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**CHANGE
MANAGEMENT**
E D I T I O N

JENIFER NAMESTKA,
CEO

**FINDING
THE MISSING
LINKS IN
CHANGE
MANAGEMENT**

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**COVER
STORY**

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Martin H Fisher, famous for his teachings on the practice of medicine, once said, “Diagnosis is not the end, but the beginning of practice.”

During a consultation, a doctor’s first question to a patient usually is, “What’s the problem?” to which the patient replies: “My arm hurts,” or “I have a breathing difficulty.” The doctor, rather than taking their observations at face value, conducts several tests to identify the root cause of the problem and comes up with an apt remedy—that’s where the cure lies.

Jenifer Namestka, a specialist in the change management space, uses an approach similar to a doctor’s diagnosis to explore some of the change mechanisms in the corporate space today. “Often, when a client mentions a pain point, they only speak about the problem on a surface level,” she says. Many consulting agencies fail to address the deeper issues, and hence, the ‘diagnosis’ stays off-target and doesn’t achieve sustainable results. She continues, “I envisioned going beyond the conventional approach, and that started me on my own path in the change management world.”

Cranking the Change Engine

Jenifer’s corporate journey began in 2000 in a boutique consulting firm. Throughout the decade, she participated, learned, and experienced the change management processes of

FINDING THE MISSING LINKS IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT

By Alex Gonsalves



TOP 10
CHANGE MANAGEMENT
CONSULTING/SERVICE COMPANIES - 2020

44
THE SECRET
SAUCE TO
ACHIEVING
SUSTAINABLE
CHANGE LIES IN
GETTING THE
LEADERSHIP TO
BUY IN ON THE
CHANGE



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big and small organizations first-hand, which awakened her to the nuances in the field. Her career path took her through tech giants and exposed her to the various work cultures and mechanisms within those organizations.

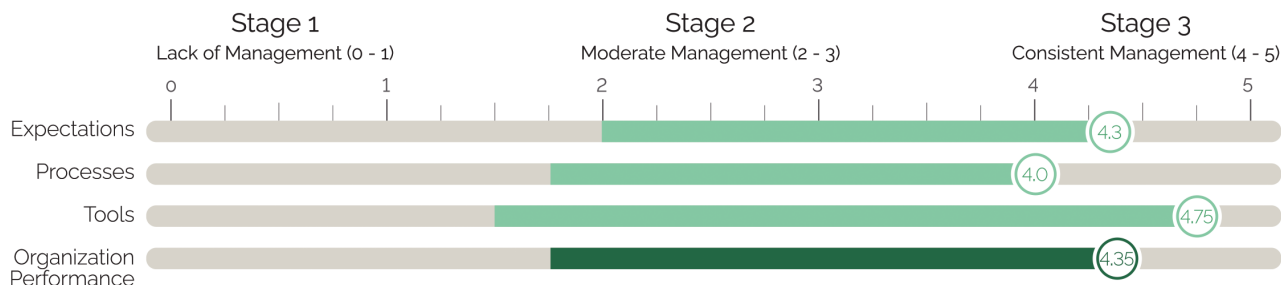
Along the way, she realized that the ‘change management engines’ in the corporate landscape lacked the ability to go beyond the ‘symptoms’ and identify the ‘root cause.’ There was a need for programs that could diagnose organizations at a deeper level and

The primary goal of Avo is to bridge the gap that exists in organizational workspaces today. Often, the working environment and culture perceived by the leadership team may not be precise; the reality might be vastly different. And the main reason for this is the lack of honest discourse between the employee and leadership teams, which contributes to declining morale and innovation. This gap is now getting exacerbated further by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is adding more chaos to the organizational



PERFORMANCE MATURITY MODEL

Applied during a change initiative to measure gap between current and desired management levels. Informs strategies to address the gap.



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implement sustainable change management strategies. According to Jenifer, such programs would require two primary components: a genuine understanding of an organization’s workflow and the utilization of meaningful measurement techniques to track success. Acting on this realization, in 2011, Jenifer turned her back on the conventional consulting arena and placed all stakes on her brand-new company, Avo Solutions.

