

## Transforming an Australian public organization: a case study using Hirschhorn's 'Three Campaigns' change model

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### Abstract

*Christine Nixon was Australia's first woman Chief Police Commissioner and headed the Victorian Police Force (V.P.F.) from 2001 to 2008. At the time of her assuming charge, the 150 year old V.P.F. was out of step with times, and best described by the term 'Autopoiesis' (see Morgan, 2006,p243), which is broadly about an organization operating as a self- sustaining organism, unaffected by its external environment, and making reference only to itself. Using Hirschhorn's (2002) 'three campaigns' change implementation model, this case study analyses Christine Nixon's attempts to effect a profound social, cultural, structural and strategic change (on a scale described as 'Corporate Transformation' by Dunphy and Stace,1992, p.72), aimed at converting the largely dysfunctional VFP, into what she wished it to be perceived as, namely a 'People's Force'. The findings reveal that whereas Christine's marketing and military campaigns went fairly well and largely correspond with the beliefs of Hirschhorn (2002), the political campaign somewhat fell short, as was the case with the overall change effort that was launched sequentially, rather than simultaneously.*

### Introduction

Whilst the academic literature on managing change within private enterprise abounds, what obtains in relation to public organizations is scarce. A plausible explanation for this being, that government resourced- public- organizations, are largely insulated from economic pressures and organizational crises that jeopardise the survival of private firms. In the case of the former, though budgets might expand or contract, public services such as public education, military and police services and such other institutions survive, even when they are dysfunctional to the extreme (Metz and Kulk, 2008). In private enterprise however, the absence of strong, proactive change management leadership (Kotter, 1996), could result in poor competitive performance, and eventual failure.

In this paper we use a change management model proposed by Hirschhorn (2002), to undertake a case study analysis of the change efforts initiated during the period 2001-2008 by Christine Nixon, to reform the VPF -which at the time of her assuming charge- was over 150 years old, archaic in its ways, and arguably dysfunctional. The paper first reviews the literature on change, in particular, change in public organizations and the VPF itself, then briefly describes Hirschhorn's (2002), change management model that's used to examine Christine's change effort. Next is a synopsis of the VPF organization at 2001 when she assumed charge as Chief Commissioner, after which is a comparison between the do's and don'ts of Hirschhorn's three change campaigns [Marketing, Military and Political] and the change initiatives implemented within the VPF. Rounding off this work, is a section each on the methodology, findings and conclusion.

## Literature Review

The extant literature on conventional change management is abundant. Whilst sections of the literature address change in universal terms, others focus on the cultural aspects of change, yet others on its context bound nature (contingency approach), and yet a few others on understanding and managing resistance to change. Few of the more frequently encountered topics in the literature under which change management is addressed (not exhaustive) include : (a) General Change Theories [Lewin, 1951; Kotter,1996 and 1996a; Carnall, 1991; Collins, 2009; Greiner, 1998; Hirschhorn, 2002] (b) Strategic Change [Johnson, 1992] (c) Barriers / Resistance to Change: [Kotter and Schlesinger,1979; Strelbel, 1996; Prahalad , and Bettis, 1986; Prahalad , 2004] (d) Culture Change: [Metz and Kulik, 2008; Hassard and Sharifi,1989; Bate, 1994; Kanter, Stein, and Jick, 1992;] (e) Core values approach to Change [Whiteley, 1995; Whiteley & Whiteley, 2007] (f) Contingency Approaches to Change [Dunphy and Stace,1990] (f) Change in the Public Sector: [Price & Bordie ,2001;Fernandez & Rainey, 2006] (g) Change in the Police [Paoline, 2003; Duncan, Mouly & Nilakant 2001],etc.

The academic literature on change management within police organizations in general and the VPF in particular is scarce, with notable exclusions being Metz and Kulik (2008) Paoline, 2003; and Duncan, Mouly & Nilakant 2001]. Whilst intimate details of the VPF and its inner workings are exhaustively listed in '*Fair Cop*' [2011, Christine Nixon's biographical memoir authored by herself and Jo Chandler], the work doesn't warrant its being regarded as academic literature.

