



Teaching The Caterpillar to Fly

Ideas about:

- managing change and personal growth
- assisting change management initiatives
- developing individual and organizational potential

by Scott J. Simmerman, Ph.D.
Performance Management Company

***"I have a microwave fireplace at home...
You can lay down in front of the fire all night in 8 minutes."***

Steven Wright, comedian

Sometimes we expect "microwave fireplace results" when it comes to improvement and change. But improvement is never fast; it depends on the creation and realization of new possibilities and outcomes and occurs with some amount of trial and error. Call it *continuous* continuous improvement - but more on that later.

Realize that everyone has unrealized potential and this unrealized organizational and individual potential can be coached and supported; most individuals need the support and coaching of others to be successful. And there can be any number of issues and difficulties involved with these changes.

In order to begin any improvement process, it is important to focus on

- understanding and capturing ideas and possibilities
- reformulating and restructuring those ideas into a usable form
- and then transforming them into actions and behaviors.

The situation reminds me of a story:

Two caterpillars are conversing and a beautiful butterfly floats by. One caterpillar turns and says to the other,

"You'll never get me up on one of those butterfly things!"

Before moving on, take a moment and consider the meanings of this story. There are some wheels within wheels herein and some important lessons on perspective, leadership and creativity. So **STOP** for a moment and consider the story again.

Okay. What you're being asked to consider may seem similar to what John McEnroe said on losing to Tim Mayotte in a professional indoor tennis championship:

"This taught me a lesson, but I'm not sure what it is."



I've told the caterpillar and butterfly story many times. And people always "get it" as I did when first reading it. But there is also a major paradox in the story as it applies to thinking, personal growth, managing change and leading performance improvement. I can state it as:

It's Dangerous to think you know "The Answer." *

** That's "The" as in "Duh."*

As I first developed and used this story about the caterpillars and the butterfly, I assumed that everyone understood that the joke / story was about resistance to change -- a single simple answer: "You'll Never Get me..." But when I asked a room full of people to talk about the meaning of the story in an Asian training session, I was shocked by their many answers, since most were not about **my** answer but their perceptions.

In asking people to discuss the joke over the last couple of years, there have been many different responses and answers, including:

- **Caterpillars have no need to fly. They are well grounded!**
- **Caterpillars can eat anything green and find food everywhere.**
- **Butterflies are a stage beyond caterpillars.**
- **Butterflies have to fly to get anywhere and caterpillars can crawl and climb.**

- We can attempt to resist and suffer the stress and difficulties.
- We can choose to be active participants in change. Or not, maybe.
- We go through stages of development and butterflies are one stage closer to death.
- Risk avoidance is normal.
- Change is often actively resisted.
- Change is inevitable.
- Caterpillars don't like wings.
- Caterpillars must hate flying since they don't even try.
- Caterpillars focus only on eating and survival.
- Butterflies can get blown around by the wind, but caterpillars can drag their feet!
- Metamorphosis is an uncontrollable process with an unclear result.
- Metamorphosis is a dark, damp, confined place, so I'm scared!
- It's easier for butterflies to develop perspective than caterpillars.
- You have to stop being a caterpillar in order to become a butterfly.
- Change is not always a conscious decision. Change will occur, inevitably.
- There is a need for vision and perspective -- we're all on a journey.

and my favorite answer:

- ***I'll NEVER be a butterfly; My mother was a moth.***

How many times do we self-limit our perceptions and our thinking because we "know the answer" and thus don't even think about different possibilities? I find this to be a very common trait -- and one most deserving of reflection and analysis.

When people talk about this story of caterpillars and butterflies among themselves, a most remarkable thing usually happens: *They discover that they share different perspectives and a diversity of ideas, which is common when people discuss things. And each has a unique perspective.*

Yet most of us, when we know "**The Answer**," will generally self-limit any consideration of other possibilities and limit our thinking.

The fact that we can generate other ideas is a most interesting outcome. All of us have the capability to generate ideas and possibilities. What we need is a simple tool and shared base of experience and common ground. Most would agree that being a butterfly is a "higher existence" than remaining a caterpillar.

The story also links to some key learning points on leading change and dis-empowering people (see pages 16 and 24), including:

- Even though we often resist change and risk, change is often inevitable!
- Change will occur and we can choose to be active participants and go with the flow -- or we can attempt to resist and suffer the stresses.

- Each of us goes through many stages of development, a process that occurs repeatedly over time.
- It's easier for butterflies to develop perspective on things than it is for caterpillars since they have a better viewpoint.
- Caterpillars focus only on eating and survival. There is more to life than this.
- What is needed is vision and overall perspective – we are all on a journey forward.
- Having gone through a process of change may make the next cycle of change less threatening and somewhat easier.
- We need to be engaged and involved in the process itself rather than feel imprisoned by our environment. Change cannot be done "to" us -- forcing the action typically generates active resistance to the process.



Possibilities are endless! Choosing to change is a really important part of improvement. And we all have a bit of the butterfly within us.

Before moving on, consider the meanings of this story about resisting change and making choices. There are wheels within wheels herein and some important lessons on perspective, leadership and creativity. So please stop for a moment and consider the story again.

"One cannot become a butterfly by remaining a caterpillar."

Change and personal growth is all about discovering the inevitability of change and the need for one to clarify a vision of the future.

