The 10 Essential Principles of Implementation Leadership: Real-World Applications of Change Leadership Acumen

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IN THE AREAS where human service, behavior change, leadership, and the public sector intersect, the rate of change is escalating. While public sector human service leaders are not strangers to change, the environment around and within organizations is getting more complex and fluid. In the criminal justice system, for example, contemporary organizational leaders have seen large-scale shifts in the specific means to the amorphous goals of public safety and justice. The same organizations that were originally founded and based on a moral and exclusive code of retributive justice are now moving beyond a period of theory-driven justice into an environment where science guides practice. The current evidence-based movement is bringing new opportunities for excellence in public administration, yet also additional complexity.

Common solutions to achieve organizational excellence have primarily been through ground-level implementation of evidence-based practices and programs and research-informed innovations. Federal, state, and local legislative bodies have invested impressive amounts of public funds in implementation projects and evidence-based methods toward improving outcomes. Yet, we see high rates of failure in the public sector when it comes to successful organizational change. Globally, 70 percent of change initiatives fail to reach their desired mark (Beer & Nohria, 2000). The implementation science community offers compelling evidence that traditional change and implementation initiatives have even higher rates of failure when working to implement evidence-based solutions to improve organizational outcomes. As a result, leaders must equip the staff in their organizations with interdisciplinary knowledge, complex skills, and practice models, all delivered with the effective application of implementation science.

Decades of research have permeated the field with new innovations, novel perspectives, and feelings of promise for leaders. However, when we step away and look at macro-level results, we see disappointing data trends illuminating large-scale organizational failure. COVID-19 pandemic anomalies aside, jails and prisons are no less full than in the past; recidivism rates are not dropping at impactful levels; the size and scope of community supervision agencies have grown at historical levels with no corresponding change in outcomes. Rates of substance use disorders and lethality from dangerous drugs are at "crisis" levels; and the risk and need profiles of individuals are getting more complex for staff to address. Meanwhile, local and state budgets and tax burdens get bigger and funding streams much more complicated. While new evidence-based direct service is penetrating the public sector, we cannot report any measured, proportional, or at least corresponding change in outcomes at the macro levels.

From the micro-level perspective, we experience similar trends of failure within single organizations. In times of pervasive implementation initiatives, agencies are impotent to build internal capacity to measure and focus on fidelity to evidence-based solutions. Many new change initiatives get off the ground, yet very few land, settle, and become deeply rooted in organizational culture and habits. One change initiative is eventually eclipsed by a new change initiative, which in turn is later overshadowed by yet a different one.

Change Enervation as the Culprit

While new leaders are trying to reconcile the many competing demands of organizational excellence, organizations have become bigger, more bureaucratic, and ultimately more complex. As leaders and organizations face challenges in responding either to externally initiated (outside-in) or internally induced (inside-out) change, new leaders emerge without any intentional development and acumen

on implementation science, organizational change, and organizational development. While executive leaders invest in traditional leadership development for new members of management teams, these traditional and aging programs are often devoid of development in implementation and organizational sciences. Our traditional approach persists as we add new divisions, units, levels of staff, specialty positions, and management, all designed to influence organizational change. And it's not working.

An organization is a single body with many interdependent parts. As an organization grows in size and complexity, it is often starved of change acumen to nourish its growth. This is *change enervation:* that is, the gradual growth of organizations in size, scope, and complexity while the people within it are simultaneously deprived of tools and knowledge to support the change. The gap between what the organization needs to change and its actual capacity to lead change is the symptom of *change enervation*. The larger that gap, the more room for organizational change problems to penetrate like a hidden disease.

Far too often we misdiagnose implementation failure as innovation failure. It might not be the evidence-based practice that is not working. It may be impotent implementation strategy, an inhospitable organizational culture, or misapplied leadership strategy to our change work. The organizationally intelligent leader has the acumen to properly diagnose when the innovation itself is flawed, when the implementation is flawed, when the culture needs to change, and when the leadership approach is misapplied. Simply put, it is not just the innovations themselves that are failing; it is the implementation that is failing, because organizations are deprived of the necessary nutrients of change.

