an excerpt from

The Change Handbook
The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems

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Introduction and Essential Fundamentals

What we do not understand we do not possess.
—Goethe

Effective, sustainable change can be elusive, particularly if its core principles are not grasped and actively applied. Change efforts are often like the little girl in the nursery rhyme, who, "when she was good, she was very, very good, and when she was bad, she was horrid." There's often no middle ground when it comes to describing the success of a change effort. Consider the following two cases:

Case 1: A Major Pharmaceutical Manufacturer

The CEO of a major pharmaceutical manufacturer in New Jersey sat quietly in his office, wondering what had gone wrong. After eight months of intensive efforts to improve product quality and reduce production cycle time, the company had spent more than $1.6 million on external consultants and allocated five full-time internal people who had developed detailed process maps, used tools to diagnose problems, and conducted training in the improvement concepts of Lean and Six Sigma. The returns to date had unfortunately not even covered one-tenth of the effort's cost. He thought he'd done all the right things, having one-on-one conversations with his VPs, publishing progress in the company newsletter, and putting posters around the plant that extolled the virtues of doing things "right the first time." He'd even conducted several all-employee Town Hall meetings and explained the program to people, taking adequate time for questions and answers afterward. He thought he'd even addressed that pesky "people part" of change that organizations so often forget, and still his effort had fallen flat. The people didn't own the change. They exhibited behav-

ior that maximized personal power in functional silos instead of taking an enterprise-wide view. Regarding the few improvements that were made, the people at middle management and frontline workers rapidly slid back as soon as the high-priced consultants finished their project stint.

Case 2: A Sleepy Mountain Town

Seventeen hundred miles away in a Rocky Mountain state, the residents of a sleepy mountain town rose to trudge down the hill to another day of meetings at the municipal center. The controversy: Many residents opposed changing local zoning laws to permit gambling in their town. They were very concerned about what would happen to their quality of life and their children's future. On the other side, the real estate developers thought they had indeed been very generous to townspeople in future profit sharing and putting money back into the town's infrastructure. The primary means each side had to voice their concerns and influence outcomes were personal pressure on local politicians and rowdy behavior in new zoning meetings. Unfortunately, these usually started out as polite exchanges and quickly deteriorated into shouting matches. The result: a stalemate for both sides, as the debate had already dragged on for more than a year.

What Really Happened?

As the organizers of these efforts sat back and debriefed the results that didn't match their intended objectives, they pondered four questions:

- Why was there no energy for change beyond the change proposers?

- Why didn't people "get it" that this change was ultimately for the good of everyone?

- Is conflict a natural state of being when people with different needs and views get together? If so, is there a way to harness it and move forward in a productive fashion?

- What could be done to create ownership of the problems and the solutions among all people involved?

One powerful high-leverage strategy that could address the four questions above was noticeably absent from the two scenarios—a concerted effort to engage groups of people in productively working together toward identifying common ground and expanding it together. That is, people were not involved in group settings where they could collectively explore possibilities, surface and test assumptions, and develop plans to address areas that they agreed would benefit all involved.

One might argue that there was group involvement in both cases. In each, there was certainly one-on-one communication, and there were meetings where information was broadcast from the change leaders to the general population. There were even gatherings where people could express their opinions and debate. However, merely getting people together in a room does not ensure they'll be productive. What's needed for effective, sustainable change are sessions in

which people collectively explore each other's assumptions, seek and expand common ground, shape a desired future, and jointly take ownership of the solutions to the issues at hand. Methods that contain these objectives are precisely what this book provides. We'll explore some high-leverage strategies for addressing these issues, and also dispel some common misconceptions about change. Specifically, this chapter covers:

- Global patterns and trends that bring the methods into the spotlight
- What drives people to use change methods
- How change methods affect people and desired outcomes
- Misconceptions about change methods
- Financial considerations
- Common elements of change that engage the people of the system.

Global Patterns and Trends

When talking about the need for changing the way we change, it makes sense to round up the usual suspects: increasing global competition, escalating customer demands, and rapid pace of change in both public and private sectors. These all exert influences that lead people to the methods described in this book. However, we believe some trends go beyond that usual laundry list and we've honed in on some particular patterns/trends that exert tremendous forces screaming for changes in the way we work together and make the need for organized group events an imperative for any leader—at any level—seeking improvements in his or her organization or community. Table 1 shows such items and associated impacts that favor the use of methods.