Now here is another paradox:

YOU now have a simple coaching framework that you can use with other people in the hope that they will understand this paradox of knowing the answer. A challenge is now given to you to find a possibility of sharing this with another group and broadening some thinking. That is the "training" part of this article -- you now have a new tool!

Let's continue to illustrate this thinking on change with a few facts and another story. In the past few years, I've learned a lot about *Lepidoptera* (moths and butterflies) because I've been using this story in my training programs.

You may also find these factoids of interest.

- There are 140,000+ species of moths and about 16,000 butterfly species but we see butterflies more often because they fly during the day - moths generally fly only at night.



- One difference between a moth and a butterfly is in the nature of their antennae. Moths have "feathery" antenna and butterflies have a bulb on a stalk. Their wing structures are also different.
- Most moths have tremendously sensitive antenna that can sense minute quantities of their sexual attractant pheromone, in the parts per billion quantities.
- The Monarch Butterfly of North America migrates great distances to areas slightly West of Mexico City, where they gather in the billions to reproduce. They then migrate back as far as the Canadian Border. They often feed on milkweed, which also serves to protect them -- birds find their taste aversive and will avoid eating them.
- Some caterpillars eat as much as 27,000 times their body weight to support their lives as flying insects. The big green adult Luna Moths lack a mouth and actually live only on the energy stored during their larval stage -- their sole focus of their adult lives is reproduction.
- Like some people we know, certain caterpillars like the *Crystalline Limacodid*, have bristles that dispense toxic chemicals. Getting too close to them can be a very painful experience! And many moths, butterflies and caterpillars use camouflage as a way of protecting themselves in an attempt to hide from predators -- we see the same behaviors in organizations.
- One moth native to South America has a foot-long proboscis that it uses to sip nectar from deep-throated flowers while another moth has a proboscis that pierces the skin and can drink the blood of animals.
- A longer list of additional factoids is included at the end of this paper, in case having additional data would be of any interest.

Thus, we've all now learned more about caterpillars and butterflies. Can we apply it to managing issues of change?

Years ago, in a telephone conversation, Ted Forbes, then at UVA's Darden School of Business asked me,

"Do you know about caterpillars and butterflies?"

Feeling as somewhat an expert on the subject, I of course said,

"No."

(Remember the paradox of knowing The Answer?)

Ted then shared a great quote and training punch line and what makes a wonderful transition to any discussion about the issues of personal and organizational change.

Ted said:

In the change from being a caterpillar to becoming a butterfly, you're nothing more than a yellow, gooey sticky mess."



All of us need to continually deal with the gooey glop that most find uncomfortable. But you have to metamorphose in order to change and that will involve going through the discomfort of being less and less of a caterpillar while you are not yet a butterfly.

Expect any transformation process to be somewhat uncomfortable -- and note that it takes some level of commitment to go through the change process and actually implement something. So, one key is to better understand the change process and the realities of how to support change to create a somewhat different future.

Understand that we are incredibly perceptive. Our natural senses give us perceptual sensitivity that is nothing short of amazing. If your physical senses are working normally, you can:

- See a burning candle from 28 miles away (if you are totally dark-adapted)
- Feel on your fingertips a pressure that depresses your skin .00004 inch
- Smell one drop of perfume diffused through a three room apartment
- Taste .04 ounce of table salt dissolved in 530 quarts of water
- Feel the weight of a bee's wing falling on your cheek from less than half an inch away
- Distinguish among more than 300,000 different colors
- Gauge the direction of a sound's origin based on a .00003-second difference in the time of its arrival at one ear to relative to the other

We have the sensitivity to be extremely perceptive. But we typically block our sensitivity and it goes unrealized and underutilized, just as most of our other capabilities and potential.

Applied to personal change, we will often limit ideas and possibilities for improvement because we already know the answers. By constraining our thinking, we are limiting our possibilities and innovations as well as limiting the self-esteem that comes from successful accomplishment of change and the rewards of self-improvement.

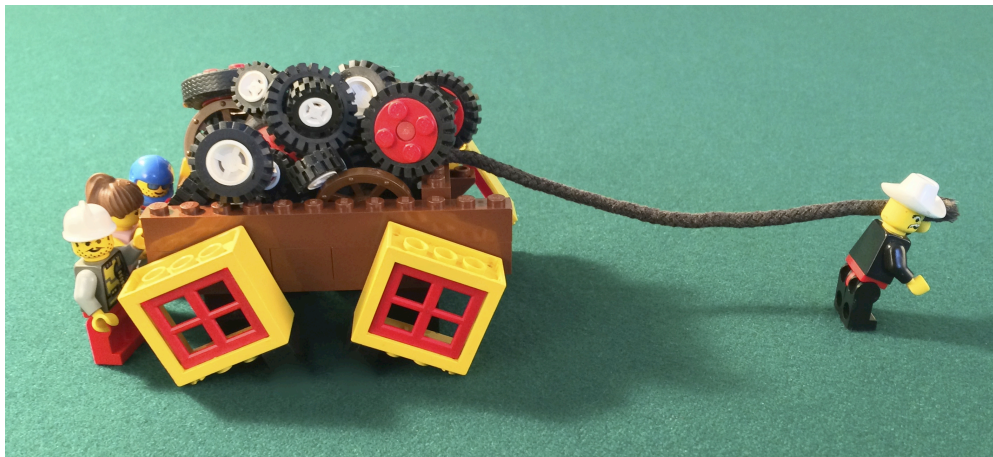
It is often our beliefs that make it difficult to see what is obvious and those beliefs and perceptions prevent us from improving.

