



Become A Change Master Step 5: Empower the Action

This is where the rubber meets the road, folks. So far, you have identified why it is vital to make a change now, enlisted allies, clarified your vision of what the change will be and shared that vision with others. You probably had to stretch to complete those first four challenging steps. You probably had to work your way through resistance. But now, you'll need to start changing other things in your life. These secondary changes may seem tangential, but are in fact essential.

Empowering the action will mean spending more time and attention with the structures, relationships and beliefs that support your change vision. It will also mean identifying and altering or eliminating the structures, relationships and beliefs that don't support the change. Some of those structures, relationships and beliefs might be quite comfortable, and the thought of altering them might be a little intimidating. So this is probably a good time to dig up the Urgency Statement to remind yourself why it's so important to keep moving.

Alter the Structures

You probably already have some inkling of what structures and systems are getting in your way. They're the habits that make it harder to stick with the change you want to make. The routines that distract you. The debts and obligations you've incurred that require you continue on your old course. But many of the structures that block your progress are so much a part of your everyday life, the trick will be to recognize that they are obstacles.

Begin by keeping a record of how you spend your time (in half hour increments) for two to three weeks. The time it takes to do this will be well rewarded since most of us have only a hazy idea of where the time goes. Writing it



down will help you see what's eating your time and attention. Maybe you're spending a twice as much time with email as you think. Maybe you'll discover you spend a half hour just "digging out" your workspace when you want to create, and that awareness could illustrate how important it is for you to stop dumping mail and other family paperwork in your creative space.

Then, have a courageous conversation with your allies. Ask them to help you identify things that block your progress. Give them explicit permission to tell you what they see and what they suspect about the obstacles you face.

Finally, try living as if your vision is complete. Notice what keeps you from doing that from 8 to 9 am. From 9 to 10 am. From 10 to 11, and so.

These three methods will identify the systems, structures and routines you need to gradually change. Once you know what to alter, the how is often easy to figure out. When it's not, ask your allies to brainstorm alternatives with you.

Get Your Relationships to Work

You might have an uncomfortable awareness you wish you didn't have about the relationships that make your desired change more difficult. They're the people who say things like "What do you want to do that for?" Or "Do you think that will really work?" when it's clear they don't think it will. Or "Who'll take care of the _____?" (Fill in the blank with the kids, dog, shopping, laundry, yard work, budget, etc.). They're the people who offer to keep you accountable, but don't



say anything helpful when you start to backslide. In some relationships, the unspoken rule is “I don’t want you to call me on my stuff, so I won’t call you on yours.”

They’re the relationships where you give so much to others, you don’t have any time or energy left for yourself. They’re people who undermine your efforts with misplaced sympathy: “Don’t worry about it, honey, you can always start next month when things settle down at work.” Or undercut your confidence with their own lack of faith: “I don’t know, you’re taking on an awful lot right now. Do you think this is the best time to start this?”

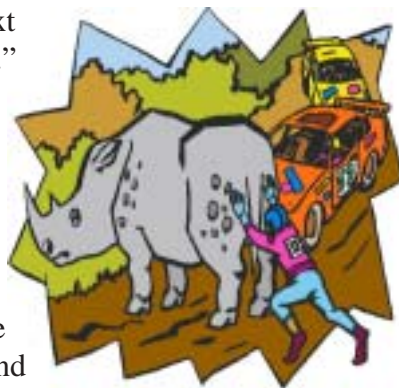
Keep in mind that you cannot change other people. They either change themselves or they don’t change. But, and this is a huge but, it only takes one person to change a relationship. If you change, the relationship changes. If the other person doesn’t like the change, he or she can invest a lot of energy trying to maintain the old status quo, but the relationship is changed.

Which may be why some people haven’t been as helpful as you thought they would be. When a person we’re in relationship with starts changing (it doesn’t matter if the relationship is personal or professional, close or distant), it can be so unsettling that we unconsciously do all we can to put the brakes on the change.

