

# Change, Choices, and Consequences:

*A Guide to Mega Thinking  
and Planning*

Roger Kaufman, Ph.D., CPT

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Finally, my thanks to the reader for choosing to examine, consider, and hopefully apply this work to help them define and achieve measurable success.

Roger Kaufman  
April, 2006



# Introduction

We are what we do—and accomplish.

Our choices and decisions about what we do and don't do determine the results we get. We are responsible for what we choose, and we can choose to be successful: to design and deliver results that provide measurable value.

The obvious theme here is choice: choices about what to plan and how best to deliver success. We can choose to be successful and get useful results, or we can choose to keep doing what we are now doing and harvesting what we now receive back for our efforts.

Doesn't it make sense to know where you are headed and that the intended destination is the right place to go? Mega thinking and planning is about defining and justifying where your organization heads before deciding on the best ways to improve performance. It pays to not let the "solutions cart" get in front of the "destination horse"—to select ends before means. This book is about being proactive: defining and justifying where one should head before deciding how to get there.

## Choices, Decisions, and Consequences

Defining, justifying, designing, and delivering useful organizational results are possible. Doing so is straightforward and practical. It only requires us to choose those concepts and tools that will help us select appropriate actions that will deliver measurable success.

Delivering useful results and proving it depend on several areas of choice, including selecting a frame of mind that puts planning, assessment, analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation—and the feedback for continual improvement that provides—in proper context. What you use, do, produce, and deliver must all align to add value—measurable value to an organization's internal and external stakeholders. You can choose to add value to your external stakeholders or limit your choice to your job and your organization. But the former option is suggested: adding measurable value to all internal and external stakeholders.

Another choice is about the size—or unit of analysis—we select for our improvement efforts. Usually choice is about the job or what goes on in a small group. Another choice is about the entire organization as the focus for performance improvement. And still another

choice, what this book is about, is to see everything we use, do, produce, and deliver as nested in our shared society. Sooner or later, we have to be called to account for what we accomplish in terms of adding value both inside and outside the organization. Think big. It will pay us all handsome dividends.

The practical choice is that there must be a partnership that seeks success for all stakeholders, both within and outside of the organization, by design and by intention.

Another choice is that the definition of the results to be achieved must be measurable, and the ways and means we use to get results have to be based on solid research, not on any “flavor of the month” or a trendy idea.

And everything we use, do, produce, and deliver must be aligned with each other as they add up to value outside the organization, including external clients and society. We call such a mindset, or orientation, *Mega thinking*, and the planning that comes from this is termed *Mega planning*.

Mega planning is about setting the framework for performance improvement so that the related parts of the system may be properly designed, developed, and implemented. This approach is analogous to locating or designing a house before buying the furniture and selecting the décor. This approach defines and justifies the specifications for the entire organization (the “house”) that will allow one to design what goes on within the organization. The emphasis here is on *what* the organization must deliver so that effective and efficient means may be considered and selected: *what* before *how*.

There are useful concepts, tools, and techniques for performance system design and development.<sup>1</sup> Each of the tools and techniques for performance improvement depends on the organization heading in a useful direction—a direction best determined and verified by strategic thinking and planning.

The Mega thinking and planning process and concepts provided in this book should not be confused with related detailed performance improvement tools and approaches. Mega thinking involves determining what the organization should deliver and then designing and developing the operational ways and means to deliver the required success. Mega thinking and planning also better ensure that what is developed inside the organization will add value outside of it—alignment.

Mega thinking and planning have a primary focus of adding measurable value for all stakeholders. It is realistic, practical, and ethical.

## Three Fundamentals for Defining and Delivering Organizational Success

Defining and then achieving sustained organizational success is possible. It relies on three basic concepts:

1. **A societal (Mega) value-added “frame of mind” or paradigm:** Your perspective about your organization, people, and our world. It focuses on an agreed-upon approach to adding value to all stakeholders.
2. **A shared determination and agreement on where to head and why:** All people who can and might be impacted by the shared objectives must agree on purposes and results criteria.
3. **Pragmatic and basic tools for planning, design, development, implementation, and continual improvement:** Defining and determining the “hows” of achieving performance that are required for success.

This book provides the basic concepts for thinking and planning Mega in order to define and deliver value—measurable value—to internal and external partners. Choices should be based on rational data in order to deliver useful results.

This book covers several related topics that will provide the concepts and tools required for defining and justifying where you and your organization should head and how to tell when you have arrived.