Rolling forward...

Another reality is that we do not have to constantly invent ideas and frameworks. That takes energy and sometimes results in failure. On our journey forward, there are already others who may have done what we want to do or changed what we want to change. It is less about invention and more about discovery. With that in mind, let me share another metaphor and framework that others have found useful and that might be of benefit to you.

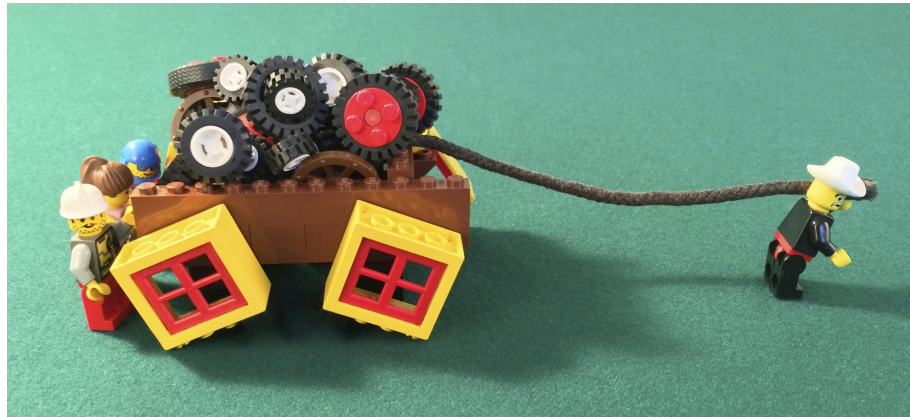
The framework is one of identifying the ideas that already exist and modeling the behavior of others. If we can identify the things that others are doing that might work for us, it might be a lot easier to make some improvements. No sense reinventing the wheel and learning through errors and mistakes if we can identify better ways that have already been proven.

To address some of these perceptual problems, let's use my most useful metaphor, called **Square Wheels One**. Many people work like the people below. Take a moment and consider this illustration:



So here they are, working hard and thumping along on **Square Wheels**. Note that the **ROUND WHEELS** already exist in the wagon. However, they continue to plod along as they have always done because these Square Wheels do work.

*After all, how would we know that we were making any progress
if things didn't go "Thump, Thump?"*



Some common thinking about this illustration:

- The **Square Wheels** can represent many things, including traditions and habits. Organizationally, they may represent processes and practices that do not work well or inter-departmental conflicts. They are the shared experiences of any organization that does not move smoothly forward. They increase costs of doing things and are inefficient and ineffective.
- The person in the front pulls forward but also gets isolated from the wagon itself and may not feel the thumps and bumps nor hear the talk at the back. Communication is hard. The view from the back is not very motivating and the pushers are somewhat blind to the future. The wagon can do the job, but it's difficult to turn; changing direction is always hard.
- Individually, the **Square Wheels** might represent the things we are so used to doing. They could just be preferences in how we approach job or home activities. What we have been doing works, but there might be more effective ways of doing things. But it is sometimes hard to see this. After all, we are making progress!
- And there is another paradox: We set our personal and organizational goals based on **Square Wheels**. And we can meet our goals if they are set this way! Lastly, over time, it becomes increasingly hard to stop and step back to look for new possibilities for doing things because we are working so hard to meet these goals!

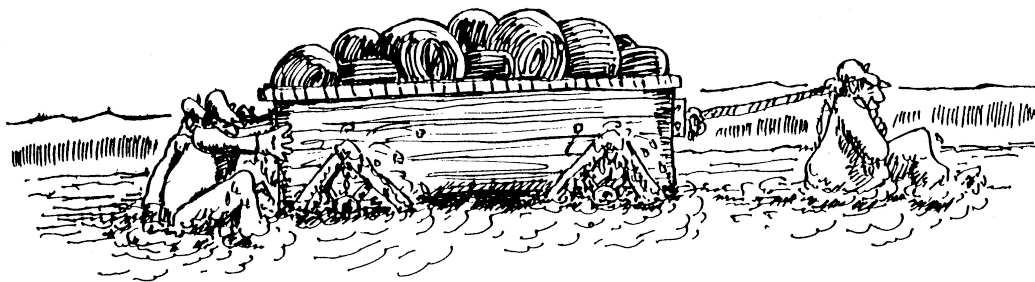
And to illustrate the power of diversity of thinking as we did with the caterpillars and butterflies, in our use of this image over the years, we've captured almost 300 different thoughts and themes about this one illustration! Some additional points include:

- Trust among team members is important for motivation and focused effort
- Communications between pullers and pushers is an obvious opportunity for improvement
- Shared visions and goals are crucial for shared effort and motivation
- Most organizations have difficulty in changing direction
- There is a constant need for teamwork and collaboration

- Continuous improvement and measurement of progress must occur because the round wheels of today will become square tomorrow
- Issues of cost and performance are always present
- Ideas for improvement already exist within the wagon

As we roll forward on **Square Wheels**, we become accustomed to the *Thump, Thump* of our journey. Yet change and improvement tend to be inevitable for most of us and for our organizations. The key is choice and perspective. The risk comes from not changing, from trying to maintain our status quo in the middle of a rapidly changing world.