Fast forward to 2020; Avo Solutions is an expert consulting agency developing proven strategies, managing program execution, and spearheading organizational transformation. Bringing her experience of managing over 250 clients in various sectors (government, non-profit, SMB, Fortune 100) across the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, and Africa has culminated into a comprehensive suite of world-class consulting and service offerings.

“Thanks to the flexibility and adaptability at Avo, I have the freedom to get into the trenches with my clients, guiding them from the program implementation phase to the final operational stage,” says Jenifer. Along with her team, she is able to conduct candid discourse regarding their pain points without the constraints that come with large firms, and in doing so, Avo undertakes focused ‘diagnosis,’ which leads to tangible results.

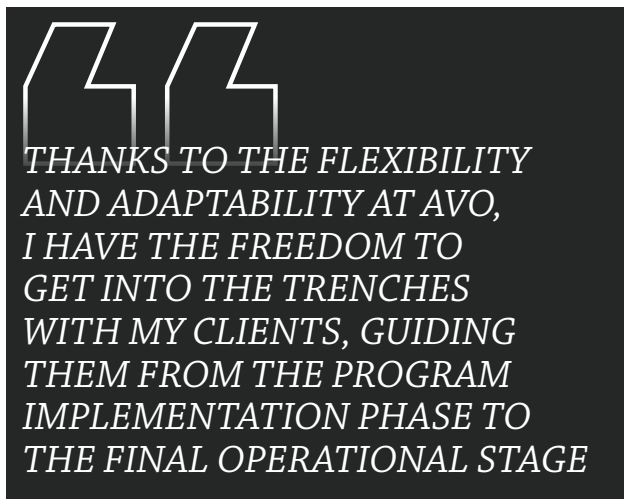
Transitioning to a Distributed Workforce

setup. Especially with virtualization, organizations are inevitably changing how employees communicate, engage, and manage their workflows.

When companies are undergoing this transition, it is crucial to facilitate a controlled shift, which begins with setting up a well-planned change management program. When the pandemic hit, the existing employee behavior and workforce processes started moving into a state of flux—and this, surprisingly, brought in a more favorable time to initiate a change management program within companies. Riding on this bandwagon, Avo is more than ready right now to help companies traverse through this paradigm shift by aligning the goals of employees with that of the organization. “When there is genuine engagement from employees, it results in exponential success rates, and we achieve this by capturing the key performance metrics, responding to early program acceptance or resistance, and delivering measurable results,” says Jenifer.

Change is Acquired through Introspection

The key to real change lies in finding the link or acknowledging the interconnectedness between different factors in an organization. “It is often challenging to delve beyond the surface layers of what is really needed. Organization can not achieve their KPIs without first navigating the change path and defining the factors that tie



into making change successful,” she says.

Change management is an essential factor that allows organizations to identify the behaviors that will support the business objectives or KPIs. “The secret sauce to achieving sustainable change lies in getting the leadership to buy in on the change,” notes Jenifer. So, although Avo starts by defining the behaviors that support the training and the communication aspects, it all boils down to the leadership and their role in reinforcing positive behaviors in the workplace. “To make it all a seamless affair for clients, I listen to them, understand their mechanisms, and design our packages according to their varying requirements

