

# The Convenient Truth About DNA



## Inconvenient Truth #1: What motivates you doesn't motivate (most of) your employees

What looks like a carrot to one person may not to another - it might even look like a stick.

We are all motivated to satisfy our needs. Our needs as individuals are revealed in our personal values. In order to understand people's inner motivation we need to understand their values. DNA not only identifies an individual's personal values, but also the challenges faced by people with different values in relating to, and therefore accommodating, the motives of others.

DNA helps leaders manage change so as to ensure everyone is presented with an appropriate carrot and the opportunity to avoid things perceived as sticks.

## Inconvenient Truth #2: You're better off letting them write their own story

If change is imposed on others there is likely to be some resistance. The larger the numbers involved, the greater and more destructive this resistance may be. Leaders of large organizations tend to have a particular value set that motivates them to lead from the front. These values encourage them to make the right noises about listening and working cooperatively, but ultimately their listening is selective, and angled toward the voices of those supporting the plan already in the leader's head. The temptation to drive a desired change through by a combination of force and spin is often irresistible to these people. To leaders driven by power and achievement any alternative would seem to involve letting the lunatics take over the asylum, and result in chaos, unnecessary risk taking and time wasting.

The benefit of managing a change process written by all is that, in principle, everyone is motivated to make it happen and is therefore more likely to make a positive contribution. But, of course, it's not as simple as that. Different people will want different changes, some will want no change at all and others will not want the changes that are the inevitable but unseen consequences of the changes they want. You can't keep all the people happy all of the time! A crowd sourced change initiative might tear an organization apart.

The answer to successfully managing change is to listen and lead. Ultimately everyone wants the same thing from an organization. They want it to be successful: to satisfy its needs via those of its customers, clients and other stakeholders. They also want it to satisfy their personal needs. DNA helps organizations identify, resolve and align these needs so individual aspirations and concerns can be understood and accommodated within a properly considered, holistic strategy, that, when enacted, maximises flow, minimizes friction and achieves the desired change as efficiently as possible.

### Inconvenient Truth #3: It takes both “+” and “-” to create real energy

This is actually the same point as Truth #1. In order to understand what looks like a positive or a negative from the perspective of any individual, and then relate it to organizational needs, one needs to understand both in terms of values.

What frightens some people into operational paralysis spurs others into action. For example people belonging to DNA's OD type are motivated by status related benefits. They tend to avoid doing things that take them into uncharted territory, and when presented with such a challenge may become unnecessarily risk averse and resistant for fear of making a fool of themselves, and incurring status related penalties as a consequence. While, in other circumstances, where they perceive they have track record of achievement, they may develop a gung ho attitude to change based on a competitive desire to be seen as a winner.

For DNA's IDs the same challenges may provoke an opposite reaction. A trip into uncharted territory is more likely to be welcomed as an opportunity to learn and gain experience, whereas they are less motivated to do what, to them, appears to be the same old thing just to prove their worth.

In designing, leading and managing change DNA helps set up challenges so as to pull everyone forward through attraction to positives, while pushing them away from negatives.

### Inconvenient Truth #4: Your leaders believe they already “are the change”

This revisits the point made in Truth #2, that most leaders of large organizations are driven by the values of power and achievement. These values, while advantageous in terms of maximising focus on the attainment of easily identifiable short-term goals using tried and tested methodology, also promote low self-awareness, a reluctance to admit, confront and work on personal limitations and a more blinkered general outlook.

DNA can be used to help leaders confront these issues and develop means by which to work with, and around, their rational and behavioural biases. Also it can be used to identify those with greater transformational leadership potential, who have greater self-awareness, humility and preparedness to learn from, and cooperate with, others, and create change management systems that leverage their greater potential to design and enact effective change.

### Inconvenient Truth #5: Influence leaders aren't *that* influential

While it is impossible for any leader to be absolutely certain of the impact their initiatives will have, they can learn to increase their influence.

The greater a leader understands what is likely to capture the imaginations of those they wish to influence, and so motivate them to enact change, the greater their chances of being influential. In order to do this they need to understand the needs of these people in the context of their experiences and current situation. Again this is where DNA can help, both in the direct analysis of values and in placing personal and organizational experiences in a single, values based framework.

### Inconvenient Truth #6: Money is the most expensive way to motivate people

At the risk of coming over like a scratched record, stuck CD, malfunctioning mp3 or buffering download, this is the same point as Truth #1. Money is a great motivator for some people, but actually for most it is not the best. DNA helps identify what people are really motivated by so organizations can dangle the most effective carrots before them.

While money may not be the most important thing for most people, once it becomes established as the currency of approval, respect and belonging in an organization, it assumes greater significance than it otherwise might. This is why money is the most expensive way to motivate people. It is just one example of the weaknesses of one size fits all strategies.

### Inconvenient Truth #7: A fair process is as important as a fair outcome

This point mirrors that made at the end of the last point, and one any parent of more than one child will quickly recognize: while every individual has different needs and seeks different things, it is important for the process by which change is effected to be perceived as being consistent while addressing everyone's interests equitably.

It is very difficult to do this unless one understands the needs of all those involved, and therefore the relative values they are likely to attach to different propositions.

### Inconvenient Truth #8: Employees are what they think

This stresses the huge importance of understanding what makes people tick and the mistake many leaders make of thinking they can drive behaviours through process. The ways in which we perceive, think and act: our feelings, our emotional responses, our intuitions and our behaviour, are driven by our values in the context of the environment in which we find ourselves. To connect with and get the most from people, i.e. to get them to cooperate fully, it is vital to understand their values and understand how their values relate to their environment.

### Inconvenient Truth #9: Good intentions aren't enough

It is true that new behaviours and ways of thinking need to be embedded if they are to stick. However, all behaviours and ways of thinking can be understood in terms of the values likely to drive them in any given environmental context, and therefore some new behaviours and ways of thinking will be easier for some to accept than others, and will therefore need different incentives and disciplines if they are to become embedded. For some people their values may be such that the time and costs required to achieve this will be prohibitive.

DNA helps organizations better evaluate the likely efficacy of any embedding initiative for any proposition and any target audience, and thereby aids the selection or design of the optimal solution.