

Get Off the Dime: Aligning the Walk to the Talk

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JOHN WOOLMAN

QUAKER

1720 - 1772

**USED HIS FOUR-STEP METHOD
TO ADDRESS:**

Slavery

Destructively high interest rates

Farm Bankruptcies

Loan Defaults

Child Labor

Trading Practices with Indians

Peace with Indians

Peace with Britain



First incident in 1742 had all the steps ...

By 1770

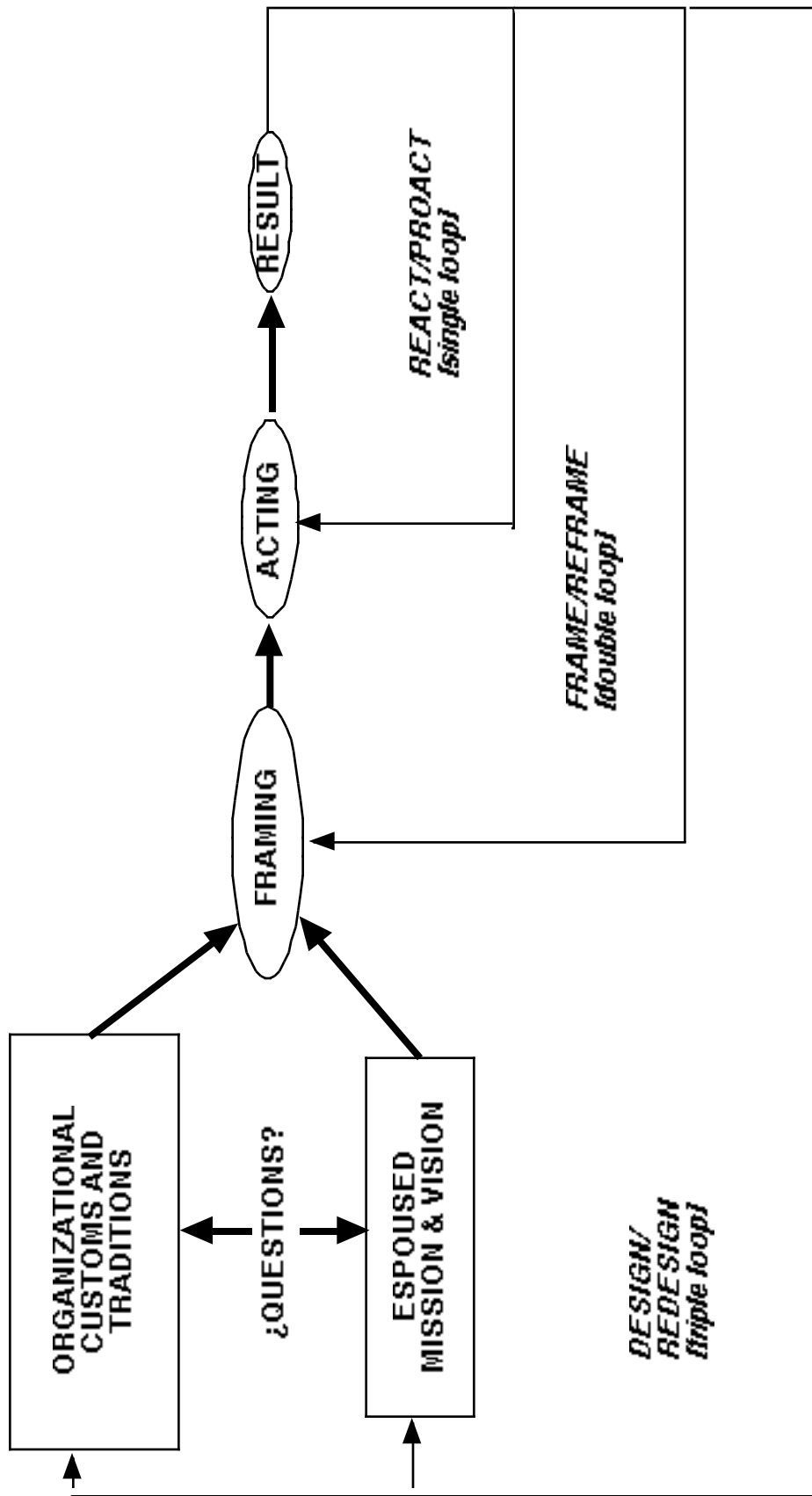
By CONSENSUS (voluntary agreement)