Organizational Intelligence as a Framework for Change

The real world of change is arduous and unforgiving. Organizational outcomes perfectly reflect their degree of change enervation and, ultimately, their degree of organizational intelligence. Organizational intelligence is demonstrated when the leadership advances healthy perpetual change in the culture and habits of the organization. Organizational intelligence requires that we embrace and apply practically derived but empirically supported principles of organizational change *leadership* rather than change management. *Change management* implies that change is

something we can control and therefore manage. Organizational *ignorance* is displayed when change initiatives are implemented with traditional methods of classroom training, policy and procedure, legislation, or simple reorganization strategies. It involves senior leaders working to manage both change and people. The ignorant organization believes it needs to protect itself internally from change. In contrast, organizational *intelligence* is present when leadership believes it must work to perpetuate the change acumen of its members and emerging leaders. It involves senior leaders and staff performing the more difficult work of applying the principles and practices of implementation science and contributing to the always growing bodies of implementation and organizational research.

While there are eight unique domains within *Organizational Intelligence for Community and Justice Innovators*, this article will focus on the *change leadership acumen* domain, which is critical to effect authentic and lasting change. *Change leadership acumen* is the degree to which change leadership efforts are aligned with scientific principles and practices of effective organizational change. It is the specific, academically supported yet practically derived means by which organizational change goals are pursued, and it is embodied in the *10 Essential Principles of Implementation Leadership*. These principles make up change leadership acumen at their core and are a necessity to achieve organizational intelligence at sustained levels.

The 10 Essential Principles of Implementation Leadership™

Principle 1: Trust the Vision
The leadership mindset is contagious, and the leader is the contagion. Traditional leadership development programs have led us to believe that leadership and a vision for change are the bricks and mortar of effective change practices. Leaders are taught that we are to *manage* change, as if it were a phenomenon that we can somehow control and thus govern with management practices. This often leads to technocratic approaches that are inhospitable to adaptive change. What is left out of the traditional leadership formula is that a leader's mindset (thoughts, attitudes, emotions, values, and beliefs) is a contagious phenomenon that greatly affects how others approach implementation and change. Trusting the Vision means that change leaders must approach their work knowing that they are the mental acclimatizers of the organization and that

their attitude is more influential and contagious than their more explicit behaviors.

The neuroscience community continues to build a body of science about the phenomenon known as the emotional contagion. This science evolves around the limbic system of the human brain, which serves as our emotional center as well as our decision-making engine. Specifically, the limbic system operates on an open-loop structure where the brain manages internal emotions with external stimuli. In contrast to a closed-loop system that is self-regulating, our mammal brain in its open-loop format likes to be regulated by others' thoughts, emotions, and beliefs. The open-loop aspect of our limbic region explains why we can be stressed by others' stress as well as soothed by others. As mammals, we like to appropriate our feelings from those of others. Further, our brain's emotional regulation properties show up physiologically. Some of our physiological functions such as blood pressure, secretion of fatty acids and hormones, our immune system, sleep function, and even our cardiovascular system are dependent on how we regulate our emotions. Perhaps you have experienced this when walking into a tense meeting while you are in a good mood; you feel the emotional climate of the room, and react by moderating your own good mood to match the room. Or perhaps you have approached a group of people who are laughing while you are in a neutral mood; you find yourself somewhat involuntarily joining those interactions with smiles or your own laughter. Even a contagious yawn is evidence of the emotional contagion at work. Leaders can directly influence others' physiology and emotions through their own.

Furthermore, there are over two hundred studies showing that humans have a stronger implicit preference for negative mental experiences than positive ones (Schemer, 2012; Zak, 2015). We are wired to invest more emotional energy in bad news than good news, which has led to our survival as a species. This research is compellingly relevant to implementation settings, because the combination of the emotional contagion and the natural asymmetry of negative to positive experiences results in a palpable leadership challenge. Attitudes travel like electricity over a wireless network connecting human beings' individual and collective mindsets. That network does not discriminate between negative and positive mindsets, and leaders have a responsibility to transmit more positive and adaptive attitudes on that network. Implementation

in the real world is fraught with challenges and uncertainty, and how we think and act as leaders in these situations motivates others to think and act accordingly. Organizationally intelligent leaders practice the artful science of sharing an adaptive mindset to influence that of others.