After looking at the data, it makes sense that change methods present logical options for addressing some of the unfolding global issues affecting organizations and communities. However, just realizing that change methods can capitalize on favorable trends and thwart unfavorable ones does not necessarily mean that all who could benefit will readily embrace them. There are

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Figure 1. Increased Immunity to Change

Pattern/Trend	Impact	How Change Methods Help
Rapid advancements in, and global dissemination of communications technology	More people can get information about policies, events, and situations that shape their lives. An informed populace can, and quite often does, crank up a strong desire to participate in decisions that affect them. They deeply grasp the issues previously unknown (consider Tiananmen Square) and start to care. Communities of practice around particular topics are on the rise, and in a peer-to-peer fashion, people freely contribute to these to advance the body of knowledge.	Channel the energy of information to people. Provide a structure in which they can quickly and productively seize ownership and responsibility for improving their lot in life, whether it is in an enterprise-wide computer implementation that promises dissemination of decision making or local political issues surrounding a zoning decision for urban planning. The information is there, and the change methods described here can help people get productive around it.
Spread of increased participation and democratic principles around the world	Whether it is the collapse of the Soviet Union, demonstrations in Indonesia, elections in the Middle East, or demands for empowerment in organizations, more people are wanting to take an active role in determining policies, decisions, and actions that affect them. Many exhort that command and control is dead, but their overt actions demonstrate just the opposite.	The methods in this book are proven practices that can systematically increase participation and energy, while simultaneously addressing concerns of organizations or communities wildly spinning out of control.
Increased education levels around the world	Generally speaking, the more people learn, the less likely it is they will enjoy being told what to do and how to do it.	Methods provide a systematic means to capitalize on internal desires to participate and develop quality results.
Increased global mobility	In organizations and communities throughout the world, there are increasingly diverse populations, and within those diverse populations there are numerous chances for conflict and gridlock.	Methods provide the means for people from different backgrounds to productively explore common ground that benefits them individually and as an organization or community.

Pattern/Trend	Impact	How Change Methods Help
Increased conflicting demands of multiple stakeholders	Organizations and communities must balance the sometimes conflicting needs of many different customer segments, workers, and other stakeholders. Increased mobility has made neighborhoods around the world far less homogenous. Multiple conflicting interests must be adequately addressed for the common good of all involved.	Methods often include multiple stakeholders and establish conditions in which they cocreatively meet their individual and collective needs.
Tight time and work/life balance	In today's post-reengineering and lean world, many organizations have not just trimmed fat, but have also cut muscle and scraped bone. Scarce time resources make it difficult to balance technical work, improvement work, and outside work interests.	Methods save time by productively using people's time to pursue opportunities and fix problems. Common understanding and commitment reduce the need to revisit issues multiple times, thus conserving scarce resources.
Declining participation in community, family, and social life	In his landmark book, *Bowling Alone*, Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam notes, based on 500,000 interviews in 25 years, how declining connections have begun to impoverish American lives and communities (data was collected only for the United States, but similar conditions exist worldwide).	Methods provide a cost-effective way to satisfy the human need to connect with other people, and can be done efficiently at work or in community interactions.
Increased immunity to change	Many companies have been exposed to numerous change initiatives over the past 15 years. After being Total Quality Managed, reengineered, and downsized, workers have adopted attitudes of extreme skepticism to downright sabotage of new change attempts to a "this too shall pass" attitude. Traditional forms of public participation, with little interaction or cooperative solution seeking, has decreased trust in government and created greater challenges for making change in communities.	As shown in figure 1, modern-day business commentator Dilbert observes that introducing change can be ill received in a workplace. Methods provide people with an immediate opportunity to have their voices heard, and in many cases, immediately acted upon, thus gradually building people's positive attitudes toward change and avoiding the all-too-common change-averse attitudes. Similarly, these methods are rekindling civic engagement in cities and countries around the world.

Table 1. Global Patterns and Trends That Favor the Use of Methods

forces and factors that tend to drive people toward using these methods, and some misconceptions that drive people away from them.

What Drives People to Use a Change Method?

The change methods described in this book have experienced an increasing popularity over the past 15 years as an element of programs where effective change was essential. While the global, big-picture patterns and trends listed in the previous sections may be the motivators, we offer eight reasons to use one of the methods described in this book.

Reason 1. They accelerate action. Since considerable time in most methods is devoted to articulating personal assumptions, imagining desirable futures, seeking common ground, finding innovative answers, and codeveloping action plans, there is a high level of commitment to quickly implementing what was developed, and lots of ownership that helps fuel rapid action.