However, there is a literature on organizations sharing a militaristic -police character, mostly hierarchy based and rigidly top-down managed (E.g., Trice and Beyer, 1993; Ashforth and Mael,1989; Simpson and Koper 1997; Daboub et al.(1995); Williams, Barrett, and Brabston ,2000 etc). These authors identify several characteristics leading to the emergence of strong subcultures: high within-group task interdependence and low between-group interdependence, accountability for performance goals but not means, member stability and cohesion, peer-based socialization, and physical proximity and the prevalence of unethical subcultures as the result of compartmentalization of identities. They further maintain that the high value placed on group solidarity in the military may increase the likelihood of passive acquiescence.

These works significantly enhance our understanding of how VPF's culture took seed, was nurtured for years with an entrenched inward looking dominant logic (see Prahalad,2004) and then evolved into what it turned out to be -ie at the time of Christine's assuming command- a largely dysfunctional force, with '*a stench of internal corruption.....and a poisonous culture war within its ranks.*'('Fair Cop', Nixon and Chandler,2011)

### Hirschhorn's (2002) Model

Most recipes offered by management theorists to effect successful change, either suggest conformance with their 'to do' checklists to make change happen (Kotter and Schlesinger,1979;Kotter,1995 etc), or, to identify 'drivers' and nullify 'restrainers' effectively (Lewin,1952), or to focus on organizational 'core values',etc (Whitely,2007). Hirschhorn (2002) offers a somewhat different take, in arguing that '*Large-scale change initiatives often collapse under the weight of their own complexity*'. Rather than focussing on understanding, measuring and managing change - and addressing associated clichéd factors-such as restraining and driving forces and urgency, his model suggests that to effect change, leaders need to break down the effort into three coordinated campaigns: *political, marketing, and military*'. [A gist of Hirschhorn's model is in the boxed section below].

*'...Successful change agents I've observed employ three distinct but linked campaigns in their initiatives. A political campaign creates a coalition strong enough to support and guide the initiative. A marketing campaign taps into employees' thoughts and feelings and also effectively communicates messages about the prospective program's theme and benefits. And finally, a military campaign deploys executives' scarce resources of attention and time as well as manages resistance. These three interlinked campaigns are all essential to the success of a change program. Without a political campaign, an initiative risks being undermined. Without a marketing campaign, a leader will be dismissed as a social engineer out of touch with employees. Without a military campaign, a program can stall even after a successful pilot project..... Successful campaigns build winning coalitions, tap into people's thoughts and feelings, and deploy scarce resources at the right beachheads and at the right time. If any one of these campaigns is lacking, the change initiative is bound to fail'.*

**Hirschhorn (2002)**

**The Political Campaign:** Corporations are so complicated and resistant to change that no leader, however powerful, can implement a major change all alone. Successful executives forge coalitions to lead and sustain change initiatives, like winning politicians, who create coalitions for more funds, and votes. Those short circuiting the all-important process of building coalitions, lose. Politicians build one coalition to win a party's nomination and another to win the election. Forging Alliances is an ongoing exercise, ie ensuring the right makeup of a coalition's membership, ie who's leading, who's playing a supporting role, who's an active participant, and who's in the friendly audience – these differ at various stages of the campaign. *'A zealot provides better leadership when a campaign's theme has yet to take root, but a consensus builder is better suited to lead when corporate policies are being changed to accommodate new work practices'*. Twists and turns are part of the coalition building process and *traditionalists need to be part of the coalition*. Changes to the organizational structure, and creation of temporary counter structures to support change initiatives, are a must.

**The Marketing Campaign:** *'Listening In'* to voices from the field is critical to any internal marketing campaign, as some ideas for change emerge from the field, not the corporate centre. Hence the use of ethnographic methods to learn what people do and think –ie how people dress, the care they show to their surroundings, what rituals they use to greet one another how people go about their everyday work and to uncover latent strengths and weaknesses. *Working with Lead Customers* –employees who step forward to try out a new practice or, as often happens, have invented one themselves - is important, as is a clearly articulated, high-level theme that employees at all organizational levels can respond to.