But we've also learned that many organizations may operate, in reality, more like this -- up their axles in glop.



Lots of times, we work hard to make progress but we seem to be stuck in the ditch. And it is hard to really get a grip on what is happening to us. Progress is most difficult.

In other words,

Things are this way because they got this way and unless things change, things will continue to remain the same.

Recognize that in organizations, this "*yellow gooey sticky mess*" is similar to the politics, systems, processes, bureaucracy and general goop that commonly seems to get well-intentioned effort bogged down. The same things tend to occur in our family and personal lives, where our past experiences, expectations and cultural context seem to slow progress.

The wagon sinks up to its axles in this stuff, with the added reality that, "*It may not be a yellow gooey sticky mess - it may be cement.*"

Progress in our organizations might get stuck to the degree that all movement forward stops and the organization loses its' ability to survive. People may think that they have no alternatives and little opportunity.

**"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation
and go to the grave with the song still in them."**

Thoreau

Lots of people and organizations tend to be bogged down and not really making much progress. People seem to naturally avoid the "yellow, sticky, gooey mess" of personal development and change and the discomfort of having to deal with these things.

Yet this gooey mess is also at the core of the reality of transformation and change. It represents a problem as well as an opportunity. How?

There are people around us who are **not** bogged down and who are already doing things differently and better. In organizations, these exceptional performers work in the same environment but get much more accomplished than the average performers. These "Mud Managers" have different models and frameworks -- behavioral, mental and strategic -- that simply allow them to operate more efficiently and effectively. *They have made choices that are different than most.*

One key is getting out of the ditch and up on the road. It is not about doing things the same way and expecting to make improvements. It is about making different choices and transforming our selves to match with our potential.

What we need is vision, objectivity and perspective about where we stand and what is happening.

And people do have choices:

**"We could be standing at the top of the world instead
of sinking further down in the mud."**

Meatloaf, from his song, *"All revved up and no place to go."*

In the transformation of the caterpillar into the butterfly, the caterpillar constructs a cocoon and then undergoes an astounding transformational process, where the old "caterpillar" molecules actually chemically transform into "butterfly" molecules. They have to stop being caterpillars before they can possibly become butterflies -- and they actually become that yellow gooey sticky mess. But then they reassemble and become more than they were. They realize their inherent potential, something that all of us can do and something that most of us can support in others.

It involves accepting that we have potential...

"Caterpillars can fly, if they just lighten up!"

Each of us must be sensitive to our surroundings and look for things we might choose to do differently. And our friends, associates, coaches and leaders should be looking for opportunities to involve and engage others in gaining perspective and objectivity about their behavior and their organizations to make improvements occur. We need to ask questions, challenge "whee-ality" and search for a never-ending supply of Round Wheels to implement.

ROUND WHEELS are also a paradox, since they already exist within the wagons and yet not all are usable, since some may not have rims or tubes. And we also have to actually stop making progress, momentarily, to discover and mount the wheels that will work for us. In organizations, implementing improvements also causes shifts in resource utilization and systems and processes; as the wagon moves forward faster, it causes other pressures in other operations.

How about the World of Work?

The overwhelming global response to Scott Adams' Dilbert cartoons indicates there exists a perception in business today that things do not work smoothly, that lots of mud exists and that few in leadership positions appear to be listening. And change and improvement are paramount needs. Many statistics from a wide range of sources support a **Square Wheels** reality of how things work:

- A study by IBM and the Human Capital Institute (HCI) shows that while 84 percent of organizations know workforce effectiveness is important to achieving business results, only 42 percent of those surveyed say managers devote sufficient time to people management.

Below from Travis Bradberry's Foreword of The Impulse Factor and coauthor of The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book:

- In the workplace 83% of those high in self-awareness are top performers and just 2% of bottom performers are high in self-awareness.
- Just 36% of people possess an adequate amount of self-awareness, and 70% of folks are ineffective at handling conflict and stress.
- Only 35% of workers characterize the level of trust between senior management and employees as favorable. Little more than half of employees will recommend their own company as a good place to work, according to a survey of 9,100 people by Watson Wyatt. The perception is that other places offer better opportunities.
- Only 23% of those surveyed by Gallop for The Marlin Company said they are "extremely satisfied" with their work.
- In the Wyatt Company WorkUSA Surveys, they report things like this: most executives (88%) thought that employee participation was important to productivity yet only 30% say their companies do a good job of involving employees in decisions that affect them. Only 38% of employees report that their companies do a good job of seeking opinions and suggestions of employees, which has dropped since 1989. And even when opinions are sought, only 29% of employees say that the company does a good job of acting on those suggestions.
- Towers Perrin surveyed 250,000 workers at 60 companies and found only 48% thought their bosses listened to their ideas or acted upon them. That's a 3 percent

drop from the previous 3 years. And only 60% of employees think their bosses keep them well informed and only 32% feel management makes good and timely decisions.

- Just 38% of workers said the information needed to accomplish their duties is widely shared and only 36% feel their companies actively sought worker opinions.
- Kepner-Tregoe reported that their survey showed that two-thirds of managers and hourly workers estimate that their organizations use less than 50 percent of their collective smarts and when asked to select the barriers to thinking from a list of 13 possible causes, both managers and workers cited the same three causes: organizational politics, time pressures, and lack of involvement in decision-making.
- KT's research also said that a little over half the hourly workers, and 40 percent of the managers, stated that frequent second-guessing of their decisions created a disincentive to spend a lot of time thinking up solutions to job-related problems.
- Dale Carnegie & Associates (1992 in a study of 4000 American managers) produced the startling finding that only 46% give their best effort at work. Only 36% feel challenged by their jobs; 52% have not attained their personal objectives; and more than 43% feel trapped in their jobs."