Principle 2: Murphy Hates Us

Natural organizational change includes the basic fact that things go wrong, especially in implementation settings. We experience turnover in key positions, must deploy new legislative requirements that consume our capacity, and are challenged by the impact on our own strategy when partner agencies change their policies. Murphy's Law (*what can go wrong, will go wrong*) applies to implementation because it applies to organizations. What can go wrong in implementation settings, very much will.

The natural human negativity bias can be of value to implementation leadership. Planning for challenges by tapping into our propensity to hyper focus on what could go wrong allows leadership and implementation teams to foresee both technical and adaptive problems and develop contingency plans for them. The value of this exercise is not so much in creating a plan, but in creating an environment where problems are welcome; followers then experience less stress when they occur. Planning for problems thus allows leaders to create a hospitable place to welcome problems not as the exception to implementation but as the rule. In such an environment, people will need to be more agile as they invite the fact that problems are natural rather than foreign to change. Organizationally intelligent leaders plan to fail. Implementation leadership compels us to plan for our failures and to consequently marginalize the gravity of failure when it occurs. This candid but authentic approach results in a much more adaptive mindset among organizational members. Organizationally intelligent leaders create a more hospitable environment for others to make mistakes with abundant grace.

Principle 3: Be Comfortable Being Uncomfortable

There is no implementation in the comfort zone, and no comfort in the implementation zone. We cannot expect to change our practices, habits, culture, organizations, and outcomes without a corresponding change in our perceptions of what is comfortable. Many organizational change theorists have

given a nod to this notion yet have left us with linear change models that simply do not attend to the real world of modern people-serving systems.

For example, the Kübler-Ross change curve developed in the 1960s was intended to illustrate what a single person goes through when adapting to a major life change and was applied to organizational change management in the 1980s (Kübler-Ross, Wessler, & Avioli, 1972). The model proposed a stages-of-grief approach where individuals, and later organizations, go through sequential steps of gradually improving change over time until the change is *finished*. The same is true for other organizational change theorists such as John Kotter who, in the 1990s, postulated an award-winning 8-step approach to successful change (2012). Many believe that original change curves still offer potent models for change. The problem with these models is that they have unintentionally conveyed an illusion that change is predictable, comes in stages, and has a discernible stop and start, and that things get sequentially better over time. If that were the case, the modern community and justice sectors would have far better implementation outcomes than the 70 percent global failure statistic mentioned earlier.

In the real world, justice systems are in different stages of change for different innovations, some inspired and many imposed, at any given time. Change leaders are juggling several change initiatives at a time and have been conditioned to apply a concept of change resilience until the change is over and done with. There is no single change initiative, there is no discernible stop and start, and there certainly isn't a sequential evidence-based checklist for how change leaders go about effecting new results. Rather, there is chaos, and real-world community and justice leaders must find comfort in that chaos. Perhaps more importantly, they should model that notion to others.

The implementation science community has presented a more hospitable change model in the *Productive Zone of Disequilibrium* (Heifetz, Heifetz, Grashow, & Linksy, 2009). Originating in the adaptive leadership literature, it effectively establishes that change cannot happen in the same zone where we are comfortable and compels leaders to establish a firm commitment to work outside their own personal and organizational bubble of comfort. The model establishes a truth that change is not linear but is a very dynamic and rather unpredictable phenomenon.

Where linear change models imply that resilient leaders stand and take the punches of change until it's over, real change requires going beyond linearity and resilience into models that demand we move forward, sideways, and backward through always-changing levels of chaos and maintain the mental and practical fluidity to lead others through the swirling gauntlet of change. Real-world implementation leadership is perpetual and ongoing, with no real beginning, no real end, and very little relief from chaos. The organizationally intelligent leader is comfortable being uncomfortable and leads others to be the same.

Principle 4: Adapt or Die

Many change initiatives that die on the vine do so, in large part, due to the leadership and problem-solving approaches that are chosen. Our impotent levels of change success are impeded by our own approach to problem-solving and, as change leaders, we are often working to solve the problems that we created with past solutions.