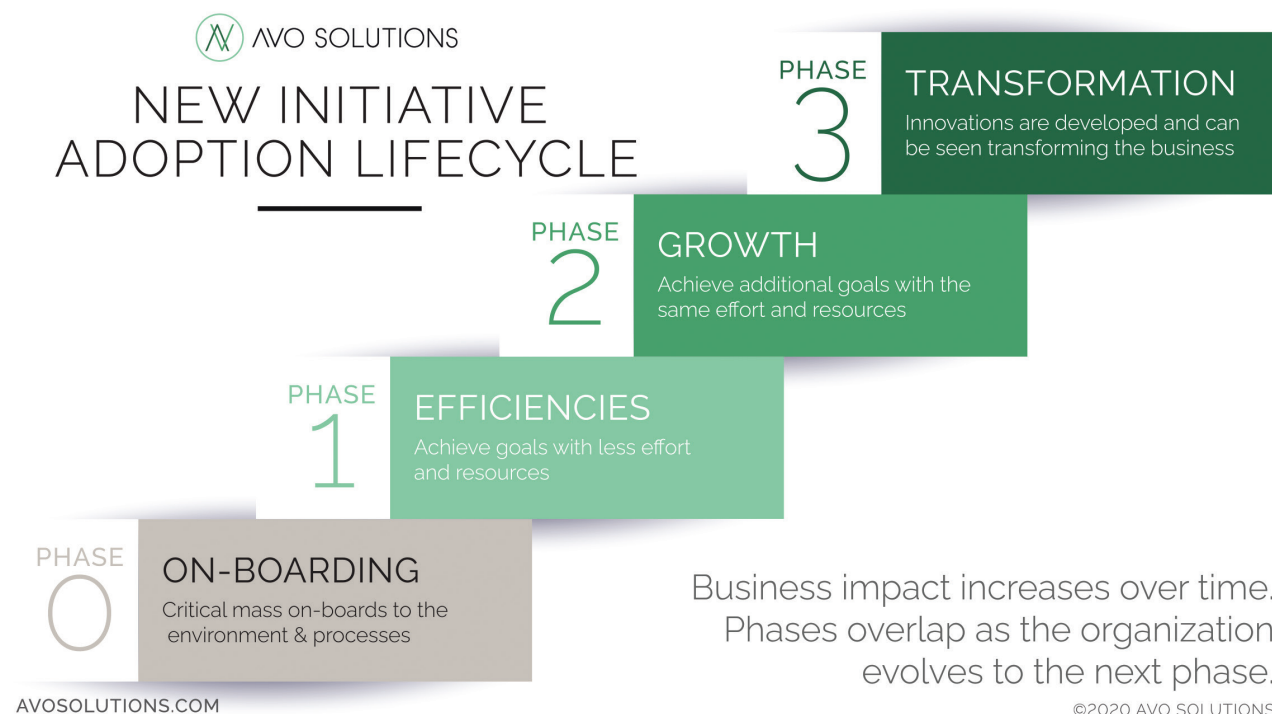
so that our solutions are nimble enough to address their unique challenges,” says Jenifer.

The Three Models of Sustainable Change

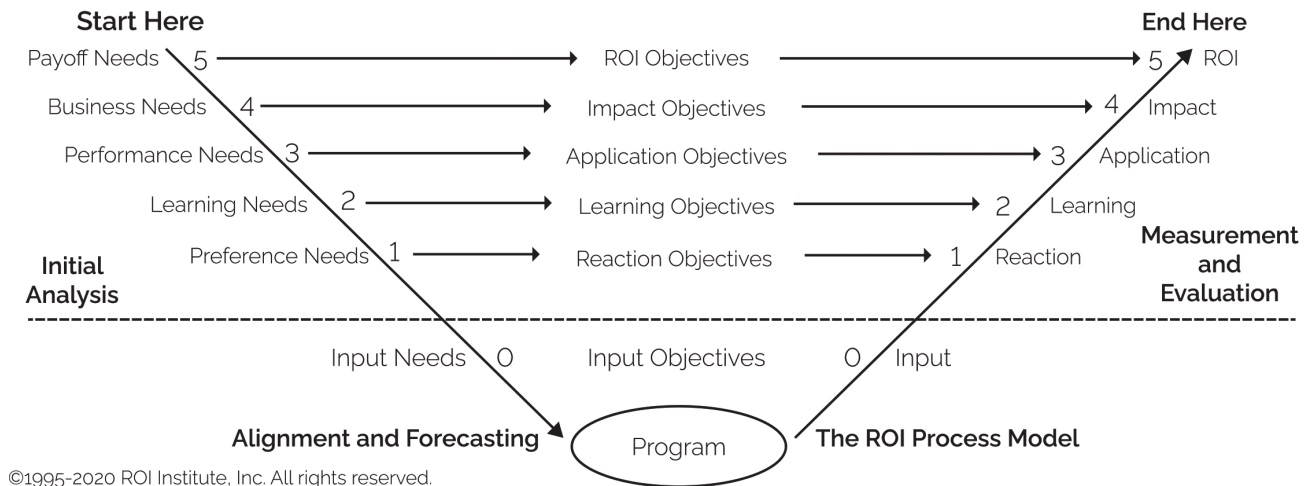
Avo achieves change using its three greatest weapons: Business Alignment Model (by ROI Institute), Avo’s Performance Maturity Model, and Avo’s New Initiative Adoption Lifecycle. Jenifer and her team use the Business Alignment Model as a foundational tool, which seamlessly aligns experience, training and communication, and behaviors to the KPIs while enhancing the program’s overall effectiveness. A huge differentiator in this model, according to Jenifer, is that it helps Avo target the essential behaviors often overlooked during change management.

