

# *A dinner series*

How to transform an  
organisation while  
keeping it ticking along

December 2012







*In March 2012 we kicked off a series of dinners. Organised with the support of Carole Stone from YouGovStone we brought together a group of senior leaders, who had never met, from industries with, on the surface, very little in common and posed the question:*

*How do you transform an organisation while keeping it ticking along?*

*We got a series of frank and candid conversations, illustrated by powerful stories and connected by one key thread:*

*It's all about the people*

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*To date, the dinners have been very successful. We would like to extend the invite to other partners to invite their clients to our upcoming dinners in early 2013. The dates and who to contact for more information can be found on the final page of this document.*

*PwC Partners who have attended the dinners so far include: Steve Beet, Yann Bondulle, Andy Ford, Tina Hallet and Craig Hamer*

# What did we learn?

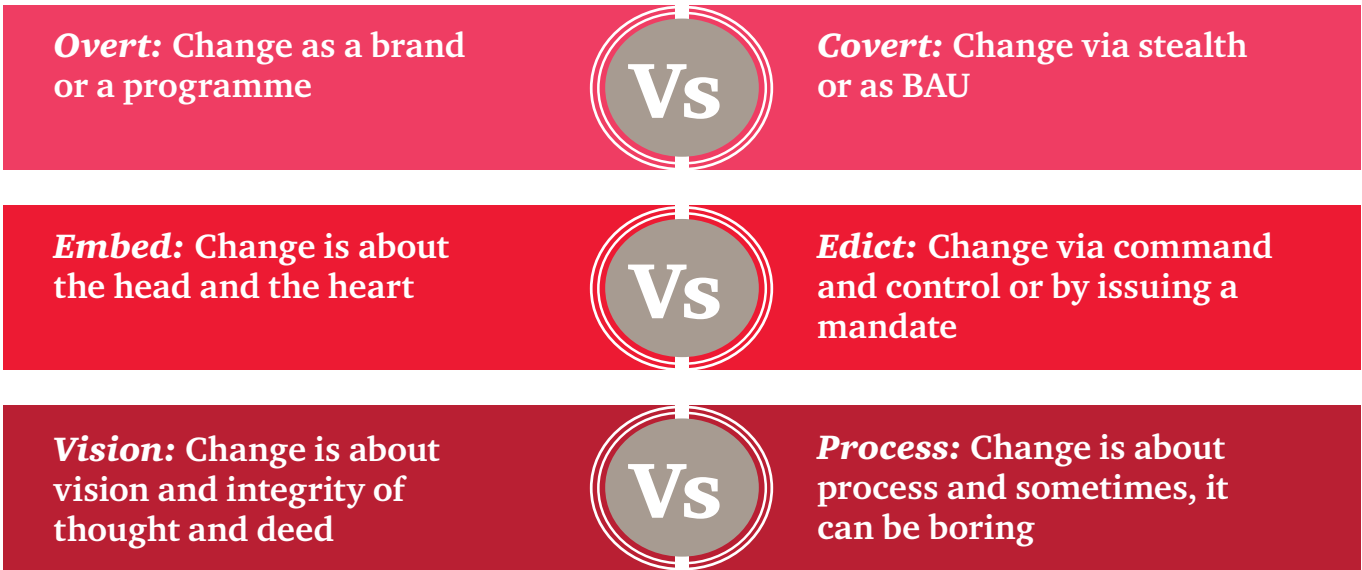
We learned a great deal from the discussions that took place at each of the dinners. With some the findings, complimentary and others contradictory. But this is to be expected. The way we approach change and our readiness or reticence to change varies based on our previous experiences of change and overlaid with our understanding of why change takes place at a specific point in time for the organisation and its people.

The contradictions and similarities in the discussions serve to illustrate this point. They also reminds us that there is much to be learned from the experiences of others, there is no one best practice, benchmarked way to transform an organisation.