Change leaders are natural problem solvers. The organizationally intelligent leader is one who is a skilled problem diagnostician first. If we fail to accurately diagnose problems as either technical or adaptive, and then match our solution accordingly, we will experience *problem mutation,* which is the phenomenon that occurs when new inorganic problems arise because leaders have misapplied technical solutions to problems that are not technical. Technical solutions, when applied to adaptive problems, create more adaptive problems.

Technical problems are those that are easy to identify clearly, live in only a few places in the organization, and can often be solved quickly by an act of decisional authority. They are the black and white problems that, in turn, require black and white solutions. In stark contrast, adaptive problems are those that do not have an easy root cause, live in many places throughout the organization, and are often problems of the collective mindset of people. They are challenging to identify and thus easy to deny. Solutions to adaptive problems require experimentation, discovery, and time to implement and perfect. Adaptive problems require solutions that may be outside of current organizational norms and boundaries. They are the gray problems that require fluidity among even more shades of gray in the development of solutions.

Adaptive problems often show up as

symptoms in change situations. For example, staff may be resistant to new initiatives because these initiatives are labor intensive and different. That portrayal of a problem may actually be a shallow symptom of a deeper, larger, and more pervasive situation. Staff may feel mastery over their current work and consequently feel threatened by a new way of doing business. Staff may have preexisting negative attitudes about the change because it departs from the normal approach to their work. The staff may feel that the change will harm rather than help their work and experience attitudinal and emotional discord about the reason for the initiative itself. At their core, these are adaptive problems, packaged conveniently with symptoms, and show up as technical problems to an organizationally ignorant eye.

This situation is common in organizations. The result is often commanded or otherwise regulated compliance from leadership, which is a direct pathway to problem mutation. Policies, procedures, regulations, orders, and performance expectations are well within the norm of public sector justice agencies. Often hierarchical in culture, these organizations come with a predisposition to solve problems with rules. It is what we are used to and well within our boundaries, toolkits, and comfort. However, it is rare that a new policy, procedure, or set of rules (technical solution) changes a person's or a group's pre-existing mindset against the change (adaptive problem). When we apply a technical solution to an adaptive problem, it further aggravates and escalates pre-existing negative attitudes about the change. Change is exhilarating when done by us, exhausting when done to us, and new problems emerge when there is a mismatch in the solution. Organizationally intelligent leaders can discern between symptoms and problems and are adept at diagnosing problems as either technical or adaptive. They are the leaders that embrace the vague and uncertain potency of their experimental adaptive solutions.

Principle 5: Fail Forward, Fail Often

Failure is a virtue while perfection is a vice of organizational change. As individuals and communities, we are socially conditioned to believe that perfection is virtuous, and that failure is forbidden. Imagine an ambitious person interviewing for an important job. When asked what his strengths and weaknesses are, he explains that his weakness is his sense of perfectionism. Often, this tactic is a veiled attempt at showing a strength that is disguised as a weakness. The disguise is

only necessary because we have made failure an organizational taboo. Change leadership requires abundant and explicit permission to fail as a precedent to learning and requires that we make healthy failure an important part of human and organizational learning. As change leaders, we must not just give permission for others to fail in implementation settings but rather make failure an expected and explicit expectation of those who are carrying out the change on the ground level.

Imagine an intelligent organization with a culture committed to excellence, well beyond its reach, that made corresponding allowances for people to fail as they learn. Imagine an organization that harvested important learning moments by talking to staff explicitly about the importance of their failures and making an inventory of the learning that occurred in the process of failing forward. Imagine that organization as one that removes the implicit boundaries that nobody fails without consequence but rather rewards staff who can teach what they learned in the process of failing forward. This characterizes an intelligent organization with a culture that is hospitable to authentic change.

After a decade of applying implementation science to real-world justice settings, I have observed that when we punish and prohibit failure, we create a culture that is inhospitable to implementation and change. Far too often, technical and hierarchical leadership undermines what is needed for people to learn in a safe and healthy way. If people do not have explicit psychological safety to learn, then the organization itself will not learn. The most profound learning we experience is often preceded by failure. If we fear failure, we ultimately fear learning. If we fear learning, we fear change. If we fear change, we fear implementation. Real change occurs when failure and change are synonymous rather than in competition. Organizationally intelligent change leaders influence others to separate the notion that *experiencing* failure is far removed from *being* one.