Reason 2. They increase shared understanding and dissemination of shared strategy/direction. When strategic direction is merely passed down from the top of the organization or from government officials, often there is minimal understanding of the strategic details and related assumptions because only select people were present during strategy development. With the use of whole system change methods, typically more people are involved in setting the strategy and therefore understand the nuances and reasons for selected options. Sometimes an entire organization is involved in strategy formulation; more often there is substantial involvement in *strategy dissemination.* The result is that there are more points of contact throughout the organization or community who understand nuances and reasons, and more widespread motivation to succeed because of personal ownership.

Reason 3. They take some of the continual pressure off the top. Organization and community leaders have their hands full: staying in touch with customers and citizens, prioritizing tactical issues, and keeping their strategic antennae up looking for emerging trends and patterns. Also, effective leaders devote time at the start of the change effort to demonstrate that elusive, often watched-for element of "leadership commitment." However, in organizations and communities that use methods, ongoing demands for positional leadership commitment can taper off a bit *if* they intelligently use change methods to create leader-full environments, disseminating ownership and energy for change throughout an organization. In communities, these methods can be a remarkable force for reengaging a disinterested public.

Reason 4. They create emotional attachment to outcomes. Great leaders know that people need to be emotionally attached to improving their own condition, or there won't be any traction. Since the change methods can create emotional attachment through meaningful involvement, cocreating the future, seeking common ground, collective goal setting, and joint implementation planning, great leaders channel their own emotional commitment through large group methods to jump-start change and move it along.

Reason 5. They promote a seeing-is-believing effect. People who have witnessed one of these large-group events and the power that is unleashed become the greatest advocates for using them. One California semiconductor executive stated, "I was in such awe of the energy created by our first group planning meeting that I had a difficult time expressing its power to other executives I talked with about our change effort."

Reason 6. They increase sustainable results. Sustainability is a key watchword in organizations and communities today (in fact, this book has devoted an entire chapter to it). The methods highlighted here foster sustainability through meaningful participation, co-discovery, and coplanning, often among groups with very different interests and experiences.

Reason 7. They enhance management effectiveness. Though many organizations espouse the death of command-and-control styles, unfortunately many ingrained practices die hard. These methods provide a way for top managers to begin to distribute responsibility while simultaneously establishing critical controls to ensure that boundaries exist to avoid often-feared "the organization will be spinning out of control" situations.

Reason 8. They convey a visible "hey-this-could-be-different" message. The widespread implementation of numerous change initiatives has inured many people to any new change effort. In some cases, they overtly oppose or covertly sabotage it. When these change methods demonstrate how quickly people can have a voice and an impact, it fuels their further enthusiastic participation.

How Change Methods Affect People and Desired Outcomes

The change methods in this book are practical applications of social systems theory that engage the complexities of human behavior. In our experience, there are three "soft" value propositions that capture business leaders' attention for their "hard" effect on measurable results. These methods generate:

Group energy. What drives a group to move forward no matter the odds? What creates a sense of collective accountability and the strong belief that "we are all in this together"? More than the sum of the parts, bringing together people with different knowledge and experiences often leads to breakthrough solutions and effective action. Because group energy is contagious, it can be highly effective in replicating its benefits, through creative and collaborative peer-to-peer interactions that capitalize on the momentum created by the peer support and coaching provided. The capacity to generate authentic human connections across siloed organizations, among diverse demographics, and between highly conflicted factions in a community, is a central strength of effective large group change. Such group energy is instrumental in bringing about high-quality decisions and results.

Intrinsic motivation. What keeps an individual going when things look dim? What causes a person to act from the heart, not the pocketbook? While group work may produce the break-

throughs, dedicated individual action is its companion for success. Through these methods, people connect with what is important to them as individuals, fueling a motivation that comes from within. For example, Participative Design Workshop accomplishes this by supporting people in structuring into their environment local work autonomy, variety in daily tasks, local goal setting, feedback, learning, opportunity for achievement, and recognition. This intrinsic motivation (coupled with appropriate doses of extrinsic motivation, like bonuses) gets people up every morning, genuinely asking from within, "What can I do to support the desired outcomes?" It is through intrinsic motivation that people take the initiative—not waiting to be told what to do—to reach the desired results.