The best approach is likely to come from a good understanding of the activities required for a specific organisation to support specific people through a specific transition that is flexible enough to take into account:

Environmental factors	The type of change
Experience of the current leadership team	The style of the organisation
The readiness of the organisation to change	The reason for the change

Below we have highlighted some of the points of contradiction that arose from the dinners. Most of these points of contradiction are common sticking points for change initiatives.



## Having said this, there are just some things that you have to do as part of any change



The detailed notes from each dinner can be found on the following pages.



## *What we heard – Dinner one March 2012*

The notes from the first dinner, grouped around how to launch, maintain and close a change program have been provided below

### *Launching a change programme*

#### *Where to start?*

In many organisations, front line staff live in the present. They are not naturally so interested in and motivated by longer term planning. Against that backdrop, how do you start the change discussion? How can you create the appetite for change?

#### *Clear direction from the top*

One view was that strong messages and leadership from the top can make a big difference. The worst part is often the uncertainty around 'Is it happening or not?' If a clear direction mapping out the journey is set from the top, the debate then moves from the what to the how, which is typically a much better place to be.

A variation on this is to define the money available to spend and then focus the change programme on generating the maximum value/quality from that spend. The emphasis therefore changes from cost cutting to value maximising, which can create more buy in and support.

In the NHS, the change programmes became clinically led. In 'intelligent' organisations, there are bright people who know what needs fixing and can therefore be given a larger role.

In other kinds of organisations, a more centrally driven/imposed approach can be more effective. The risk of course is that a top down approach will squash good ideas coming up through the organisation.

#### *'Find me a crisis'*

'Find me a crisis on which to hang this change programme' is a view that others have seen in the past. What is the killer fact which means we have to change?

There needs to be some dissatisfaction with the status quo. If required, work hard to raise the dissatisfaction ('Raise the D') and then create an attractive destination which the change programme enables.

#### *Much more than cost*

Cost alone is rarely a strong enough motivation for change. In many cases, companies are looking to offshore back office functions because they recognise the opportunity to professionalise these functions and raise standards, staff motivation and quality, as well as reduce costs.

So it's vital to identify metrics which get to the heart of what you are trying to achieve – which are not purely financial.

#### *Changing culture quickly*

In one public sector organisation, for the first time, people who did not meet their budgets were fired. As a result, the culture of overspending very quickly changed. There was a very deliberate centralisation as common standards and disciplines were defined to be applied across the organisation. The next stage was to empower people out at the periphery of the organisation as much as possible, within the parameters of these common standards and disciplines. Morale and performance both soared.



# Maintaining momentum

## The power of symbolism, images and stories

Symbolism, images and stories can create a step change in the energy and momentum of a change programme.

‘Why does Lloyds still make a rice pudding that nobody eats?’ The traditional rice pudding produced each day by the bank’s caterers came to represent all of the bank’s long established business practices which were fit for purpose once but no longer made sense.

KPMG, when they were going through their merger, created a visual representation of the change that was going on behind the scenes by transforming the foyer of their London offices. The physical changes created a more vivid impression of change for its employees, which in turn kick started a programme which was at risk of drifting.

Another example of a small event which acted as a powerful catalyst for change was an interview that a well known BBC journalist did with the Prince of Wales. At the time, BBC online was struggling to attract top talent, which saw more prestige from TV or Radio work. The Prince commented that he had read an article that the journalist had posted online. This in itself raised the profile and prestige of news content on BBC online and started to change perceptions within the journalistic community.

## Planning for key influencers and blockers

One other topic which was raised in this area was the importance of identifying and planning for key influencers and blockers, who could derail, slow down or dilute the programme. There were two key priorities here: first, to focus on trying to find personal wins for them; and second, to focus on getting the right 80% of the people onside. You can survive having 20% of the group opposing change, as long as all of the key influencers and blockers are within the 80% who are supportive.

## Overt vs. covert

It is also interesting to compare approaches which are covert and smaller scale, with those which are overt and larger scale. There are certainly benefits of using ‘control experiments’ – testing change ideas and initiatives with different business units on a smaller scale to test the waters before trying to go wider.