Quakers had ended owning slaves

by shifting to system of land

leasing/share cropping

ReActing, ReFraming & ReDesigning



Source: Adapted from "Learning Pathways" diagram, available 10/21/04 at actiondesign.com

THE BROOKLYN DODGERS CHANGE PROCESS

STEPS	ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	ACTION LEARNING IMPLICATIONS
1	Rickey studies race relations and desegregation methods. Rickey begins dialogue with race relations scholars regarding social norms around segregation. Rickey recognizes his ability to generate change in the tradition system within baseball. Rickey identifies the key stakeholders that need to be convinced.	Rickey develops a plan to desegregate the Dodgers with an understanding of the social implications of his actions.	Triple-loop understanding of the situation.
2	Rickey presents his plan to the Dodgers Board of Directors in the context of making the team more competitive and profitable.	Rickey presents his plan as a strategic business move.	Single-loop presentation to the Board.
3	The Dodgers Board of Directors accepts Rickey's plan as a way of creating a competitive advantage for the Dodgers. One board member explicitly rejects any social motivations for desegregation.	The Dodgers directors understand Rickey's plan as a strategic business move consistent with their current goals.	Single-Loop acceptance of the plan.
4	Rickey recruits Robinson and appeals to his sense of social justice. Rickey hires Harold Mann to manage the press. Rickey gains the support of Dodger announcer Red Barber.	The advocacy group members accept that integrating the Dodgers is feasible. Robinson recognizes that societal implications of his signing.	The advocacy group members accept that integrating the Dodgers is feasible. Robinson recognizes that societal implications of his signing.
5	The advocacy group focuses public discussion on Robinson's athletic ability. The advocacy group repeatedly describes the Robinson signing as a business decision. Robinson remains silent on racial issues during his first season with the Dodgers.	Robinson's presence on the Dodgers is consistently explained as nothing more than a wise business decision.	Single-loop public justifications.
6	Dodgers release threatening letters. Rickey farms out some of his top Black prospects to other teams. Rickey claims to be motivated by social justice concerns. Robinson becomes active in civil rights issues.	The participants focus on social justice as the motivation for their actions.	Retrospective public justification shifts to triple loop learning.
7	Third-party accounts of the Robinson signing focus on the societal implications and challenges to baseball tradition. Other ballplayers begin to speak out in favor of desegregation. Other baseball teams use social justice arguments for signing Black ballplayers.	Retrospective accounts of the Robinson signing accept the social justice motivation of the participants and recognize the societal implications of the actions.	Triple-loop understanding of the Robinson signing.

Source: Austin, John R. *J. of Appl Beh Sci*, 33: 109.

WOOLMAN'S "I AM WE" PROCESS

0. Decided if this change is something you want to become responsible for. Responsibility means "living consistently within an awareness of whether one likes or dislikes the consequences of one's own actions. ... Conversation is a major means to create this awareness. Three levels of awareness are entailed in producing responsibility. First there is an awareness of the actual effects of one's behavior (as opposed to one's intentions); second there is an awareness of whether one likes or dislikes these effects; and third, there is an awareness of one's preference for internal coherence and consistency." (Tomm, 1998:131.)

1. Frame for oneself a "we" fellowship relationship with others. Look for the source of the current problematic behavior within "our" shared tradition system.

2. Approach in a friendly manner those involved with the behavior in question and suggest that there might be some problems in our shared traditional system.

3. Request help in deconstructing how a specific behavior might be based, at least in part, on a troublesome assumption within our tradition system.