Your job is to talk about it. Talk about why the change is important to you. Listen to why the change might be threatening or uncomfortable for your relationship partner. Talk about what you want; listen to what your partner wants. Find common ground.

If the compromise you come up with still doesn’t support your change vision, you need to:

- ⊙ Make sure you have enough support from other relationships
- ⊙ Stop looking to this relationship for support in this change
- ⊙ Determine how much time you can spend in



this relationship without delaying the change you need to make

- ⊙ And limit the time and energy you invest in this relationship accordingly.

For example, Betty’s boss Susan is not supportive of Betty’s new commitment to being comfortable in a strong, flexible body. Betty has talked to her boss about how being strong will make her more productive at work, but Susan is unimpressed. Susan just wants Betty on the job on time, doing what she’s been hired to do. There is no point in Betty complaining about how her boss won’t support her by giving her a longer lunch hour to work out or offering a membership at a gym as an employment perk. Betty needs to make sure she has a workout buddy, a trainer, friends who encourage her, and so on to give her the support she needs. Betty needs to determine how much of her day and her energy she is willing to spend working. If she can’t find a way to mesh her workout schedule and her work schedule, she’ll have to look for a new job.

Continuing to focus on how Susan isn’t supporting her is futile. It’s an excuse to play the victim. “Well I tried to change, but my boss won’t let me.”

If you can see how you’ve done something similar, stop it. If you don’t

change this, you’re using that person as an excuse not to do what you recognize you need to do. There are a few perks to being the victim—people feel sorry for you, you are entitled to special treatment—but it is ultimately a place of powerlessness and dissatisfaction. You have the power to change—use it!

Examine Your Beliefs

By now, you’ve undoubtedly run into resistance. There’s always a reason for the resistance and behind the reason is a belief.

For example, when I recognize I need to enlist more allies, I often feel resistant. I’ll have a whole list of reasons why I should put it off just a little while

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Want to move forward with a creative
project and need help moving obstacles
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Check out the Change Master class
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longer. The essence of those reasons is that I feel vulnerable when I approach someone to be my ally. The belief behind that feeling is that if I ask someone for help, I'll have to take whatever I get whether it's what I'm looking for or not. I still hear the echoes of my mother saying "Beggars can't be choosers" in my head even though she hasn't said that to me for over thirty years and probably wouldn't dream of saying it about my current situation.

I know this isn't logical. The beliefs that block your progress won't be any more logical. Which, in a perverse way, makes them even more effective obstacles. Let go of the idea that this will be an exercise in logical thinking.

To uncover your old beliefs, notice where you've experienced resistance or when you stopped making progress. Ask yourself why. For every reason you come up with, notice the feeling behind the reason. What is the old belief that makes you feel that way? What is the old lesson you learned years ago, perhaps even in childhood?

Don't let the thought "Well that makes no sense," distract you. Be diligent in rooting out your old beliefs. As soon as you realize you're entertaining an old belief that no longer serves you, kick it out.

Appreciate What You've Got

As important as it is to identify and eliminate obstacles, it is even more important to appreciate and expand the structures, relationships and beliefs that support your change. Asking yourself "What's working well and how can I build on that?" is an application of Appreciative Inquiry, a social research method and organizational development tool. Originated by David Cooperrider, Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University, Appreciative Inquiry is creating powerful, purposeful change in organizations that apply it. AI assumes that what you're looking for already exists and what we focus on becomes our reality.

For example, researchers told elementary school teachers that, based on the results of testing done at the end of the previous term, certain children would excel in their classes that year and a

few other children would do very poorly. Despite the fact that the children were chosen **entirely at random** and there was no reason for any of these children to perform significantly better or worse than their classmates, the predictions always came true. The teachers expected certain students to do well and they did. The teachers expected other children to be "problem kids" and they were. The results were so consistent and so dramatic over several trials that the researchers decided it was unethical to repeat the experiment further. After all, would you want your child randomly selected to fail?