Stealth can be very dangerous – if it dawns on the business at some point what is really going on. But covert does not imply dishonesty – it is all about finding the right entry point. And if your preferred approach is overt, you certainly need to plan very carefully and do your diligence before you announce the change programme.

## Different messaging for different groups

Getting the messaging right for different groups and communities is also critical. For creatives, the messaging might focus on the ability to reinvest the savings that are obtained in producing creative content. Messaging which talks in terms of change and cost savings is less compelling and engaging than messaging which emphasises growth, creative opportunities, quality etc.

The underlying culture of the organisation undoubtedly plays an important role. Companies which have a very clear financial culture are probably at an advantage in this regard.

## Older ≠ bolder

Situations in which senior management, the key decision makers, are close to retirement are a particular challenge, as the leaders of the organisation don’t have the motivation for change. In this case, it comes back to finding a way to precipitate the crisis, bringing so much pressure to bear that it triggers a radical rethink.

Where you have leaders who block, who don’t believe things can be done, the only solution is to change them.

There is some evidence that advancing age can be a difficulty here. As business people age, it appears that their desire for, and ability to, change tail off.

## Balancing pace with risk

Rolling out change across an organisation – there are plenty of examples where roll outs seem to take forever. But equally expanding too quickly brings the risk of problems and failures, which can quickly undermine the success of and commitment to the programme.

## The role of consultants

How can external consultants play a role here? The best consultants are senior, personal trainers – they don’t do change to an organisation. They can also bring

the ideas that the organisation has missed – this is the gold dust, of much higher value than managing the change process. They can also bring much needed impartiality, experience and credibility. They can help the sponsor build the case for change with external independent evidence.

The other key is for the objectives and remuneration of consultants to be fully aligned with the objectives of the organisation.

# Declaring victory

The wealth of discussion on the previous two topics meant that the time available to discuss this third topic was brief.

## Always or never?

Two contrasting views were expressed:

Declare small victories as early as possible to make the benefits of change tangible and to show that change is not just words, but is already happening. Boost your ability to declare victories early by involving your best people early on in the programme.

**vs.**

Never declare victory! Always be ready to set the next target, continuously stretch the organisation. Change should be a constant process (with periods of varying intensity) rather than something which is only done when the organisation is in trouble.

## Horses for courses

Different skill sets come to the fore at different stages in a change programme. Some people are great at starting the ball rolling; others are stronger at embedding change further down the track. Bear this in mind when assembling your change team.



## *What we heard – Dinner two May 2012*

In the spirit of the discussion, rather than following the set topics, the notes from dinner two were grouped into themes or tips. The notes in italics are key quotes or images from this dinner.

### *Understand who you are working with and change from the inside out*

#### ***Embed, rather than edict and make change sustainable***

Change can often raise concerns with capability, but experiences of and with change can differ wildly and these experiences influence the way we react to change. A good rule of thumb is: don't assume. Don't assume that you know the motivations and experiences of those subject to the change. Remember the ***miners on their lunch break with the FT out***. Don't assume that those who are dissenters will never be supportive of the change. Don't ignore dissenters, as was observed: ***if you ignore dissenters during the change they will come back to bite you during business as usual*** and often the people who thrive in a change aren't the ones you want around for BAU.

From a change capability perspective, we discussed change led and driven by people who are viewed by the organisation as external and their role in ensuring that those who are subject to the change, are involved at worst and championing the change at best. In fact, those who were around before the change should be your lightning rod as to the success of the change. This tied nicely back to the idea that you shouldn't assume that dissent equals disinterest and the observation that ***there is a danger that you are accused of being a no-hoper because of some balmy change***, presumably put forward by someone who knows less than you about your organisation. Having said this we also discussed some scenarios where dissent does mean that people won't change, the granite layer being an example. It was at this point that we also discussed the concept, or need for a little ***creative destruction***.





## Recognise that you can't change everything and if you try to you'll be ignored

### What do you do when you have 49 dialects in one classroom? Or 15 years difference in male life expectancy between boroughs?

When it comes to societal change, **people want more control**. But how do you give people more control, when they are disempowered without being patronising? One idea was **don't prescribe the solution**. Allow people to make their own way up and down the change curve, and in doing this pick your battles and focus them on changing only what is really important.