**The Military Campaign:** Central to implementing change, is the management of resistance. To introduce lasting changes, one must deliberately engage with and overcome resistance. To overcome organizational resistance to change, three military tactics are useful:

(i) *Securing Supply Lines*- Just as logistics are critical to any military campaign, supply lines are crucial to every change initiative. In corporate change management the 'supply lines' are construed as 'channels that provide attention' or, which focus attention, on the change campaign on hand. This, as change initiatives feeds on attention. *'Change initiatives usually fail not because of active resistance or insufficient funds but because of a lack of attention..... 50% of all corporate initiatives bog down simply because people stop paying attention to them'*. Therefore securing supply lines before kicking off change campaigns is critical, as is the careful use of meetings, that's another way to gain attention and overcome resistance.

(ii) *Choosing Beachheads*- Organizational leaders often resort to testing the efficacy of new practices -change initiatives- by establishing pilot projects. These pilot initiatives often tend to

be less onerous in their complexity than the real change situation, thereby minimizing the challenges in implementation and resulting in easy successes. However, such pilot initiatives rarely, if ever, turn into beachheads because they do not expose leaders to the complex dynamics they will eventually face. *'A beachhead is never easy to secure; that's what makes it strategic'*. A beachhead needs to be a free space for innovation, and it needs to be able to loop learning back into the rest of the organization.

(iii) *Creating a War Room: 'A war room is a dedicated space encouraging people to focus on a single issue and can help screen out many day-to-day organizational distractions'*. It can house shared materials, documents, charts, and maps for everyone's use. If located near a CEO's office, the war room also signifies the importance of the issue under attack. It serves as an information nerve centre, and provides leaders with access to all data specific to the change initiative being tackled (attacked). It symbolises the seriousness with which an initiative is being addressed, and could be used for increasing media awareness on the same.

*'Any organization determined to implement a change initiative should create a war room.'*

### **The VPF between 2001-2008 [Source: Nixon and Chandler,2011]**

The Victorian government's appointing Christine Nixon as the VPF's first female Chief in 2001, was in fact a demonstration of its acceptance that it was time for major change in the force. Being a female, an 'outsider' (of Victoria state) and an academic with insignificant operational (police) experience, was a major departure from the old order, particularly so, in terms of increasing 'women's representation' within the VPF, then conspicuous by its absence. The following sections provide a summary of the VPF's workings and culture between 2001-2008.

Diversity and discrimination: The VPF had the least women officers of all Australian police forces in 1999 (Towers, 1999), their resignation rate higher than men's, with women categorized separately as "policewomen," and, their role relatively limited, compared to the males in the force. Women officers were sidelined and experienced exclusion, and their efforts to be a part of the institution, marginalized. [*Christine herself was referred to in derogatory terms, such as the 'Wollongong traffic cop', 'Mrs Doubtfire', 'The best scone making aunt', etc'*, see Nixon and Chandler (2011), p217]. Minorities such as non-white, women and gay officers were discriminated against as well. However, the 'male dominated culture' being the cause for attrition, was not publicly acknowledged until 2000. Post 2000 witnessed increasing media reports on sexual harassment, the absence of flexible policies for parents, officers' negative attitudes toward women and racial minorities, and of homosexual police officers in the VPF faring no better than their female and non-white colleagues. Gay and lesbian officers were harassed and relations between them and the rest of the force were strained (Metz and Kulik,2008;Porter, 2003; Towers, 1999). The appointment -between 2002 and 2003 - of Sanjib Roy and Sue-Ellen Zalewski as Director and Assistant director of HR was unprecedented, as neither of them were white, nor males. As such, the old VPF leadership had little understanding of the business case for diversity.