4. Work together with those who are agreeable to experiment with alternative behaviors that do no rest on the troublesome assumption ... (Neilsen 1993:123-124)

Sources

Text

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Abstract This article interprets within a behavioral science, action-learning theory framework three ethics cases where John Woolman's "I Am We" action-learning method was used. The method looks for the source of current problematic behavior in biases of a shared tradition system rather than simply within individuals; it approaches those involved in a friendly manner, asks for help in deconstructing how behaviors and values might be based on troublesome biases within our tradition, and works together with those who are agreeable to experiment with alternative behaviors that do not rest on the troublesome biases. Relevant aspects of such behavioral science concepts

as exit, voice and loyalty, reciprocal interactions, and action-learning are employed and extended. Three cases where the Woolman method was used are presented and interpreted within a behavioral-science-based action-learning framework. Strengths and limitations of the method are discussed. A new type of action-learning—triple-loop—is suggested.

*We must be still and still moving, into another intensity,
For a further union, a deeper communion.*

—T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets

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Abstract Action learning (AL), or the concept of single, double and triple loop learning (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Nielsen, 1993), is a very powerful tool for understanding change. Briefly, a single loop change happens within an actor's current framework, a double loop change actually transforms that framework, while a triple loop change addresses the framework of the actor's environment.

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The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy. ~ Martin Luther King, Jr. ~

Quotes

If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will avoid one hundred days of sorrow. ~ Chinese Proverb ~

If you want to win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend. ~ Abraham Lincoln ~

To act is to be committed. And to be committed is to be in danger.
~ James Baldwin ~

It has never been, and never will be, easy work! But the road that is built in hope is more pleasant to the traveler than the road built in despair, even though they both lead to the same destination. ~ Marian Zimmer Bradley ~
Opportunities are seldom labeled ~ John A. Shedd ~

There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment; the time is always now. ~ James Baldwin ~
Never let your head hang down. Never give up and sit down and grieve. Find another way. And don't pray when it rains if you don't pray when the sun shines. ~ Satchel Paige ~

There are two ways of meeting difficulties: you alter the difficulties, or you alter yourself to meet them. ~ Phyllis Bottome ~

If you don't make a total commitment to whatever you're doing, then you start looking to bail out the first time the boat starts leaking. It's tough enough getting that boat to shore with everybody rowing, let alone when a guy stands up and starts putting his life jacket on. ~ Lou Holtz ~

There may be a hundred things you know about a person—all of them bad. But there may be just one thing you don't know, which if you did know, would completely change your opinion. ~ A Nigerian Christian ~

If we are unwilling to let our ideals cost us anything, our ideals aren't worth anything. ~ Zora Neale Hurston ~

Some people see things as they are and say, "Why?" I dream of things that never were and say, "Why not?" ~ George Bernard Shaw ~

To recast larger problems into smaller, less arousing problems, people can identify a series of controllable opportunities of modest size that produce visible results and that can be gathered into synoptic solutions. The strategy of small wins addresses social problems by working directly on their construction and indirectly on their resolution. ~ Karl Weick ~

[Controversial social change] is change that challenges organizational norms and broader societal norms. Generating peaceful, controversial social change in an organization is difficult, and doing it well is important. Organizational change theorists recognize the importance of organizational traditions and norms, but few examine the important role societal norms play in organizational change attempts. Controversial social change in an organization directly challenges widely accepted organizational norms, and, to be successful, it must change not only the members' behavior but also the members' interpretation of societal norms. ~ John Austin ~

The function of a group in the believing game is for people to help each other believe more things, experience more things, and thereby move away from the lowest-common-denominator tendency in a majority conclusion...But the believing game does not have its full power as a dialectic for getting to the truth till you add the dimension of time. After three months of practice, people will be able to understand, believe, and thereby discover obscure truths in assertions which would have been inaccessible to them at the start. Continual practice in trying to have other perceptions and experiences helps people break out of their "sets" and preoccupations—helps them be less rigid, less prey to conventional, knee-jerk, or idiosyncratic responses. ~ Peter Elbow ~