Principle 6: Culture is King

All implementation and strategy are downstream from organizational culture. Anyone who neglects to diagnose and fully understand the organizational culture will become its victim. Culture in the criminal justice sector is king. In our environment, culture is the underlying eco-system of beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, traditions, and habits among the collective sum of

people in an organization. It is omnipresent, but is impalpable and invisible and thus, often neglected in organizational change efforts. In the public sector, and especially in criminal justice, it is more powerful than any budget, any leader, any policy, any strategy, any set of politics, and any law. That includes criminology and that includes implementation science.

Culture is a strange and rather elusive phenomenon, but its impacts are concrete. Implementation leaders have an explicit imperative to understand the organizational science behind culture and how it can inhibit change. Change enervation begins when leaders are deprived of intentional acumen to mindfully address culture and must instead compete with culture as a hopeless afterthought.

While the original source is unconfirmed, Peter Drucker is often famously credited with the statement "Culture eats strategy for breakfast," implying that most strategies for change will live and die at the hands of organizational culture. This abstract notion of culture is not new; for example, Ward Goodenough offered:

> Culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. (Garvin, 1956, p167)

While organizational culture is a well-established phenomenon, the community and justice sectors have often lacked the acumen to measure, diagnose, understand, and change their own culture. The criminal justice field has unique attributes to its culture that make change even more arduous. There are competing goals within statutes, case law, practices, habits, and job descriptions. There is role conflict among the competing obligations of deterrence, rehabilitation, offender accountability, retribution/punishment, incapacitation, reparation of harm, and cost control. Imagine each of these competing goals as independent but competing colors of a Rubik's Cube puzzle. When solving one problem (e.g., punishment) we compete against the demand to support another (e.g., rehabilitation). We may work to address punishment while simultaneously disrupting

rehabilitation, while aggravating cost control, while also neglecting victim and community reparation. Change leaders are responsible for solving a complex puzzle of competitive demands; often they end up settling for the path of least resistance, which results in impotent implementation strategy and lethargic status quo outcomes.

Cameron and Quinn (2011) offer perhaps the most intellectually accessible tools and framework for organizational culture in the *Competing Values Framework* and the *Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI)*. Their work contains compelling targets for justice leaders to consult and apply to their practice models for change. Culture change is not a technical phenomenon and thus cannot be approached technocratically with checklists and other mechanical approaches like regulation, policies, and procedures. It is an adaptive phenomenon that requires implementation and change acumen.

Change leaders need both implementation acumen and organizational acumen to be effective at their work. Culture is a jar that traps and limits our change initiatives, and leaders cannot read the label when they are inside the jar of their own culture and organizational boundaries. Imagine a leader who cannot discern the organizational culture because the leader is not just acclimated to it but also a product of it; this makes the culture invisible from the inside out. Organizationally intelligent change leaders have the knowledge, skills, and tools to identify, diagnose, understand, and change their organizational culture. They *can* read the label because they can get outside of the jar of their own culture with implementation leadership acumen.

Principle 7: Lead the Hearts, Lead the Minds

Traditional management education has focused on behavioral approaches to leading others. Technical leadership preoccupies itself with the rules and procedures of innovation, but people need to understand why they are being asked to do something beyond their comfort zone. Implementation leadership shifts the focus to the mindset so that those who carry out the change can be in governance of their own behaviors. When a change leader influences and inspires the mindset of others, that leader is liberated from the burdens of governing individual behavior.

Simon Sinek famously said that "people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it" (Sinek, 2009). Change leaders must spend more time focusing on the reason for change (the why) before spending time on the *what* and *how* of change. This requires leaders to attend to the intellectual and emotional reasons for change beyond the skills and habits.

As human beings, we make decisions about change in the emotional regulation center within our brain. This occurs in the same region where we feel, and we feel based on what we think. Decisions are preceded by emotions, which are in turn preceded by thoughts. Our cognitive-behavioral brain decides, while our heart commands; when we neglect the connection between intellectual and emotional reasons for change, we will obtain indolent results. People at all levels start the process of change with willpower—a temporary and exhaustible resource. When things get real, willpower runs dry and status quo mindset creeps back into our brains, promising a return to comfort and an escape from the trials of change.