From the CPP, Inc., Global Human Capital Report, "Workplace Conflict and How Businesses Can Harness It to Thrive" taken from Inside Training, 10/8/08:

- Managers think their conflict-management skills are better than their employees think they are, and may be costing U.S. companies upward of \$359 billion per year in manpower hours. Nearly one-third of all managers surveyed feel they're skilled at dealing with conflict but only a fifth of employees believe their manager deals with conflict well: Some 31 percent of managers believe they handle conflict well; 22 percent of non-managerial employees think their managers do a great job of sorting out disagreements; 43 percent of non-managerial employees believe their managers don't handle conflict as well as they should; and 23 percent of managers feel they don't handle conflict as well as they should.
- Among those who reported spending time dealing with conflict, 76 percent (81 percent in the U.S.) have seen desirable outcomes such as major innovations, better solutions, and increased motivation; 76 percent have seen conflict lead to a positive outcome; 41 percent have seen conflict lead to better understanding of others; and 29 percent have seen it lead to a better solution to a workplace problem.

Decades of consistent survey results indicate that there are *wheel*y many problems at hand in most workplaces and that an improved sense of involvement and engagement would pay great dividends. Many wagon pushers feel the problems at hand but few get the satisfaction from having things improved. But there is often little incentive for taking risks and making improvements. And it is not obvious that others in the organization are always listening to ideas or always willing to implement change.

We need leaders to take the time to discuss the possibilities for improvement and engage the energies of all of the people. This is a two-way street as we can ask for feedback as well as share ideas and best practices. It's not rocket science; it's about involvement focused on improving the task at hand. It should seem clear that the potential for improvement already exists, that there is a butterfly within each of us.

But some just may not see the potential for improvement or the need for change and some managers may not see their role as one of developing people. The statistics consistently show, however, that most people feel that improvements could be made if others would be more open and asking about the possibilities for improvement, **the Square Wheels are everywhere!**

A few more key points:

- Knowing "**The Answer**" will prevent you from seeking out other possibilities and ideas, limiting possibilities.
- Groups generate better ideas than individuals -- do things in teams of 5 to 7 people. Get support from others around you in any change initiatives.
- There are more ideas available than one might initially think. Play generates creativity and innovation. Pressure doesn't.
- Not all the good ideas are immediate or even obvious until a problem is discovered and discussed.

Another learning point is that a focus on the things that work but don't work well takes clear objectivity and perspective. We must stop pushing and pulling in order to get far enough away to see possibilities for improvement. This is especially tough to do when one's goals and objectives don't allow for much development time.

By paying attention to the **Square Wheels** and then paying attention to the perceived possibilities for improvement, we create a bit of cognitive dissonance or discomfort caused by a gap between the perception of how things are and how they could be. By becoming less comfortable with the current processes and more aware of what might be done, we are more likely to initiate changes and improvements.

There are no bad people in companies; there are just good people doing clunky things in poor systems. When you put people into a poorly functioning process, there is little chance that they will perform well. We must address the operational and motivational systems to engage and motivate people. And the people who have hands on experience only need perspective and support.

People will often resist change because they are comfortable with how things are, right now. By identifying **Square Wheels** and **ROUND WHEELS**, we increase discomfort with

the way things are now and we make change more likely. This relates to our simple Change Model, comprised of four factors,

- The current level of discomfort with the way things are now
- The attractiveness of the vision of the future
- The individual or groups previous success with change
- The peer support for making a change occur

By increasing any or all of them, we make change more likely.

Similarly, we use a simple model for analyzing and managing Roadblocks. There are four types, ranging from immovable (escalate up) to “the ones you’ve heard of that must be true.” By allowing groups to brainstorm and list roadblocks and then analyze them, the group can decide which to escalate and which to handle.

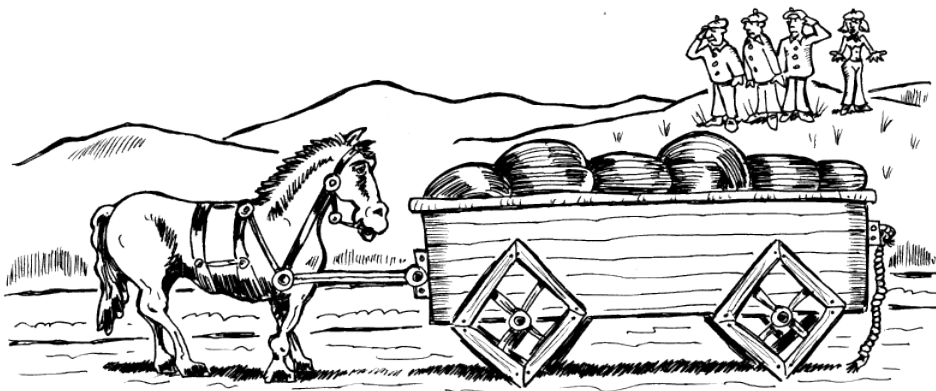
To some degree, most people are un-empowered, allowing roadblocks that are real or perceived to get in their way. The reality, however, is that they expect things to change while they keep doing things the same way. My belief is that our tools can help management to remove those things that get in the way (dis-un-empowerment) and generate peer support for change and improvement and the sharing of best practices through improved teamwork. (A number of tools are available on our website for this purpose – www.performancemanagementcompany.com)

The **problem** with performance improvement and dis-un-empowerment is that many people don't "buy into the program." Issues of trust and past history often factor into this causing people to feel that things really won't improve or that their efforts may not be recognized and appreciated.

