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*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*

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When to Consider This Approach

- When you have an important business issue or opportunity.
- When you want to work within the hierarchy of an organization.
- When you have specific ideas about what you want to do and are willing to change your mind based on feedback.
- When you want to take a firm lead.
- When you want to improve communication and alignment across layers and functions.
- When you want to include expert opinions and perspectives in group dialogue.
- When you are willing to take a risk and be open, honest, and vulnerable with your employees.

When to Pass

- When you are not committed to giving and receiving honest feedback.
- When you are not committed to *adjusting* your plans and strategies -- you just want people to "buy" them.
- When you are not willing to respond *quickly* to the feedback you receive.
- When you are not committed to investing the time and resources to do this well.

(You need to plan a large-scale meeting as well as you would a formal wedding. Because of the rigor of this approach, more than one facilitator is needed and some staff should be heavily involved in design and preparation for each event.)

Real-Time Strategic Change

Combining Speed, Participation, and Commitment

Have you ever thought it possible for hundreds, or even thousands, of people in an organization to *plan together, simultaneously, at one place and at one time*? Sound crazy? It isn't! *Real-Time Strategic Change** is a methodology that has been used successfully in groups ranging from 40 to 4000.

The difference between *Real Time Strategic Change* (otherwise known as *Large- Scale Interactive Process*) and the other methods we have presented (*Future Search* and *Open Space*) is that this one relies on leadership to propose a "straw-horse" model for review and feedback, and then creates a forum for analysis and dialogue. Participants interact with their leaders, outside experts, and each other in a meaningful exchange of ideas. **Together** they analyze issues and formulate strategies. Based on mutual feedback, leaders revise the organization's approach and participants commit to action steps. By the end of a three-day workshop, everyone knows the direction, has had a hand in shaping it, and is ready to act.

To create this kind of result, we work with a cross-functional design team to plan one or more large-scale workshops. Our goals are to get everyone in the room to broaden their awareness, and to maximize their involvement. Customers, stake-holders, and experts might be invited to provide perspective for the group to ponder.

Participants are assigned to tables that represent a maximum mix of organizational viewpoints. They are given guidelines and instruction for completing tasks and for managing their small groups. They are expected to contribute their table's wisdom to each planning round and to take the emerging direction to heart. At times, they might be asked to give each other feedback about what they need to make their strategy work.

Given the visibility of this process and the fact that the group size might be in the hundreds or thousands, the keys to success are (1) a commitment from leadership to be open, honest and responsive, and (2) a workshop(s) that is well-designed and well-planned, both procedurally and logistically.

Our experience is that the pace of this approach can be absolutely dizzying at times, but people come away feeling enlightened, empowered, and energized. Why? They know the direction, have had a hand in shaping it, and are ready to act. If you are interested in exploring this approach for your organization, give us a call. We'd love to help! □ *CMP*

** This large-scale methodology was developed by Kathleen D. Dannemiller and Robert W. Jacobs. You can read more about it in Jacobs' book Real Time Strategic Change, published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers in 1994.*