Emotional engagement. What causes someone to express how much he or she truly cares about a specific outcome beyond all logic? What helps to foster strong feelings about something that matters? Rarely are people swayed through white papers or fact-filled lectures. Rather, it is by putting a human face on an issue, making it personal, that people commit 100 percent. For example, a pharmaceutical company sought to improve the stock-out situation on a life-saving drug. They kicked off the effort with a film of testimonials from people whose lives had been saved by the drug. They also showed the adverse effects when the drug was unavailable. That helped fuel a very rapid improvement effort. Within two months, the stock-out situation was eliminated and 100 percent of the patients received their medication on time. Without some sort of emotional connection to critical behaviors, people can end up simply going through the motions of executing work plan tasks. This usually results in lackluster outcomes, or projects that die a slow death. With emotional engagement, people go out of their way to seek the assistance of others, to find time in their busy schedules to do the necessary work (even though it may not have been budgeted), and to innovate ways to circumvent obstacles to implementing the desired outcome.

These characteristics do not exist in isolation. Rather, as group work inspires individual motivation and engenders emotional commitments to the work and to colleagues, these qualities reinforce each other. It is a tribute to the underlying theory that such powerful practices are available to benefit our organizations and communities.

Responsibility of the Change Leader

As with any powerful tool, using change methods appropriately is incumbent on change leaders. Being clear about their true intentions and acting with integrity in carrying out those intentions is not only ethical but also fundamental to success. These change methods ask people to open their hearts and get involved. No less can be expected of the change leader. If this seems a lot to ask, consider the stakes of the intended change and make a clear choice about what it is worth to challenge an organization or community to be its best.

Having seen the power of these change methods, it raises an important question: Why are they not in even more widespread use? To understand this, we turn now to clearing the air on some misperceptions that have hindered their growth.

Misconceptions

Some of these methods have been around for several decades. As pioneers have brought them into organizations and communities, we have learned a great deal about what makes them effective. Along the way, some perceptions have arisen that cause leaders to avoid using them. Table 2 contains some of those misconceptions, as well as realities and mitigating strategies.

Misconception	Reality and Mitigating Strategy
Methods are just touchy-feely, feel-good events with minimal practical impact.	It's certainly true that there is more time spent than in an average meeting devoted to what might be dubbed "people issues" such as establishing conditions for effective interpersonal communication and joint exploration of issues. However, when done well, these are set up in the context of addressing an important opportunity or problem, and actually address it more productively by reducing the number of future required iterations of understanding and buy-in.
Most people will change based on pure logic, so methods that seek to engage people are unnecessary.	People need an emotional, gut-level connection to a challenge to inspire engaging with it. Large group methods can help provide that by generating intrinsic motivation through direct involvement.
It's expensive to get lots of people in a room to decide something, and it's just not worth it!	There is no "law" of methods that states that everyone has to be called into a room for every decision. Typically, careful attention is paid in discerning who gets invited to ensure that the optimal mix to address a challenge is present. Effective preplanning ensures the right people are gathered at the right time to address challenges in a systemic way, instead of just "fixing errors."
Methods should bear the brunt of the large-scale change work for successful change.	Large group methods are not the only way of accomplishing successful large-scale change, though they are among the most rapid. Other approaches include one-on-one conversations, training, coaching, role modeling of new behaviors, day-to-day management practices, and changes to the reward system.
Top managers and government officials should not give up control to middle managers and frontline workers or to ordinary citizens.	The issue of control has some elements of emotion to it, and some elements of well-founded logic. Historically, many managers and civic leaders have been burned by pushing decisions lower in the organization or out to community members, but when large group methods are used well, appropriate boundaries, alignment, internal controls, and monitoring mechanisms are present. In fact, when selected decisions are distributed to groups, the groups may actually provide more control because more people are watching for positive overall outcomes. Futurist Karl Albrecht speaks about empowerment as "responsible freedom."

Table 2. Misconceptions and Associated Realities About the Methods

Misconception	Reality and Mitigating Strategy
A large group method is just like any other meeting, just with more people.	Large group methods are quite different. It's an entirely different type of meeting because people are in conversations with each other that they truly care about. While starting and finishing on time are great to apply to any meeting, including large group methods, beyond that, traditional facilitation rules may not all apply.
Conflict is bad and will naturally emerge in a method when members having different interests show up in one place, resulting in discomfort and catastrophe.	There are places in every city where people are together and there is no conflict. These places are called cemeteries. The reality is that whenever you have more than one living person in a room, you'll have more than one set of interests, and that's not a bad thing. Most methods are designed to surface conflict and deal with it productively.

Table 2. Continued

Once people have gotten over some commonly held misconceptions about the methods, they are ready to move along in the decision process to use one or combine several methods. Once they start thinking about committing to using a method, it's completely natural to start thinking, "What will this cost and what will it get me?"