Many people don't have a positive experience with attempts to make changes and improvements. And they do NOT get the support of others around them.

Let's illustrate with a test that might be interesting for you. You could also try it with someone else.

Take 2 minutes and consider identifying four or five key points in the following illustration:



Consider the above – what is going on / what is this about. Think of some themes and ideas – maybe six of them before reading on...

The name of the cartoon is **Trial and Error**. And it is about how change and improvements occur. And if you are reading this without considering your reactions to the illustration, stop and please consider.

If you are like most people in our sessions, you will generate a number of ideas about what is wrong and what they should have done and few about what they have done or are doing positively. The actual ratio of negative to positive is greater than **16 : 1** and we've tested this worldwide in all sorts of organizational cultures with very similar results.

Some of the common ones include: they aren't working on the problem, the horse is before the cart, horses won't push like that, they should see the problem but they don't, they missed the Square Wheels completely, and they are about to run off and stop working.

Continuous continuous improvement is an ongoing process, is accomplished by trial and error and requires perspective and reflection. But, too often, we are quick to put a "**Blame Frame**" on things and presume, with our leadership and expertise, that we would not have made such simple errors and omissions.

But horses will push carts when trained and motivated (hang a carrot in front of it!) and a great many potential ideas for improvement will always exist that can be implemented or modified. As Max DePree said:



**"We cannot become what we want to be
by remaining what we are."**

If everyone is focused on what people should have or might have done, this feedback to others will be seen as non-supporting and negative. The effort that was taken to try to do things differently would be punished rather than rewarded – we make change less likely. This "*constructive criticism*" is not constructive and will not support *continuous* continuous improvement.

A team approach generates the pooled, collective knowledge needed to solve real problems as well as provide the synergy and consensus as to where to generate results. Peer pressure can be focused on improvements if we can engage the team in a bit of reflection. Leadership provides the power and support to the implementation -- but they must follow through and do something to recognize any improvements.

Quality, for example, is a people thing. A cross-functional team with a few skills, a mission and vision, and a bit of empowerment from management can generate the objectivity, perspective, collective knowledge and support to make real improvements in systems and processes, the root solution to the quality issue. And by getting people involved in the solution, they become equity owners of the process and we do things with them rather than to them.

Improving service quality is often an issue of leadership and recognition. Organizations have a real need to implement change. But the dynamics involved are complicated, and yet simple. You would all agree that motivation comes from people who take pride in results, with pride being a strong natural reinforcer of behavior.

The impact of putting **The Blame Frame** around less than perfect attempts to improve will stifle improvement. We naturally generate defensiveness or defense instead of change and we punish innovation while we demand improvement. And then we wonder why people do not feel self-actualized and intrinsically motivated. All of us can support improvement of others!

Intrinsic motivation, then, comes from something like this:



Most people already have the **ROUND WHEELS** within their grasp but, because of negative self-talk, constructive criticism, past performance evaluations focused on the negative and other typical work dynamics, we may not recognize them. Getting a test back in school, for example, was an experience of seeing all of our wrong answers highlighted and marked in red. Making an improvement is inherently motivating!

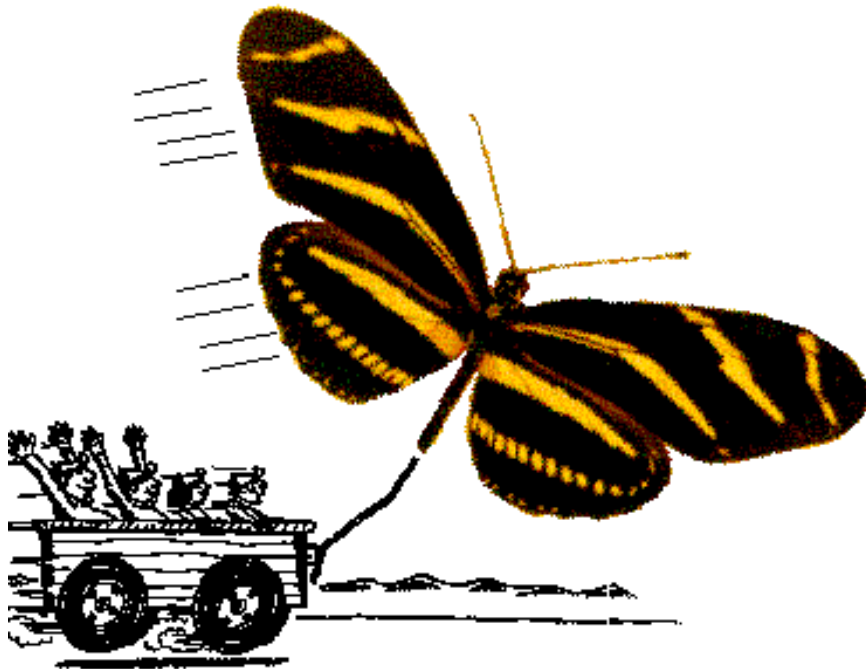
**This focus on the negative does not work to bring out the positive.
Focusing on the negative only brings out the negative!**

Performance coaching and personal improvement should address the positives of the situation, seeing that continuous improvement is continuous. There is a need for objectivity and perspective combined with management support. But because of people's focus on personal issues, politics and pettiness, many do not get feedback that focuses on the things that could be done to correct and improve our results.