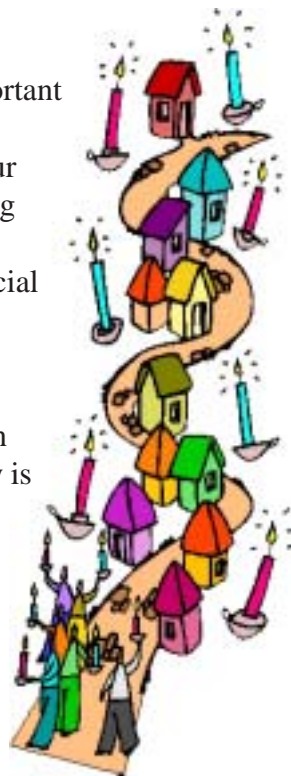
We get what we expect. You've experienced this phenomena when you've misplaced your eyeglasses or your keys. You begin looking with the expectation you'll find them, but if you don't find them fairly quickly, you start to think "They're lost. I can't find them anywhere." The more you think "I can't find them," the more you convince yourself until you get to the point where you couldn't find them if they were hanging off your nose. Of course another person will spot them immediately. But because you're focusing on "They're lost," that's your reality.

What we focus on gains importance and credibility. The more attention we invest in an idea or activity, the more we increase its impact. The tendency to focus on solving problems, Cooperrider insists, creates more problems to solve. Instead, we should focus on what's working well and consider how we can carry that forward.

So consider what routines, systems and structures in your life are supporting your change. Structure may seem limiting, but keep in mind it is the limits of its banks that give a river its direction and speed. Without banks, the river becomes a swamp.

If you want suggestions for 3 simple, supportive practices, take a look at the "Basic Creative Training" article in Volume 7, Issue 2 of Imagination InkLinks at www.rosannebane.com/main/inklinks.htm.

Give yourself the helpful structure an Action Map can provide. Action Mapping is explained in many of my classes and on pages 170-171 of *Dancing in the Dragon's Den*. If you'd like a handout about Action Mapping, send me an email at Rosanne@RosanneBane.com or call me at 612-722-4139.



Think about the people who support you in your change journey. How can you increase contact with them? What about more frequent phone calls, emails, lunches, weekly meetings? How can you deepen the impact of your partnership?

Return to your most passionate statement of your vision. What beliefs support that vision? Replace old beliefs that don't serve you with ones that fit who you are now and who you are becoming.

Give Yourself Room to Grow

Back when I was a kid, before baggy was a fashion statement, my mom would insist on buying new clothes that were a little big. It was the thrifty response of a woman with four growing children and a limited budget.

It's an idea worth recycling into a life strategy: Give yourself enough room to grow in your beliefs, relationships and structures. You've probably outgrown a lot of the old stuff years ago.

Remember your strengths and abilities. Consider the probability that you are stronger and wiser than you were five years ago. Read good books and take interesting classes, particularly ones that challenge your old perspective and expand your view of reality.

Appreciative Inquiry warns us not to focus too much of our attention on the obstacles. Of course, you'll need to identify and eliminate obstacles as you grow into the change you've selected, but do that from an appreciative perspective. Do it with your focus on the bright vision you're moving into.



Want an Empowerment Boost? Become a Change Master!

We will apply the 7 Step Process of Personal Change to give you the tools, skills and support you need to:

- ⊙ Stop procrastinating and start living the life you want
- ⊙ Remove obstacles and take action to make your dreams reality
- ⊙ Discover where and why you're resistant to moving on and how to move through the resistance to achieve your goals
- ⊙ Develop habits that support your creativity and your personal and professional development
- ⊙ Honor your promises to yourself and live with integrity, authenticity and power!

Tuition is self-determined based on what value you receive from the class. Online registration at www.RosanneBane.com or call 612-722-4139.

Tuesdays, Jan 14 thru March 4, 6:45 to 8:45 pm

OR Saturdays, Jan 18 and Feb 1, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm

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Classes start in February 2003. For more info or to register: call 612-379-8999 or visit www.loft.org.



When you or your organization needs motivation and information to move out of resistance and through the change, check out Rosanne's coaching and speaking services at www.RosanneBane.com.

Or call Rosanne at 612-722-4139!