



Toolbox

Change Leadership for Place Attractiveness

The Eight Steps of Change method for cities and
regions

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Leading change for place attractiveness

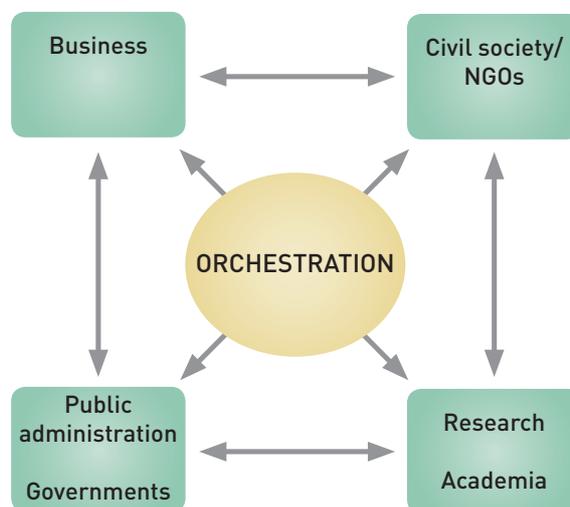
Kanter's Law: Everything can look like a failure in the middle.

Improving the attractiveness of a place requires an orchestrated effort from different actors working together in a systemic way. In order to establish such a system, a shared vision is needed as well as trustful relations and motivated key individuals.

Change needs to be started and lead. Not only managed and this is especially true of places, where because of several organisations who all have a stake and role, the risk of losing long-term perspective and track of daily operational changes can be greater than in one organisation.

The purpose of managing an ecosystem of a place – a geographic area comprising of several quadruple helix stakeholders – is to make a city or region more capable of attracting and retaining talent, investors, tourists, work with digital transformation or sustainability. According to our experience and research, in most cases these are important horizontal issues that are regarded as very important by all key stakeholders, but nobody takes responsibility for working with the issue, despite years of confirmation of the topic's importance and so *ad infinitum*.

In best practise cases, this responsibility of multistakeholder management is directly assigned to a concrete person in an organisation that has the mandate to work with several stakeholders. The work entails in a word orchestration, which means managing the ecosystem and its various stakeholders in a fashion that helps to reach the set goals and targets set by a committee or group of key stakeholders.



Orchestration is a key term to understanding and working with place-based change management. Pictured is the representation of the quadruple helix Orchestration between various sectors.

Eight steps of change leadership in a local or regional setting

Naturally, there could be a gap between the current situation in the region and the desired way of managing and leading place attractiveness. A change process can be started to introduce a new way of working. Below is a framework for managing change towards improved place attractiveness, which is inspired by John P Kotter's *Eight steps of change*, but which has been adapted to a place setting by complementing it with the Future Place Leadership's vast experience in managing and leading change processes in a local and regional setting.

To make any transformation successful it is necessary to change people's behaviour, which can be achieved when people have had the chance to first see, then feel and then change their personal behaviour.

The eight-step model can be used as a starting point for a change process for a place, but which has been adapted to a place – local or regional – setting.