We can't really focus on developing human capital and achieving highest potential if we treat people in ways that diminish self-esteem and limit opportunities. The only way to achieve high performance is to engage the best energies of the people within the organization. And they already exist - the challenge is to unleash them from within.

So, if we want people to fly, we've got to look at what influences their initiative and performance and get them involved and engaged.

We need to allow people to try new things and experiment with the systems and processes. By hooking things up in a new way, we can often generate that creative spark and innovation that will make a long-term fundamental improvement. Consider what you can do to have more fun and generate new ideas for change.



"Given the right circumstances, from no more than dreams, determination, and the liberty to try, quite ordinary people consistently do extraordinary things."

Dee Hock, founder of VISA International

"Never doubt that a small, committed group of people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

God gives every bird his worm, but he does not throw it into the nest.

Swedish proverb

Summary:

There are lots of possibilities for improvement. There are so many ideas that are already in the wagon and already used by so many other people. It does not require a lot of creativity or even the invention of new ideas or processes, since these ideas often already exist.

The key is perspective and vision. It is about getting people to "step back from the wagon" and consider possibilities.



If you are looking for **The Answer** on issues of personal and organizational change, recognize that there is probably no good simple answer. No one is that smart and every situation is different. There are too many conflicting factors and individual differences to do anything but coach and support.

At the same time, the best practices and unimplemented ideas are already in the wagon, needing only some way to recognize and implement them. There are a lot of workable and even proven ideas that can be used by you and the people you support. We just need a more effective approach to sharing these ideas and implementing change.

Our journey forward is often marked by limitations, but numerous possibilities already exist for improvement.

Scott Simmerman

Whatever you do, don't simply keep pushing!

Scott Simmerman

So, let's choose to focus on becoming more than what we are and becoming more like the butterfly. It is the diversity of thinking and perspective that gives us the opportunity to continue to see things in different ways. And we need to keep focused on the future. Each of us has the potential within us to fly, even though we all are different, so long as we continue to focus on improvement.

We are limited in vision and processes, but we can always push for improvements.

Scott Simmerman

You cannot empower. You CAN Dis-Un-Empower.

You can help remove the roadblocks.

Most employees say, "Can't" but really CAN.

Go to the people

Learn from them

Love them

Start with what they know

Build on what they have

But of the best leaders

When their task is accomplished

Their work is done

The people will remark:

"We have done it ourselves."

2000 Year Old Chinese Saying

"Blessed are we who can laugh at ourselves, for we shall never cease to be amused."

Author Unknown

"Don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy."

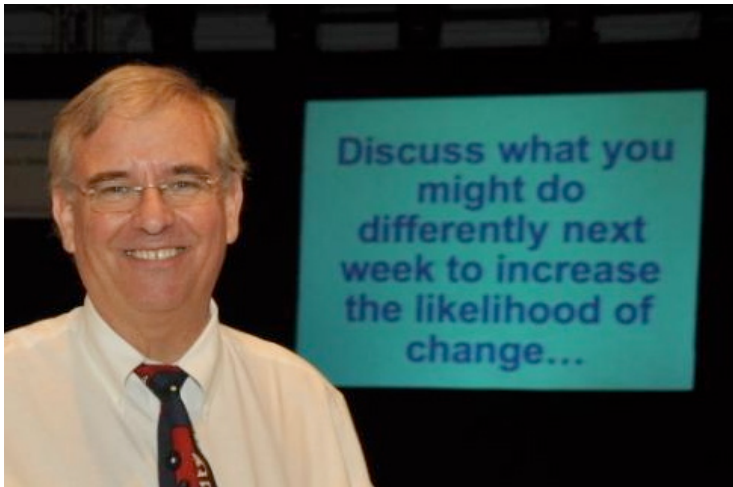
The Eagles, "Take It Easy"

Even Caterpillars can fly, if they would just lighten up.

Scott Simmerman

So, I challenge each of you to look for ideas for improvement and make a difference in your wagons.

Your **ROUND WHEELS already exist. *Use Them.***



For the **FUN** of It!

Scott J. Simmerman, Ph.D.

Reach us at:

Performance Management Company
3 Old Oak Drive
Taylors, SC 29687 USA
864-292-8700
864-292-6222 (FAX)
email: scott@squarewheels.com

© Performance Management Company, 1995 - 2012. All rights reserved.
Square Wheels® in a registered servicemark of Performance Management Company.

Much more information and other resources are available on our websites:

Go to www.SquareWheels.com or to www.performancemanagementcompany.com for information about our products and services

[Go here for information about Facilitation, Change and Leadership Communications Tools.](#)

[Go here for more information on managing and leading change.](#)

You can see a variety of short videos on our products and how to use them at our [YouTube site at PMC864](#)

And have a most interesting and engaging time using these ideas and consider purchasing some of our inexpensive support materials!