Main topics to help guide your strategic thinking and planning choices<sup>2</sup> include:

- Defining who the clients are and who benefits
- Outlining the basic questions each organization must ask and answer
- Providing the basic concepts and tools for delivering performance improvement and proving the value they add

- Using both change management and change creation (or reactive as well as proactive thinking and doing)
- Assessing needs and placing the needs (not wants) in priority order
- Using performance data to continually plan to get from current results to desired ones, and then use the criteria and performance to continually improve—fixing what isn't working and continuing that which is working

This approach sets the stage for performance system design and development: First find direction and then develop the ways and means to get from here to there. The details for building on the Mega plan by designing, developing, implementing, and evaluating detailed performance systems are provided elsewhere, including Brethower (2006), Gerson (2006), Carleton (2006), Watkins (2006), and Guerra (2006).

Let's get going. As we move along, examples, self-assessments, and exercises are provided for use by you and your partners on your journey toward success.

## Endnotes

1. Approaches, concepts, and tools such as:
  - Rummler, G. A. (2004). *Serious performance consulting: According to Rummler*. Silver Spring, MD: International Society for Performance Improvement and the American Society for Training and Development.
  - Brethower, D. M., & Dams, P. C., (January 1999). Systems thinking (and systems doing). *Performance Improvement, 38 (1)*, 37–52.
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  - Dick, W., & Carey, L. (1989). *The systematic design of instruction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman & Co.
  - Gagne, R. M., & Driscoll, M. P. (1988). *Essentials of learning for instruction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). NJ: Prentice-Hall.
  - Rothwell, W. J., & Kazanas, H. L. (1998). *Mastering the instructional design process: A systematic approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
  - Van Tiem, D. M., Moseley, J. L., & Dessinger, J. C. (2000). *Fundamentals of performance technology: A guide to improving people, process, and performance*. Silver Spring, MD: International Society for Performance Improvement.
  - Watkins, R. (2006). *Performance by design*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press.
2. This book and the guidance in it are linked with ten standards for performance improvement sponsored by ISPI. This is true of this book as well as the other five books in the series. The relationship to these published standards is found at the end of this book along with a suggestion on how existing standards could and should be expanded.



# *Chapter 1*

## **Defining Where to Head and Why to Go There**

Could there be any more basic decision than where you and your organization should head, and justifying why you want to get there? It seems rational that the destination and what constitutes success for you and your organization would have to be agreed upon.

Yet organizations—public and private—have fuzzy statements of purpose.<sup>1</sup> You can, however, help modify this dismal and almost universal state of affairs and be much better off for your efforts. Everyone benefits from the positive changes you can make for precision, rigor, and delivered success.

Defining where we should head and justifying why we want to get there should be based on adding value to all stakeholders. Those stakeholders include external clients, our shared society, and our internal partners.

Deciding where to head is best nested in reality—the reality of economics, politics, and society. Change is ever present, and we can be the masters of change or the victims of it. Because there is change, we have choices, and those choices we make have consequences. We can choose success or choose something else.

### **The Three Cs of Life**

There are three Cs of life:

- **Change**
- **Choice**
- **Consequences**

We can count on change happening: We can take control or wait for things to happen to us. We may be proactive or reactive. This book starts at the proactive and sets the stage for reactive (and useful) performance system design and development.

We make choices in our personal lives as well as in our organization. We can choose to take control or be victims. Not making a decision is a decision.

And no matter what we do, or don't do, there are consequences—results or impacts. We are responsible for the consequences in our lives. We can improve our own odds by knowing about and controlling change through our choices—the three Cs of life.<sup>2</sup>

## Change!

Change is scary for most of us. We know how to deal with today—whatever comes our way based on our current decisions and their consequences or payoffs. Some would rather deal with current reality than get out of their comfort zones and take a risk—a risk to change what we do and how we act. We can get beyond our history and our conventional ways of thinking and acting.

If we are not getting the payoffs—results—we want, then it seems only reasonable to change our behavior: to change what we do and how we do it. Simply said, we are what we do and accomplish. If we want to get different results, then we must:

1. Define the results we are getting now.
2. Determine the results we want to get.
3. Establish what actions and behaviors will deliver the results we want to get us from current results and consequences to desired results and consequences.
4. Select new actions and behaviors.
5. Decide to change.
6. Change.
7. Support ourselves in our changed behaviors and actions and be prepared to change again if we don't get the results and payoffs we want.<sup>3</sup>

Here are some basic decision-making steps, based on Harold Greenwald's work:<sup>4</sup>

- Identify the payoffs you are getting now that you don't want.
- Identify the behaviors you are displaying that deliver the negative payoffs.<sup>5</sup>

- Identify the payoffs you do want.
- Identify the behaviors that will deliver the desired payoffs.
- Decide to change your behavior.
- Change.
- Be ready to decide to change in the future if you want different payoffs.