Guided by modern neuroscience and the emerging discipline of neuro-leadership, cognitive collaboration adopts the mindset that *we are smarter than me*. The novel and compelling concept of *cognitive collaboration* encourages us to access the neuro-functional cognitive differences among individuals within an organization to reach better decisions and change strategies. It requires that we use an outward mindset—looking beyond the boundaries of our own thinking preferences and addressing the needs, challenges, and objectives of other people who think very differently than we do (Arbinger Institute, 2016). Cognitive collaboration compels us to partner by virtue of the differences among the people we serve as leaders. When we lead the hearts and the minds, implementation becomes more inspired and less imposed. Organizationally intelligent leaders perpetually attend to the intellectual and emotional engagement of others as they go about the work of change.

Principle 8: Be Intentionally Infinite

The purpose of implementation is to perpetuate rather than to terminate organizational change. It is often said that implementation is a marathon rather than a sprint. Both the marathon and sprint metaphors, however, are fixed or finite analogs for change, since they both have an end with clear victors and losers. The objective is terminal in these metaphors; in other words, the goal is to stop the race. Real-world change is neither a marathon nor a sprint. Rather, implementation is a commitment to ongoing agility. Implementation leadership requires a personal and collective mindset that is based in perpetual growth as opposed to change that is affixed to arbitrary deadlines. It is the explicit role of a change leader to influence the mindset of other leaders and followers and to understand that organizational change is not linear, is barely curvilinear, and has no discernible stop or start. To believe that change is terminal is evidence of a fixed leadership mindset that is harmful to change and likely responsible for the large-scale change failure in the justice system.

A finite leadership mindset perpetuates linear change models, condemns the organization to existing policies and perceived organizational boundaries, and thus nearly guarantees ultimate termination of successful change. Practically speaking, that means that change must occur within existing fixed rules, with fixed people, and fixed methods. Finite mindset, in its extreme, leads to fixed implementation planning. Sadly, the trials of applied implementation science, especially to the criminal justice sector, have illuminated a sobering reality that fixed implementation plans simply do not last long in the real world.

An infinite leadership mindset is one that cannot govern a time in which organizational change stops. The infinite mindset compels us to perpetuate the notion of ongoing change. It means that we lead in a constant state of agility and experimentation. In a fixed or finite mindset, exploring implementation with trial and error is against the norm. In an infinite mindset, trial and error is the prevailing method of change. Whereas a fixed mindset views the term implementation as a terminal project, an infinite mindset views implementation as a way of doing business that leads to organizational excellence. Leaders who apply the infinite mindset know that we must play the game of change with agile players, an agile plan, and flexible rules.

At its core, the finite leadership mindset is a form of technical leadership. This serves its purpose at times; but when used throughout the whole environment of change, it falls short of the real-world needs from organizational actors who carry out the change. The infinite mindset is an adaptive way of leading change that is far better matched to the real-world trials of implementation of evidence-based innovations. Organizationally intelligent change leaders are intentionally infinite in their thinking and they influence others to be the same.

Principle 9: Take the Leap

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated compelling situations where justice system leaders must function in times of uncertainty and ambiguity and make decisions that are imperfect if not completely paradoxical. Imagine the leader who must decide between admitting a new violent detainee to jail while working to control further spread of the virus. Incarcerating a person to a contained jail or prison exposes staff and inmates to outside contagions while simultaneously protecting victims and communities from further harm—at least in theory. In a crippling paradox, doing the opposite creates other palpable and obvious problems. It's a nearly impossible decision, and the tension to make the *right* decision can paralyze technocratic leaders who are waiting for the perfect response to come to mind. If a change leader stalls in this space between certainty and uncertainty, that void becomes an abyss where healthy change can die permanently.