Macho, male-hegemonic culture and patriarchy: VPF had a strong male-hegemonic culture for in excess of 150 years, and a marked distaste for workforce diversity. Members christened themselves 'the 'brotherhood', and outsiders considered inferior and unworthy of inclusion to the force. Due to the dominant culture behind it, HR systems such as recruitment, training, technology and performance were rigged to promote the interests of 'the brotherhood'. Approved behaviours were rewarded, a few with vested interests promoted, and 'potential troublemakers relegated to dead-end positions'. Patriarchy was rife. The dominant logic was



racist in terms of attitudes towards minorities and outsiders, political, in terms of beneficial alliances and illegal gains and patriarchy. Divisions wanted different uniforms to show the difference in ranks, power and position within the force. Decades of a strong masculine environment and tradition passed down uninterrupted, affected accountability and productivity in the long run. Community needs and protection were irrelevant to most officers. The homogenous, male-dominant, anti-diverse 'brotherhood', licensed bullying, marginalization, and military strictness with no room for flexibility in thought, creativity and individual autonomy to problem-solve.

*Internal corruption:* This sub-heading is best described by the excerpt in the boxed section below, from the book 'Fair Cop'[Nixon and Chandler (2011)].

The ecosystem for survival, was comprised of "birds" (upright and honest officers), "grasshoppers" (the occasional freeloader type and the "man-eaters" (corrupted detectives and political partners).  
Nixon and Chandler (2011).

Nixon and Chandler's (2012) book provides a comprehensive account of the power and politics interplay, the police-crime nexus, and 'the rats within the ranks' [See Chs 17 and 20]. The political ties that existed throughout the network of officers preserved the self-interests of the corrupted, instilling a sense of complacency and organizational inertia. Officers had been misled under the dominant discourse that the force existed only to fight crime in the physical sense and to work with political parties in place to achieve its goals. Most of the major dealers in the drug trafficking business were officers. The organization refused to look inward for suspects. Codes of silence were developed to protect the privileged few who had power and were tempted to partake in illegal operations. A few went above the law to acquire gains based on the ideology that the force could go above the law as long as it resulted in capturing perpetrators and vigilantes. Torture, interrogation and solicitation of drugs were carried out without supervision in cover-ups and sting operations. Certain relationships and transactions between officers and senior management made illegal operations a daily occurrence. Past credentials and glorification of the force led officers to believe that they were on the right track. There were those who had political ties with drug vendors within the police ranks. Pawns were kept in positions, who carried out orders to persuade union members to exhibit anti-Nixon behaviour.

*General work culture:* VPF's cultural paradigm that concretised over 150 years was so strong that this became its biggest barrier to change. It echoed superficial beliefs in masculinity, political agendas being served due to complacency and corruption, and a strict military perspective on structures in terms of command, communication and obedience. Past strategies and behaviours that were successful were still being relied on, increased blind-sightedness on the organization's decreasing performance and reputation as a whole. A sense of entitlement encouraged corrupt practices, alliances and un-productivity. The emotional damage inflicted on those caught between had resulted in years of emotional badgering as well as exposure to devastating crimes. This led to an unhealthy lifestyle of drugs, booze and almost no work-life balance. Promotion opportunities as well and individual benefits were nil. Hierarchies were too tall and caused delays in communication. Superficiality through appearances like different uniforms, clean-shaven faces and hats, were priorities and methods of segregation again. Officers were particular of uniformity, stellar appearances and military-like observance of the rules.

### Comparing change initiatives in the VPF, with Hirschhorn's 3 campaigns model

The change management initiatives undertaken by Christine to alleviate VPF's issues (described in the foregoing) are now assessed for their convergence or divergence with the three distinct campaigns that Hirschhorn (2002) said all change efforts must be split into, in order not to crumble under their own weight and complexity. For purposes of brevity, only two points each are being provided, under headings 'convergence' and 'divergence', against each of the three campaigns of the chosen model.