Financial Considerations

As people enter the method selection process, they typically develop a healthy interest in the following:

- Costs
- Benefits
- Other Resource Considerations

Costs

Once people decide to use large group methods to meet their organization or community challenges, an early question that arises is, "Hey, what's this thing going to cost?" Well, it would be great if we could give you a standard cost for each method, or even a formula to figure it out. We can't.

The two big variable costs for a method are facility costs and facilitator costs. Both can vary widely. For example, the strategic planning vice president of a Fortune 100 company booked an island resort for a three-day Search Conference. The total cost of the session was $55,000. Five weeks later, a Colorado mountain community held a Search Conference—the same exact agenda—at a free local community center using pro bono facilitators, where total out-of-pocket costs were $68.73 for donuts and coffee. Value of each event: priceless. Costs: highly variable. The bottom line is that costs are more determined by the organization or community culture and event structuring than they are by specific method type. For sample budgeting templates, visit www.thechangehandbook.com.

Benefits

A challenging question for many methods is, "What benefits were realized?" Some methods, such as Six Sigma, are wired from the start to identify potential benefits, tactically pursue them, and then audit the results. For other methods, such as Dialogue (that helps surface important unstated assumptions) or Participative Design Workshop (that converts organizations into structures of high-performing teams), it is a bit more difficult to find a direct tie to the bottom line. A majority of the contributing authors in the first edition stated that while there was definitely a benefit to doing the method, the connection between the method conduct and the financial results was too loose to definitively provide a specific return on investment figure.

Authors suggested several alternatives. Benefits are best defined in the context of the desired outcomes. Clarity about the purpose of the work provides the basis for determining its effectiveness. Whether this is best measured financially or through other means, it is an opportunity for a rich and useful conversation as the initiative is defined.

Another approach suggested by contributing authors was to qualitatively consider the cost of not doing the method, and then assessing if it would make sense to do it. For example, such questions might include: "What is the cost of not having a strategic plan that all the vice presidents helped create and are motivated to implement?" "What are the implications of not having a major community segment present in zoning discussions?" and "What are the costs of hidden and overt resistance if frontline workers are not involved in decisions that affect their local working conditions?"

Finally, it's important to consider that not all benefits arrive with a monetary price tag. Some benefits, such as quality of work life, vibrancy in communities, and increased collaboration are extremely worthy objectives and can make an immediate difference in people's lives as well as a long-term difference that has positive economic implications.

Resources

An often-missed consideration is one of resources. Typical resource requirements for large group methods include flip charts, easels, markers, LCD projectors, a laptop computer, and a large room, preferably with a window. Everything you may need for a session may not require a financial outlay, or it may be a minimal expense for something that can make or break the session. For example, if you require an LCD projector and you're conducting the session in a remote location, make sure you order it early, and that they have backup bulbs for the projector. If you're up at a rustic mountain lodge, make sure the conference room they've put you in has electrical outlets. If your method requires a big circle of chairs and no tables, make sure the hotel staff can remove the tables from the room so it won't look like a table warehouse during your session. And if you will be generating many flip charts full of information, be sure it is okay to use tape on the walls. You get the picture.

Now that you know why people might use methods that engage others in changing their systems, what might turn them off, and what it might cost, you may want to know *what it is about the methods that makes them effective.*

Common Elements Across the Methods

By looking across the many methods in this book, we uncovered some common elements that we believe are keys to their success. We offer seven shared characteristics:

Contributing to a meaningful purpose *compels people into action.* When people see the possibility of contributing to something larger than themselves, they operate differently. The emphasis shifts from focusing on "Why can't something be done?" to "How can we make this happen?" There is a tangible difference in the atmosphere of organizations and communities that have made this shift—they feel alive with possibility and excitement.

The power of individual contribution *is unleashed.* When people understand the whole system, when they see the possibility of meaningful intentions, and when they feel their voice matters, they commit. While it doesn't happen every time, the potential for extraordinary accomplishment exists within each of these approaches.

The whole person, *head, heart, and spirit, is engaged.* Over the years, words such as "hands" or "heads" have become a way to count numbers of people in organizations. They reflect a focus on what is considered important—hands to do the manual work; heads to do the thinking work. These methods reengage the whole person: hands for doing, heads for thinking, hearts for caring, and spirits for achieving inspired results.