When we talk about decisions and changes, please think of these basic steps. This book provides the concepts and tools for defining and then making successful decisions.

Why change? What is really riskier? Continuing on with the predictable-yet-painful (or perhaps just boring and unrewarding) or deciding to make things better?

### *Choices*

We do make choices. Not making choices is a choice. We can be the master of change or the victim of it, all depending on our choices. No matter our choices, the consequences are ours to own. We have to commit to our choices and carry them through until we get the results we desire.

### *Consequences*

What happens to us in our lives is largely up to us. If bad things happen, we can be resilient or we can give up and drift from day to day. Means—our choices about change—lead to ends, results, and consequences. It seems smart to link our choices to the consequences we want and not leave it up to what fate and indecision deal us.

The basic choice for any planning is what frame of reference we will use:

- Will we choose to plan for our workgroup<sup>6</sup> as the primary beneficiary?
- Will we choose to plan for our organization as the primary beneficiary?

**or**

- Will we choose our external clients and society as the primary beneficiary of everything we use, do, produce, and deliver?

Successful strategic planning and strategic thinking—creating our future—are based on defining where to go and justifying why you want to get there. The basis for “where to go” and “why get there” resides in a simple but often overlooked reality: We all are means to societal ends. You, me, our organizations are all means to societal ends. When we think strategically, we focus on adding value to our shared society, and then we plan strategically to get measurable societal results.

Because of this fundamental reality (which is usually assumed or avoided) of basing everything we use, do, produce, and deliver on adding measurable value to external clients and society, this concept is provided now—front and center.

### *Society, Mega, and the Rational Choice*

The basic rational choice is to make external clients and society—Mega—the planning frame. When you do, it is the safest, most practical, and ethical choice. When we choose our external clients and our shared society (Mega-level thinking and planning) as our planning frame, we can then sensibly align our workgroups and our organization to add value as we move from internal contributions to external ones.<sup>7</sup> This guiding principle is simple and straightforward, and it makes intuitive sense.

From this shared societal value-added frame,<sup>8</sup> everything you and your organization use, do, produce, and deliver is linked to achieve shared and agreed-upon positive societal results. Mega thinking (your mindset, or frame of reference based on adding value to our shared communities and society) is guided by an *Ideal Vision*,<sup>9</sup> which is defined in Figure 1.1. Note that the label *Ideal Vision* is just that, ideal. We might not get there in our lifetime or the lifetime of our children, but if that is not where we are headed, where do we stop? Consider this definition of an Ideal Vision that has been derived from asking people from around the world “What kind of world do you want to help create for tomorrow’s child?”<sup>10</sup>

Why does using Mega make sense? It is rational if for no other reason than we all depend on each other for contributing to our safety, survival, and well-being. Thinking and planning Mega, how-

ever, is a choice, and like all other choices, you are responsible for the consequences of your choices.<sup>11</sup>

Here are some choices that you and your organization face:

- Add value to our organization while adding value to our shared world (Mega) **or** only add value to myself and my organization
- Enlarge the frame of reference for planning and doing **or** keep the current focus on the organization alone or small groups within the organization
- Focus on immediate effectiveness (results and consequences) now and in the future **or** focus on efficiency (the ease of doing things)

Choices: If you don't choose Mega, what do you choose? What results and consequences will you take responsibility for delivering and not delivering?

**Figure 1.1: An Ideal Vision.**

<p><b>Basic Ideal Vision: The world we want to help create for tomorrow's child</b></p>
<p>There will be no loss of life nor elimination or reduction of levels of survival, self-sufficiency, or quality of life from any source including (but not limited to) the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War, riot, terrorism, or unlawful civil unrest</li> <li>• Unintended human-caused changes to the environment including permanent destruction of the environment and/or rendering it non-renewable</li> <li>• Murder, rape, or crimes of violence, robbery, or destruction to property</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Shelter</li> </ul>

(Continued)

**Figure 1.1 (Concluded)**

- Permanent or continuing disabilities
- Disease
- Starvation and/or malnutrition
- Destructive behavior (including child, partner, spouse, self, elder, others)
- Accidents, including transportation, home, and business/workplace
- Discrimination based on irrelevant variables including color, race, age, creed, gender, religion, wealth, national origin, or location

**Consequences:** Poverty will not exist, and every woman and man will earn at least as much as it costs them to live unless they are progressing toward being self-sufficient and self-reliant. No adult will be under the care, custody, or control of another person, agency, or substance. All adult citizens will be self-sufficient and self-reliant as minimally indicated by their consumption being equal to or less than their production.