An element of this may include trusting in the market. We discussed examples from the public and private sectors, where it may have been far more constructive to allow the market to deal with the situation, but for whatever reason, the parties involved could not concede control.

By the same token, in times of change, we discussed the need to trust your people to deal with what they have been hired to do. Provide them with guidance on what is essential to change and leave them to deal with what's not essential to the change – micromanaging the change wastes your time and undermines your people.

## Behind any successful change is a leader with true conviction

### Did you feel like you were standing in bathtub, after the water had drained out wearing no clothes?

No different to the literature, the group agreed that the quality of leadership was cited as the main reason why organisations get through a change. We discussed what it looks and feels like to be a leader of transformational change. This discussion ranged from stories of: **water running out of the bathtub and standing wearing no clothes**; to memories of Margaret Thatcher and the impact of the changes driven through by her government. The group generally

accepted that the change was sweeping and 'influential' and that much of this came from her strong leadership and strongly held convictions. The group also discussed the commonly held view that to be successful change agents, **leaders must have vision, but they also need to motivate and inspire**.

## Change for changes sake, it's a recipe for disaster

### People won't change if there is doubt, they can smell it

We then discussed the motivations for change and the groups view on change for changes sake – it's a recipe for disaster. It was observed that people can sense if the change lacks purpose or the leader lacks conviction, as one participant noted **people can smell it. People won't change if there is doubt around capacity or capability**. However, this doesn't mean that change for changes sake

isn't common practice from an organisational, political and societal perspective. Unpacking motivations for change, led to a discussion about change and **how much you can compromise** when one force, such as commercial performance dominates everything. In a situation where you can't compromise on commercial outcomes, one participant noted that directive changes works best: **make an investment, resource it, deliver it**. Making the change stick was noted as another matter altogether.

## Know when to stop, it's before the cynicism sets in

### Change uncovers inconvenient things

As one participant noted **change uncovers inconvenient things**, so leaders need to know when to call it a day. We had a lengthy conversation about having the courage to say, stop, this isn't working or to call out when change has gone wrong. A related discussion was on what to do when the

change we have been asking for happens and we just aren't ready. We heard some examples of when the members of the group had experienced organisational and societal change that had gone too far. In this context, it was suggested that articulating the anticipated benefits of the change upfront, and establishing good programme governance and tracking mechanisms, will always help to clarify when to stop.

## Trust and loyalty aren't dead, they are just different

### Social media – I've never seen anything like it

In the age of social media, it's easy to just assume that all we are interested in is a 144 character anecdote or tagline. There was a significant discussion on the positive and negative impacts of social media. On the positive, it's given a voice to many people in the community, on the negative it has encouraged people to reduce change to a sound bite. The sometimes glib nature of comments made about employers and brands in social media forums has also contributed to the notion that people have lost interest in loyalty. Be it to their employers or other

public institutions. There was general consensus that **trust in institutions is at an all time low**, but it was also acknowledged that this doesn't mean that people don't want to rebuild that trust, or that they no longer value loyalty.

On neither a positive or negative front, social media has certainly acted to either increase the stakeholder interest in the operation of organisations that play a significant role in our community such as Banks, the UN and Local Government. Or it's given a mouthpiece to those who always had those concerns and now have the means to have these concerns heard.



***We are in all in this together***

banking sector. One comment was made that ***financial service institutions previously considered themselves to be business to business providers***. Now they are almost ***Business to Community***, in the sense that, in their communications they are considering a far wider group of stakeholders, across a much wider community, many of whom will never be their customers. This raises challenges for dilution of purpose and message and brings us full circle back to the concept of change with purpose and conviction.

Some of the key words or themes from our discussion have been captured further in the wordle provided here:





## What we heard – Dinner three October 2012

In the spirit of the discussion, rather than following the set topics, the notes from dinner three were grouped into themes or tips. The notes in italics are key quotes or images from this dinner.

