding how to get there. In this scenario the future-state could be many things - but for all examples you need to first define: **WHAT COOKIE are you making?**

THE CHALLENGE

Start by answering:

What does the ideal future-state look like?

What does success look like?

What is 'Good Enough'?

Then note "knowns and unknowns"

Identify any impactful decisions

Identify any external parties that need to be communicated with and when

Is there any information needed to get started?

Do you need to inform anyone of what decisions you make?

We recommend one answer per sticky note, but you can have multiple per question

Step 2: Determine Stages & Timeline

Created through backcasting, a PCM Framework shows how to evolve a product, service, or experience to its target future-state by breaking it into components.

- List out your high-level cookie making components (Examples: creating a list, going to the store, preparing ingredients etc.)
- Use backcasting to start from your ideal future-state and work backward to the current day in order to plan out your week.
- Map your components from Left to Right horizontally as a timeline (these will be the columns in your visual)

Identify components BEFORE creating your timeline!



Step 3: Action Steps

Each component (column) will be broken down into the tactical actions that start with the evolution of your planning, execution, and implementation steps.

- For each timeline component, write out each action step that has to be done, first to last
- Make sure your actions include planning, execution, and integration steps
- Determine which steps are most important to get done (by priority)

Details matter! Focus on one component (column) at a time!



Step 4: Dependencies

Some actions across components have the ability to be executed in parallel with other actions, while others are dependent on the completion of actions that come before it.

- Begin to connect action steps with arrows across components with direct dependencies.
- Identify action steps that have no prior dependencies in each component
- Identify actions that can be done at the same time versus actions that hold up progress

Go the extra mile by identifying moments in the process where important decisions need to be made and/or where someone else needs to be consulted or informed

Step 5: Retrospective

- Who thought about a container or getting cookies from your home to the party?
- What were some unknowns you accounted for?
- What were some potential obstacles to success that you ran into?
- What did you learn?
- What was something new?
- What is something you will take with you?



DISCUSSION

Consider this model at scale. Can you picture a current scenario that is a micro example versus a scenario that is a macro example in your workplace that you could use this method for? If so what is it?

How Will You Lead When Things Change?

Key Takeaways:

- Drive Alignment Continuously: Don't treat alignment as a one-time kickoff—keep it alive through ongoing cross-functional collaboration.
- Anchor in Living Visuals: Use ecosystem maps, blueprints, and PCM frameworks to establish immediate order in chaos.
- Tell Stories Everyone Can Understand: Demystify complexity with simple visual narratives that bridge the gap between backstage strategy and frontstage execution.
- Evolve by Design: Embrace an experimental mindset where every shift is an opportunity to learn, adjust, and move forward.



BE a Problem Solver When Things Change

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