Far too often, change leaders spend their time worrying about the future impact of their decisions. A well-known cliché comes to mind here: *Worrying doesn't rid tomorrow of its problem but rather robs today of its joy.* The problem here is not the expenditure of time calculating the future. The problem is using the mind to worry rather than to imagine. Worrying is preparing for the worst-case scenario, which reinforces a negative mindset that we use to paint a picture of the very situation we do not want. Here, more than ever, perfectionism becomes a vice for change rather than a virtue. In these situations, change leaders should still allocate that time in mindfulness but to imagine the situation they do want. Worrying is simply a destructive use of the very same imagination that could be repurposed to facilitate creative, adaptive, unconventional, and experimental solutions that are naturally imperfect. The perfectionist thinker will wait until the risk-free solution comes to mind. And while waiting for that perfect solution, change will erode to its eventual termination and other emerging leaders will develop the same habit. Over time, this mental habit becomes the fabric within the organizational culture that reigns supreme over the best implementation and innovation strategies.

Effective change leadership requires catalyzing courage to break through *analysis paralysis*. The criminal justice system is far behind the curve of applying implementation science to its work and perhaps now, more than ever, we need to discover new ways of change. Leaders cannot and must not seek to avoid risks in every situation of change. Rather, we must be comfortable with the discomfort and accept the certain risks of our uncertain decisions.

It is important to note that a courageous leader is also a scared one. Ask any courageous leader and they will tell you their courage was not the absence of fear. Intelligent courage is taking the leap into the chasm of uncertainty and into a known state of *conscious incompetence*. That is, a stage where you become aware of what you previously did not know you didn't know (*unconscious incompetence*) and that is a stressful and awkward place from which to operate. Effective change leaders can and should find comfort in that chaos.

Analysis paralysis is a signal to fail forward, not to stay inert. It simply means that we have exhausted all certain options and that none have guaranteed positive outcomes. Thus, instead of paralysis, we *take the leap* into uncertainty and learn what we need to learn. It is a leadership mindset of progress rather than one of perfection. It is a shift from distinct solutions to experimental ideas. Organizationally intelligent change leaders know when to start the analysis and when to suspend it and then take the courageous leap into uncertainty.

Principle 10: Savor the Journey

The *10 Essential Principles of Implementation Leadership*™ were gleaned from a personal leadership journal that covered 10 years of applied implementation science work to large criminal justice settings. The journal originated as random thoughts, observations, and illuminations of the best to the worst of real-world leadership experiences in this environment. One of the lessons from that decade-worth of learning was that real-world leadership requires a time to stop and reflect on what you have learned and to share that learning forward with others. This article is our savoring of the journey of applied implementation science and change leadership. Our ambitions are that we all work to further innovate on these principles. Savoring the journey means that leaders have a duty to inventory our experiences so that we can see tangibly what we have learned in the infinite pursuit of organizational intelligence. It is a focus on the learning and, more importantly, the abundant sharing of that learning with other leaders and followers in our collective environment. The trials of real-world change, if openly shared, contribute to the greater body of knowledge about how to effect authentic change in a challenging and complex environment. In doing so, one ennobles the effort of organizationally intelligent change.

Savoring the journey means that we are candid, provocative, and transparent about real-world implementation and that we help others by sharing that truth. It is far better to embrace the trials that come from the real world rather than to camouflage them. Organizationally intelligent change leaders have the mindfulness to inventory and abundantly share their experiences to capitalize on learning as an organization.

The Organizationally Intelligent Leader

Organizationally intelligent change leadership is less about creating better followers and ultimately about creating better change leaders. We have a moral imperative to help the emerging leaders in our system to be far better at their jobs than we ever were at ours. We can do powerful things in people-serving systems once we choose a higher commitment to excellence and simultaneously abandon our commitment to our individual and organizational boundaries of comfort. Simply put, we must be more loyal to the change than we are committed to our own comfort zone.

Change leaders are ambitious people. We are often accused of being more ambitious than the real world can manage. With high levels of ambition come equivalent levels of disappointment when things do not go well. We can easily reduce that disappointment simply by shrinking our ambition. Or we can aim higher and be willing to miss rather than aiming lower and hope that we hit the mark. We must not let the disappointments of change overshadow our ambition.

As intelligent change leaders, we become intoxicated by the thought of progressive change and innovation. As we start our applied implementation work, we then become sobered by the challenges of real-world change. While the trials of the real world must always sober us, we must simultaneously think, imagine, and lead with the uninhibited and intoxicated mindset of adaptive change and innovation. Organizationally intelligent leadership demands that both co-exist in conflict and in harmony. To abandon either mindset is to doom such leadership to ineffectiveness.

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