#### a) The Political Campaign:

What went right [Convergence with Hirschhorn's political campaign]	What did not go right [Divergence from Hirschhorn's political campaign]
<p>-Consensus building with the masses, at relatively lower / less influential levels.</p> <p>-Changes to the organizational structure, and creation of temporary counter structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing one layer of management between her, and the department heads and regional assistant commissioners,</li> </ul>	<p>Limited consensus building where and with whom it most mattered most –powerful 'Traditionalists', [E.g: Noel Ashby, Paul Mullet, Stephen Linell etc] with whom 'a zealot like' –not long term consensus building approach was adopted.</p> <p>- Directive leadership tendencies, with off and on aggressive approach with powerful opponents entrenched in old ways, and loyal to former leaders</p>

#### b) The Marketing Campaign:

What went right [Convergence with Hirschhorn's Marketing Campaign]	What did not go right [Divergence from with Hirschhorn's Marketing Campaign]
<p>- The several 'station visits' and presentations inside and outside the VPF used to communicate her vision for the VPF and that provided two-way communication opportunities across the VPF and Christine.</p> <p>- The 550+ "Force Issues." raised by officers during her visits (Victoria Police, 2002).</p> <p>-Replacing "Executive Command" (in use for almost 150 years) to "Corporate Management Group."</p>	<p>-The marketing campaign for the most part was very strong and effective.</p> <p>-Some more 'listening in' /taking on board of the views of the senior ranks / traditionalists [for example on uniform/attire issues, drinking on the work premises] would have resulted in more harmonious relations. However, these could be considered relatively less critical, as compared to weaknesses in the foregoing 'political campaign'</p>

#### c) The Military Campaign:

What went right [Convergence with Hirschhorn's Military Campaign]	What did not go right [Divergence from Hirschhorn's Military Campaign]
<p>-(i) <i>Securing Supply Lines</i>: This aspect was effectively carried out, with ongoing 'attention' paid to all aspects of change addressed.</p> <p>(ii) <i>Choosing Beachheads</i>: Given the centralised structure and tightly interlinked nature of operations of the VPF, 'choosing beachheads' [as with 'test markets'] was not feasible.</p> <p>(iii) <i>Creating a War Room</i>: Here too, given the geographical dispersion of the force and nature of operations, it's wasn't practical to have a 'war room'.</p>	<p>-No significant shortcomings are observable against this factor.</p> <p>-Not applicable</p> <p>-Not applicable</p>

### Methodology

A qualitative case study methodology has been adopted to analyse this contemporary, real-life situation, for which multiple sources of evidence [all secondary data] have been used.

'Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships' (see Yin, 1984, p. 23).

Whilst the main case facts relating to the VPF have been extracted from the book 'Fair Cop'[Nixon and Chandler (2011), a range of articles from the extant literature, from the popular press and other sources have been used to validate various claims and arguments offered in the book.

The case was then analysed using the change management model of Hirschhorn (2002)

### Findings and Conclusion

In this case study, we attempted to analyse how Christine Nixon went about initiating and managing change within the Victoria Police Force in Australia (between 2001 and 2008), using the 'three campaigns' change management model conceived by Hirschhorn (2002). Viewed from this lens, we argue that whereas Christine did remarkably well in the 'marketing' and 'military' campaigns of the change process, there were shortcomings in her management of the 'military' campaign.

In this latter campaign, although there were aspects she handled well, such as creating counter-structures etc, a critical deficiency [either through design or default] was arguably her failure to build consensus and take on board the 'traditionalists', who constituted a major influence base in the VPF. Her actions in this regard, were in Hirschhorn's words 'Zealot like', more appropriate for short term solutions, than lasting ones. Resultantly, it appears that the impact of her mis-handling of this campaign, resulted in her tenure with the VPF having a less than happy ending, and her exiting the force a bit more prematurely, than what may have been the case if she had managed to turn the traditionalists into allies, rather than her adversaries.

However, the VPF that Christine left behind [called 'AC' for 'After Christine'] was considered by many, as being better than the 'BC' - 'before Christine' - version of itself.

### Limitations

One limitation of this work-that perhaps lends itself to the domain of 'areas for further research'-is that the unit of analysis of this is limited to the VPF only, and does not draw parallels with any other similar organization that attempted to effect organization wide change.

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