### *It's always about more than the change, but the idea is never obvious*

#### ***When you hit a bump, you don't just respond by changing focus***

The first observation of the evening was that the need to change is constant. It was noted that leaders today are ***faced with 20 VHS vs beta max moments every day***. If you don't transform, you will wither away. The topic soon turned to, the fact that with all of this change, it's even more crucial to remember what is important.

Being clear about what you want to achieve beyond just the change, also helps to equip people with the confidence to keep working throughout

the change, knowing that they are working toward something bigger. This is important, as one participant noted: if you don't tell people about the reason for the change they assume it is about money.

People will get tired, they always do. It's easy to get to the first 50%, getting to the remaining 50% is harder. So if you hit a bump on your change journey, don't panic. ***It's a skill to sit still and quietly and analyse the real priorities***. Or as one participant put it, if you do panic and change again, you ***just end up jumping from log to log without ever reaching your destination***.

### *Behind any successful change is a leader with true conviction*

#### ***And three other people ready to take over***

It was commented that in transformational change situations, the role of a leader is to ***create clarity from the ambiguity***. In that sense, the leader needs to be able to clearly articulate the vision or the idea behind the change. Just as sustainable organisations live beyond their leaders, sustainable change is likely to live

beyond just one leader. This means from a capability perspective, for transformational change to succeed you need not only leaders with the right capability now, but others ready to step in should the need arise. Having said this, it was acknowledged that it takes a leader, very confident in their own capabilities to sign up to ***having three people*** behind them, ready to take over when the time comes.







## What we heard – Dinner four November 2012

In the spirit of the discussion, rather than following the set topics, the notes from dinner four were grouped into themes or tips. The notes in italics are key quotes or images from this dinner.

### Invest in a clear, strategic rationale for the change

#### *And you might find yourself with an opportunity to chuck out the chintz*

In the face of data, or overwhelming evidence as to why a change is necessary, rationally, it's hard to disagree. Unfortunately, people don't always react rationally to change, especially if it isn't immediately apparent to every stakeholder why the change is necessary. The way a change is communicated is important. **A clear story delivered by senior leaders and simple communication that**

**answers the question of 'WIIFM'** gives people the best chance to rally behind the change and is a must for any successful change program.

Further, a **clear mandate for change**, clear benefits and communication, **could give you licence to change more than you might have first thought**. The reasons for change can be obvious for some, but an opportunity to do more for others. We heard about one organisation's successful change record creating a clear mandate for further changes that allowed them to start their transformation or **chuck out the chintz**.

### You don't need to brand everything as change

#### *I'm a change junkie but I've never had a (formal) change program*

Change as a BAU activity is possible. One of the first questions put to the group was: **I know how to run a change program, but how do you do change as BAU?** We discussed the fact that large scale change programs work for a set period of time. But as one of the participants commented: **what do you do today, when change is constant?** Turn change into a BAU activity. We heard about examples of

change working, bit by bit to transform an organisation from the inside out, until **it was more open** to the outside world. The group discussed the merits of change by stealth, rather than via a programme, as a method to change while remaining in business as usual. The lesson: it doesn't have to be a big bang. Sometimes **change can happen on a need to know basis, or even, by stealth**. So how do you choose BAU or change programme? As one participant observed, they both work, but **one is usually more appropriate than the other**, depending on the organisation, the operating environment and the type and scale of the change.



## Use milestones to shrink the change

### You need a beginning, a middle and an end

If you want to maintain the momentum on a change programme, **be forensic** about chunking the change down into milestones that can be met and celebrated. Sometimes externally set deadlines can also work to maintain the urgency of the change, but these can **only work if the deadlines don't waiver**. Milestones also allow you to

celebrate your success and the efforts of your team to date. This is an important, but often overlooked element of a change initiative. Finally, working to a milestone delivery schedule also allows you to capture qualitative and quantitative data to allow you to be really clear on your progress to date. One participant noted that **they relied quite heavily on data – every week we did quantitative research to check how we were progressing**.