Dis-Un-Empowerment - A Definition and Explanation

This is a word I coined out of frustration as well as need. Too often, I saw managers give up on trying to empower their people, feeling that their best efforts were not going to work. But the basic concept was so important for customer service and innovation. So, I came up with a more actionable model, where I define **Dis-Un-Empowerment** as follows:

The act of removing perceived or actual roadblocks so that more things get done. Often, a task of management or someone perceived as a leader / one with influence. Alternatively, a self-propelled personal improvement process.

Realize that it is next to impossible to "empower" someone, although the word is bandied about lots in the service improvement paradigms. (Read also Scott Adams' Dilbert materials for examples).

You can provide opportunity and you can provide a supportive environment and guidelines for performance and behavior but you cannot give someone power to perform. You can help them better manage the roadblocks they face and do a better job of analyzing their realities.

Senator Bobby Kennedy's directive: *"Question initial assumptions."*

Most people, because of past experiences and life history, are generally not "empowered." More often, they are un-empowered; they have had their power removed or constricted by others in the past or present. It is extraordinarily difficult to "empower" someone. Alternatively, it is a **LOT** (read that "a great deal") easier to remove one's perceived roadblocks. Interestingly, people who get less done will have a longer list of these impediments than high-performing people.

You can do this yourself and help others to better manage roadblocks. We sell a great toolkit on [Roadblock Management](#). You can also search for "dis-un-empowerment" and dis-un-engagement" on Google or Bing to find my latest blog posts and articles and tools. I am also building a Dis-Un-Engagement Toolkit, with similar thinking about performance.

Most of these butterfly and moth pictures compliments of John Snyder at Furman University's Lepidoptera Exhibit. Thanks, John!

Who is Dr. Scott Simmerman?

Scott is Managing Partner of Performance Management Company and a consistently top-rated presenter on a variety of organizational effectiveness issues using these tools for performance improvement, facilitation, engagement and motivation.

You can see more information about these products by visiting his websites, www.SquareWheels.com and <http://www.ScottSimmerman.com>.

Products and services are available at www.PerformanceManagementCompany.com

And we encourage you to call – He is easily reached at 864-292-8700

Presentations are highly interactive, entertaining, practical and very highly-rated by diverse audiences worldwide. The cartoons can be effectively applied to learning situations of almost all types and Scott sells many different toolkits and exercises for these purposes.

Performance Management Company publishes and distributes toolkits and team building / leadership games to consultants and trainers worldwide. Current clients include a global mix of Fortune 100 clients and multinational organizations as well as small organizations and independent consultants.

Users of his materials include managers, trainers and leaders of organizations of all types, globally, and include thousands of consultants and trainers.

Scott has been presenting new ideas to management on performance improvement for over 20 years, engaging audiences worldwide on capitalizing on human potential to impact long-term performance improvement and profitability. He combines a bottom-line viewpoint with a strong focus on maximizing human capital. Reactions to his themes and ideas are strongly positive even though they are often provocative.



Since he started sharing **Square Wheels**, he's delivered workshops, retreats and seminars in 38 countries including India, UK, South Africa, Egypt, Malaysia, Trinidad, Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, The Philippines, Saudi Arabia, The Netherlands, Denmark, Korea, Sweden, Belgium, UAE, Mexico, Bahrain, Portugal, Canada and other places.

Scott was born in New Jersey in 1948 and attended Allegheny College (Meadville, PA), got a Master's Degree from Iowa State University and completed his doctorate in Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He remains a most avid Tar Heel fan.

In 1978, after teaching two years at Furman University, he consulted with Edward J. Feeney Associates for three years, working with client organizations including First Chicago, Bell of Pennsylvania, Borden's and a very diverse group of other organizations. Since that time, he has taught courses for a number of other universities as well as attending hundreds of presentations at conferences and educational institutions as well as maintaining an active training and consulting business.

Scott moved to Los Angeles in early 1981, taking a position as internal consultant and human resources manager for The Home Silk Shops, a chain of retail fabric stores and where he became quite active in the training community. At the end of this consulting project, he was hired as Senior Vice President of Operations for The Warehouse, a large chain of music / video stores based in Los Angeles with operations in 6 states and whose president was a good friend of his former employer.

In 1984, Scott moved back to Greenville, SC to start Performance Management Company and focus on service quality improvement. Current business development has expanded into the publishing and distribution business and they now actively support a large network of consultants and trainers worldwide.

Scott and his ex-wife Joan have been successfully operating a two-person global company, celebrating its 28th anniversary this year, and continuing to develop their virtual business philosophy that allows for travel, impact and entertainment.

Performance Management is a home-based company owned by Scott and Joan with manufacturing and distribution affiliates worldwide. The main business is publishing, with Scott authoring a number of powerpoint-based presentations using **Square Wheels** illustrations as well as **The Search for The Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine** - a high-impact team building simulation proven with audiences worldwide. He is author of **Seven Seas Quest** and **The Collaboration Journey**, one of his **Square Wheels** games. Other products are being released and many of these are translated into other languages.

Dr. Simmerman is on the faculty of Furman University's Center for Corporate and Professional Development and he received recognition as a Certified Professional Facilitator from the International Association of Facilitators.

PMC collaborates and supports a vast network of consultants and has exclusive business relationships with a number of companies in specific countries. Please feel free to contact him or visit his websites for more information or if you have an interest in working with him in some collaborative venture.