Avo’s Performance Maturity Model, on the other hand, is based on Carnegie Mellon University’s Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI). The Performance Maturity Model is used to measure how well the organization is managing specific expectations or behaviors, processes, and tools needed to drive KPIs. The measurements are conducted quarterly, and it provides Avo with a tangible ‘snapshot’ of the organization’s progress. The tactical approach employed through this model ensures engagement at various levels of the client organization, successfully transferring the ownership of change from Avo on to the client, and thus, facilitating sustainable progress within the organization.

Finally, Avo’s New Initiative Adoption Life Cycle is used to tie-in all aspects, all the way from on-boarding to final



THE BUSINESS ALIGNMENT MODEL



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transformation. The model, based on Geoffrey Moore's *Crossing the Chasm*, was developed to track the adoption of a new initiative's behaviors, tools, and processes in an organization. Avo leverages the model to manage client expectations with adoption maturity and to achieve KPIs. It gives clients a clear picture of their wins and how their program has evolved. Through this model, the maturity of the programs can be easily tracked while targeting the key areas that need additional change.

Guiding New Implementations to Success

According to Jenifer, implementing a new program or technology doesn't mean an organization automatically starts achieving growth without going through the essential change mechanisms. A case in point is a multinational technology company that had incorporated an Enterprise 2.0 program for a target audience of over 17,000 people. However, the newly launched Collaboration 2.0 platform did not achieve the expected business value and became a barrier to performance. That was when they decided to seek the help of Avo Solutions. Avo realized that the initiative would benefit from integrating an influencer program to deliver localized and meaningful adoption. The company leveraged a bottom-up approach using highly-engaged influencers to drive adoption tasks and provide feedback for improvement. Using the collaboration adoption model and suitable organizational change management programs, Avo facilitated the re-engineering of business processes to achieve desired outcomes and meet the requirements for an integrated social collaboration platform. As a result, the client achieved a 380 percent adoption goal for the first year, with 105 percent training satisfaction on knowledge transfer goals.

Behind the Wheels of Avo

This success story, among many others, has been made possible by Jenifer and her team's unique work approach that is unlike

most agencies in the corporate space. The CEO herself wields an unassuming yet friendly disposition, which makes her instantly connect with most people. "Over the years, I have learned to listen more than to speak," she says. This has helped her to forge excellent relationships with clients and understand them on a personal level. Her unique character is complemented by her honest and straightforward take on matters, which have helped many clients seek her advice and let go of the programs holding the client's business back.

Jenifer's genial yet disciplined approach can be seen in Avo's unique work culture also. Avo, derived from the Hebrew word *Avodah*, translates to work and service. "We aren't the stars of the show, but we are there to serve the clients," she affirms. The only criticism one can receive at Avo is if they refuse to seek help from their colleagues when they need it and end up delivering a lower standard than what is expected of them. "The clients won't know the difference, but we will, and that is something my team and I have little tolerance for," she states.

Setting the Course for Success

Owing to its dedication and loyalty, Avo experienced phenomenal growth in 2019 and is planning to maintain that with well-placed strategies. Moving forward on its path of sparking sustainable development, Avo has begun to expand their network by adding more strategic partnerships with small, minority, and disabled veteran owned businesses. By 2021, the company plans to extend its capabilities to the federal government while enhancing its internal mechanisms. Further down the path, by 2022, Avo will be ready to cement its position among Fortune 1000 companies as a strategic consulting partner. "Work isn't created just to add hours, but to create value. Avo doesn't nickel and dime our clients, but leaves behind robust assets that create value, even after the engagement is complete," concludes Jenifer. **HR**