Knowledge *and* wisdom *exist in the people in the organization or community.* This belief that the people in the system know best is a profound shift from the days of bringing in the outside "efficiency" expert with the answer. While several of these approaches rely on new ideas, not one of them presumes to have the answer. Instead, they engage people in the organization or community in making choices about what's best for them.

Information *is* cocreated *by members of the organization or community.* What keeps the system whole over time is a commitment to collaborative meaning making, a profound shift from information provided on a "need-to-know" basis. When people share stories of what is important to them and to the system, they are more connected to each other and make more informed decisions about their individual and collective actions.

The method creates a whole system *view among members of the organization or community.* Each method enables people to understand their system at a deeper level. They begin to see interconnections among departments, neighborhoods, processes, and relationships. When this occurs, system members know better how to contribute and therefore make commitments that were previously unlikely. Because more people understand the whole system, they can make intelligent, informed contributions to substantive decisions.

Change is a process, *not an event.* While most of the authors describe a half-day to three-day event, they are all quick to say that the sum total of a transformational effort is *not* just one change event. While events help focus people's attention, they are only one part of the change equation. Leaders—at all levels—of organizations and communities also need to focus on

actively supporting the plans and improvements achieved during the event. Without such ongoing support, conditions may return to what they were before the event occurred.

These elements form a pattern, linking the individual with the collective, and the inner being with the outer "doing" or work, integrated through communication that connects, and bounded by two key assumptions: a commitment to a systems view and change as an ongoing process (figure 2).
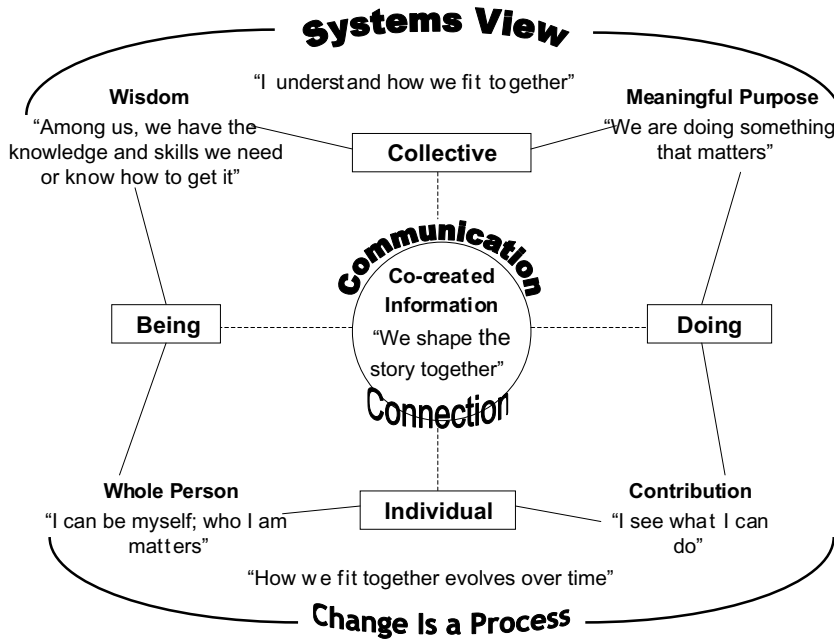
Figure 2. Common Elements Among the Methods

In summary, the methods in this book provide a way to address the complex emerging global trends and patterns that provide huge challenges to the very survival of organizations and communities today. Indeed, the collaborative and common ground–seeking methods may provide one of the only solutions to such complex problems. Once people recognize that the methods can have such a profound impact, they need to decide if, when, and how they will use them. The forces that drive people to use the methods in this book—such as the need for speed, the need for intrinsic motivation, and previous exposure to the dramatic success of the methods— are currently being experienced by a growing number of progressive leaders who seek positive, sustainable change. Unfortunately, misconceptions about the use of methods abound, and, in many cases, are keeping people from using them. By taking a critical look at historical use of the methods—both good and bad—and correctly applying their underlying principles, leaders can advance the positive development of their organizations and communities in a sustainable way.

A Word on Terminology

We have encountered a variety of terms that are nearly synonymous: large group methods, whole system change, enterprise-wide change, large group interventions, change methods, change processes, and the process arts are among the most common. Many of these are used throughout the book, depending on the author's background and audiences with whom he or she typically works. We have found that a term one person really resonates with can often set off alarm bells and near anaphylactic reactions in another. For now, our advice is to *use the term that you think best for your environment.* Think about how you'll want to explain what you're trying to accomplish to key decision makers, your fellow change agents, and the population that will be most affected by the change, and select a good match.

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