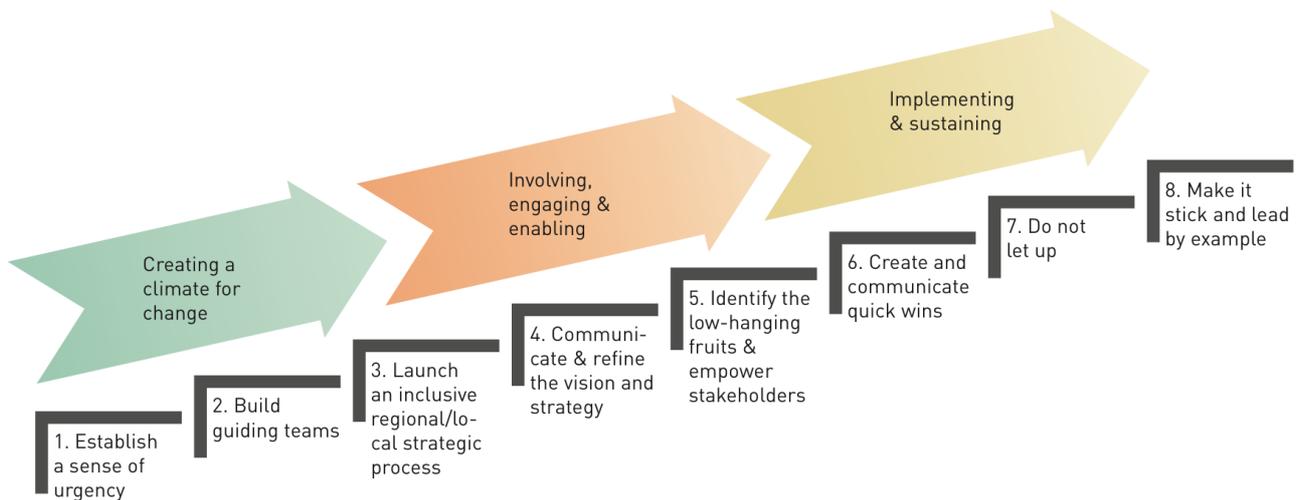


Figure: Eight steps of major change in a place context, adapted from John P. Kotter

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Step 1. Create a sense of urgency around a single big opportunity or crisis

It is critical to create awareness of the need for strategic change. Change does not usually come from fear, but from pointing to a great opportunity. That said, a location that is facing a crisis or looming crisis may need to use this as a starting point for instilling a sense of urgency. In addition, benchmarking with frontrunner locations can be a concrete tool for creating a sense of urgency.

Step 2. Build guiding teams

Connect people to your change idea. Pull together a guiding team or guiding coalition with the necessary credibility, skills and connections to provide change leadership. This team may represent one or several organisations in the location.

Step 3. Launch an inclusive regional/local strategic process to create a vision and strategy

Involve key stakeholders in the place in a strategic process to create a sensible, clear, simple and uplifting vision and a common strategy. Tools for involvement include strategy workshops, focus groups, interviews and surveys.

Step 4. Communicate, seek commitment and refine the vision and strategy

Communicate the change vision and strategy effectively, in order to create understanding and to relate to feelings. Keep communication simple and heartfelt, not complex and technocratic. Meet place stakeholders to get their commitment regarding the strategy and use their input to refine the strategy.

Step 5. Identify the low-hanging fruits and empower organisations and people to act on the vision

Identify areas that are easiest to change and begin working with these. Show how it's done by telling "we-won-you-can-too" stories. Try to remove obstacles blocking action, ineffective performance measurements. Try mediate conflicting interests between different stakeholders.

At this stage, new platforms for driving the change may need to be created, a team, project, partnership or even new organisation that is in charge of the carrying out the strategy and realising the vision. Stakeholder involvement can be ensured via work groups, co-financing of common work and/or governance.

Step 6. Create and communicate short-term wins

Show quick results in order to energise change "helpers", enlighten pessimists, defuse cynics and build momentum for the effort – and to legitimise the effort for different stakeholders.

Step 7. Do not let up

Continue with wave after wave of change. Do not declare victory too early. Keep the urgency up and remove or work around obstacles in the region. An effective way of keeping a sense of urgency is to utilise benchmarking: show what other leading places are doing to communicate that we need to sustain the efforts.

Step 8. Make it stick and lead by example

Leaps into the future can slide back into the past. Keep the change in place by trying to communicate and maintain a new, supportive and strong culture – and leading by example is one of the best ways to do that.

About Change leadership for place attractiveness

Attractiveness is increasingly important for cities and regions – to attract and retain talent, to promote investment, business and entrepreneurship, to attract visitors and business travellers, work with digital transformation or sustainability.

Improving place attractiveness is dependent on co-ordinating the work of an ecosystem of many different stakeholders from the public, private, civil society and academic sectors.

However, strategic initiatives often fail. We simply underestimate the difficulties and lack the right tools to coordinate the work and get stakeholders to help drive the change that is needed.

Further reading

<https://hbr.org/2012/09/ten-reasons-people-resist-change> Ten Reasons People Resist Change
Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard Business Review 2012

For more information

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