## Don't always look to the obvious

### The people who can most influence bosses are their secretaries

A key to any successful change is the early adopters or the **change agents who buy into your vision and are happy to champion the change**. But the most effective change agents or influencers won't always be the most obvious. We heard one story about a successful change that engaged secretaries as the key change agents,

for some of the more difficult stakeholders – their bosses. Sometimes change can uncover the unlikeliest supporters, **while the people you assumed would support the change can often be the most negative**. Make it easy for yourself – **start with the people who are the most receptive to the change**. Change agents can come from any level of the organisation and sometimes unlocking the gates to the change via the traditional gatekeepers or the **concrete layer** can be a good way to start.

## Hold your nerve

### On the basis that it was a sound decision, the noise will die down

Transformational change creates noise. If there is a good rationale for the change, **hold your nerve** and on the basis that it was a sound decision to make, the noise will eventually die down. We heard from one participant about the effect of transformations on an organisation's **Brand Index and Buzz scores** – quite often a transformation will create some short term bad buzz around the brand, but this negative buzz never affected the overall brand health. Thus the external and internal bottom line being: **things blow up all the time but the things that aren't big, well they blow away too**.

This is also the case for the people within the organisation throughout the change. A question was posed by one participant: **what do you do when other people don't hold their nerve?** As research into the way people respond to change attests: individuals move through the stages of change at different speeds, dependent on a combination of their previous experience and understanding of the situation. So in fact, you should anticipate that others will not hold their nerve, putting processes in place to keep the programme moving while the people adjust to the change at their own pace. As one participant observed reflecting on a change in their organisation **even though they voted for it, they said they would leave when the change was completed**. But the change went ahead and in the end, no one left.

## Be clear about what will change and what will stay the same

### We aren't asking you to like it, but this is why we are doing it

Even a change as significant as a symbolic name change doesn't mean everything has to change. Change with a clear purpose allows organisations to be clear with their stakeholders as to: what will start as a result of the change; what will stop to allow for the change to be embedded; and what positive features of the current organisation will be amplified. This is especially important for the people who are left behind after a change, **who need to be made to feel that it is OK for them to be positive about what is happening**.

We heard how one organisation undergoing a significant change that was perceived as taking them away from their roots, made time to explain the rationale for the change to retain their connection to their local community. In doing this they didn't ask the community representatives to like the change, but they did make sure that they understood why it had to happen. During and after the change, this organisation continued their commitment to sponsor **the local football club** as a symbol for the community.

## Sometimes boundaries can be freeing

### We only gave them two boxes to move office

Sometimes, there are just too many options. In large change programs, as in life, sometimes boundaries can be freeing by the very fact that they eliminate choice and uncertainty. When you are asking people to change, you are in essence giving them a set of parameters for how you now expect them to work. This means big changes for some and smaller changes for others. This was illustrated perfectly by the example from one participant: **where people were only given two boxes to move with – we had a big competition with the secretaries as to how much paper**

**they could get rid of to help their partners move with only two boxes**.

The clear parameter of the two boxes introduce people to the new ways of working that would be in place in the new office, forcing them to leave some of the physical symbols of the old ways of working behind in the old office and setting these same people up to be comfortable and successful in their new environment.







# Who was there?

At these dinners we have had the pleasure of the company of Founders, CEOs, COOs and Partners from the organisations listed below.

Aviva Plc, CMO	Institute of Directors, CEO	First Utility, CEO	The Big Society, CEO
Visa, VP.			Institute of Ideas, CEO
Medway Council, CEO			WPP, CFO
London Borough of Camden, CEO	Attendees at the dinners included...		Plan International, COO
MSQ Partners, Chairman			Goldman Sachs, Head of leadership
Lowe Worldwide, COO			JML, Chairman
Framestore Ltd, Chairman			Gasol Plc, CFO
BBC, COO	HSBC, COO	YouGov, Founder & CEO	Clifford Chance, COO
			Euro RSCG Worldwide, COO

# It's all about the people

At the conclusion of each dinner, the participants volunteered what they would take away from the conversation. The most common reflection – as leaders, our challenges are so similar, doesn't matter what industry or role we work in. A sample of their thoughts can be found below.