The choice might not be comfortable at first, but if you are not adding value to our shared society, what assurance do you have that you are not subtracting value?<sup>12</sup> Starting with Mega as the central focus, *strategic thinking* provides the database—foundation—for *strategic planning*.

**Note:** This will not be the last time Mega is presented or discussed. More detail and applications are in the following chapters and it is the central theme of this book: proactive action to define what must be accomplished to improve our shared world before fixing and repairing what we are now using and doing.

A central question that each and every organization should ask and answer is:

*If your organization is the solution, what's the problem?*

This fundamental proposition is central to thinking and planning strategically—using a Mega focus. It represents a shift from focusing on oneself, individual performance improvement, and one’s organization to making certain you also add value to external clients and society. In working with your organization, ask the above question. The dialog that will result usually lets people know that they and the organization are only a means to societal ends. If the organization is not adding measurable value to external clients and society, its time is short. Many organizations, such as the ill-fated “dot.coms,” and too many high-rolling companies, including those that have gone bankrupt and/or whose executives are serving jail time, failed to ask this question.

Instead of asking this question, most organizations typically stop at what is immediately good for them and their organization (the so-called bottom line or business case) and neglect to make sure they and their organization are adding value outside of themselves. Some organizations pull up the cloak of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and dodge their responsibility to add value directly to our shared society by building swings for playgrounds, sponsoring “5% days” where that percentage of all sales goes to charity, or working in the community.

Such “feel good” responses to social responsibility might look good, but it still must be augmented by (and perhaps be secondary to) each organization and each person in the organization making sure that everything they use, do, produce, and deliver adds direct value to their external clients and our shared world. For example, United Parcel Service (UPS) does both community as well as charity outreach. In the performance of their organization worldwide, they set objectives and use hard performance indicators to track environmental and safety contributions.<sup>13</sup>

A dual center of attention on and direct contribution to our shared society seems to be growing as it should be. Making money and doing societal good must not be mutually exclusive.

The use of the label *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)* might signal a growing interest in societal consequences. Even the worldwide managing director of McKinsey & Company, Ian Davis, has noted that the early and narrowly applied Milton Friedman admonition of “the business of business is business” has outlived its usefulness.<sup>14</sup> This is especially true if it means looking at last quarter’s financial results as the only measure of success. Just looking

after the bottom line is no longer enough. Viable CSR should include rigorous indicators of measurable societal value added to its scorecard, not just tinkering with some of the possible elements of adding social value.

Sensibly and happily, organizations are joining the chorus that adding societal value is not only necessary ethically, but also makes good business sense.<sup>15</sup> Increasing examples of measurable results from thinking and acting Mega are now finding their way into publication.<sup>16</sup> This represents a shift away from the usual and aging concept that the business's sole focus on the bottom line may be giving way to an additional and primary focus on Mega thinking and planning.<sup>17</sup> Adding societal value and using both your talents and your organization's talents are practical, smart, and safe.

The hallmark of this approach to strategic planning and thinking—Mega thinking and planning—suggested in this book is a focus on society and using yourself and your organization as the vehicle for adding value. In considering this, here are two questions:

- What are the risks for not thinking, planning, and doing Mega?
- What are the risks for thinking, planning, and doing Mega?

### **Indicator for Mega Results for Individuals: Measuring Results and Consequences**

Measurement is both vital and tricky. How do we know when someone is self-sufficient and self-reliant? When can we tell when they are not under the care, custody, or control of another person or agency? Good questions, and ones for which we should have answers.

In the Ideal Vision (Figure 1.1), we note that each individual should at least be self-sufficient and self-reliant. But how can we tell? One useful indicator<sup>18</sup> is that a person's consumption (what he or she pays for) is equal to or less than his or her production (what he or she gets paid for). A simple equation is:

$$C \leq P$$

where C is consumption (in monies paid out) and P is production (for which one gets income). This is an indicator of self-sufficiency and self-reliance.