We all need to look around the corner and say 'what's the next thing?'

Find a way to help people enjoy it.

Trust is still important but it is in danger of becoming a word like innovation.

Change is more now and we need to work out how to relate to these new circumstances.

The speed of decision making has changed.

I learn more from diverse discussions than from discussions with people who have ideas that are similar to my own.

Change in all sectors is hard!

Successful change requires strong discipline but you must also have strong empathy.

You need to understand what it's like to be on the receiving end. If you understand their fears you're more likely to change in a sustainable way.

Remember the surgeon 'I save lives what do you do?' Make sure you answer the WINFM question.

Change by stealth can work if it is in the context of the change. And don't forget to celebrate success.

When I know what I want it's easy to make it happen. Most aren't clear what they want.

Celebrating success is really important, you need to continuously recognise people.

People can over-engineer, complicate and dramatise. (You need to) maintain a sense of humour and perspective.

You need a breadth of people in a team and to keep your eye on the human pressure points.

The issues with trust are cross sector and cross industry.

Change is difficult in the public sector.

It was interesting to think about change at a societal level rather than just at an organisational level.

Remember the surgeon 'I save lives what do you do?' Make sure you answer the WINFM question.

Have a vision and values that you are not prepared to lose. Remember people respond to emotion.

It's always interesting to listen to different perspectives from outside of my world. It reminds me to be more open.

Sometimes, we just have to get over ourselves and be adaptable.

Transformation is never just about cost reduction, it's about delivering success.

Across industries, we have the same principles for change: honesty and communication.

Change everything except your values

It's never just about the change.

Politicians are a given and a crucial stakeholder, but you can engage them well.

Change is about vision, consistency, simplicity, and integrity of thought and deed.

Keep your values and morals at the core of the change. Remember the fish rots from the head.

Let us never forget what's important: to have courage and retain the trust of our talent.



# Invite your clients to our 2013 dinners...

## How to transform an organisation while keeping it ticking along

**Tuesday 12 February and Tuesday 19 March 2013**  
**7 More London Riverside, London SE1 2RT**

### ‘The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order.’

This quote sums up the conflicting challenges that organisations face when they embark on a transformation programme.

Leading an organisation through change triggers fundamental challenges and worries:

- How much change can we swallow without jeopardising our core business?
- Do we have the right leaders, the right discipline to get through successfully?
- Will we survive during and thrive after our transformation?
- Will we have to compromise on timing or on our ambition?
- Is it all going to be worth it?

### A Safe Haven

Our dinners are aimed at CEO's, COO's and division heads leading their organisations through ambitious change. The participants have been hand picked based on their experience steering a course between changing as quickly as possible to secure a better future and changing as little as possible to avoid jeopardising the delivery of immediate results. The dinner provides our guests with the opportunity to share issues that they can't discuss freely within their organisation in a confidential setting. Through our dinner discussion, we aim to create a supportive and informative network, where participants can gain specific insights from peers in other sectors.

### Invitation

We would like to invite you to join one of our dinners in 2013 to discuss the conflicting issues associated with transformation programmes. You will learn from peers what works and what hasn't in resolving trade off challenges. You will share your experience to help and inspire other guests facing similar issues.

### Dates:

Tuesday 12 February 2013  
Tuesday 19 March 2013

### Timing:

6.30pm Welcome Drinks  
7.00pm Discussion & Dinner  
9.30pm Close

### RSVP:

Please let us know if you would like to attend one of the dinners, indicate which dates you could make and hold these dates in your diary. If you would like to recommend someone else also attend, please contact Yann Bonduelle at [yann.bonduelle@uk.pwc.com](mailto:yann.bonduelle@uk.pwc.com) or call 020 7804 5935.

We will contact you approximately 3 weeks before the date of the dinner to make sure we understand your specific transformation challenges and experiences.

I do hope you will be able to join us and help us make this forum a valuable part of your networking activities.

Kind regards

**Yann Bonduelle**

Partner

PricewaterhouseCoopers





[www.pwc.com](http://www.pwc.com)

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