



# Taming the Beast

## A positive approach to change

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### Abstract

The Beast prowls in any organisation that needs to change. It is emboldened by anxiety, fear and cynicism. When it feeds, it consumes profits, puts the organisation in danger and lays waste to executive careers.

This *ChangeBEAT* paper looks at two change programmes, one where the Beast broke free and ran amok, and another where it was tamed and brought to heel.

## Meet the Beast



From an early age we hear a whisper from deep within our brains that tells us change is dangerous. Better to stay close to what we know than risk life and limb in the treacherous unknown.

As we grow, our rational minds learn there is wisdom in these words. For every Columbus or Livingstone there are a hundred forgotten explorers that ended up in the cooking

pot or shot full of arrows!

In our business lives we also learn to distrust change. We get comfortable where we are and with our regular pay check. We watch “flavour of the month” management initiatives stumble and fail, damaging those naïve enough to get involved.

We learn that executives, who one day preach the need to change, somehow are not there when the really tough decisions must be made. We learn that their huff and puff, so threatening to our comfortable existence, will probably go away if we only wait a little while.

So we become sceptical, cautious and even downright contrary when the subject of change is raised.

So meet the Beast. The Beast is people's collective resistance to change, and very resistant it can be.

## The challenge

The main purpose of the company executive is to drive change. Without change there can be no progress and without progress shareholders are sure to be disappointed. So executives must change their organisations; if they are to succeed they must learn to recognise and tame the Beast.

Let's see how the Beast played its part in two real-world case studies at the mobile phone development centre of a global company.

## Case Study: mobile phone development



The new development centre CEO finds that his parent company is very unhappy. They complain that the centre's products are always delivered late. That same day he hears more bad news. The ISO 9001 certification vital to selling in the European market is about to be lost. If these critical problems cannot be addressed, the future of the centre looks bleak.

The CEO defines two new programmes: the first is to "always deliver on time"; the second is to ensure that "ISO 9001 certification is retained".

As we will see, these two programmes embraced the Beast in very different ways.

### **"Always deliver on time"**

A number of different, uncoordinated activities are initiated to "always deliver on time". One of these is the introduction of a Project Management Office (PMO).

The enthusiastic head of the new PMO, a newcomer to the development centre, believes that common project management processes are an essential element of the drive for better delivery. Until now there has been no standard project management approach throughout the organization, with skills, processes and systems varying widely.

Keen to make progress, he sets out to reform the organisation's project management practices by introducing a computerised enterprise programme management system.

The PMO establishes a cross-functional team that selects the system and pilots it successfully in a small project. Many of the most important project people in the organisation are busy developing the current handset which, as usual, is behind schedule. Only one project manager has the time to get involved with the pilot.

Notwithstanding this omission, the team agrees that the system is ready to be implemented on a mainstream development project and in its lair the Beast begins to stir!

### **The Beast wakes up!**

A valuable feature of the enterprise programme management system is that all the development centre's plans and resources can be managed as a single portfolio in a central database.



Within each project the plans and resources are rolled up automatically, and in their turn, the projects roll up again to a complete company view.

Effective use of such a tool will be a huge step forward for an organisation where even desktop use of Microsoft Project is inconsistent.

Unseen, the Beast stands up, stretches, and starts to feel hungry...

### **The heartbeat of the prey**



The new system requires a weekly "heartbeat" process by all project and line managers to update tasks and resource assignments and enable the roll-up to portfolio level.

Once the roll-up is complete, reports can be produced for use by executive managers in their cycle of weekly and monthly review meetings.

This discipline brings transparency and accountability, but also represents a significant change in an organisation where project managers are used to producing an occasional one-page report, and where (crucially) executives have had no access to the data necessary to challenge it.

The Beast sets off from his lair, licking its lips.

### **The Beast closes in**

The PMO team do not appreciate the step from the non-critical twenty five person pilot project, to a full handset development programme involving up to four hundred people under immense schedule pressure in the UK, Japan and China.

The innovative new enterprise programme management system, requiring an extensive behaviour change throughout the organisation, is launched at the same time as a new handset development. The political ramifications of the increase in transparency and availability of information to executives are ignored.

The hapless system implementation team lacks the experience to appreciate the dimensions of the problem, and do not see the Beast, now closing in at full speed.

### **The Beast strikes!**

Matters come to a head when the new handset project team finds itself in training workshops expecting to be told how to plan its projects better with the new system.

The system vendor's expectation is that the project team will explain how planning is done so that they can automate the process with their tools.



The Beast runs amok and the carnage is terrible to behold! The handset project team vehemently deny that they lack effective project management processes or that this is the cause of their failures to deliver on time. They become angry and uncooperative, blaming the enterprise programme management system for increasing their workload, without providing benefit. Line and project managers bitterly resist the loss of control implied by need for plans and resources to be updated for the weekly “heartbeat”. After all, in the old world, plans were rarely updated at all!

Only the Beast is happy. It gorges itself on the resentment, anger, frustration and fear of all involved as the enterprise programme management system is roundly rejected. The only thing everyone agrees is that the PMO and its implementation team are to blame.

Eventually the dust settles and the blood dries. Despite all business logic and the undoubted benefits the new system would confer, the opportunity to transform the project management practices at the development centre has been botched.

Well satisfied, the Beast returns to its cave for a well-earned rest.

### **“Retain ISO9001 certification”**

Meanwhile the other major change initiative, “Retain ISO9001 certification”, follows a different route.



Time for the programme is short. Only seven months remain before certification is lost. Worse still, all of the existing systems and processes are moribund and must be entirely replaced.

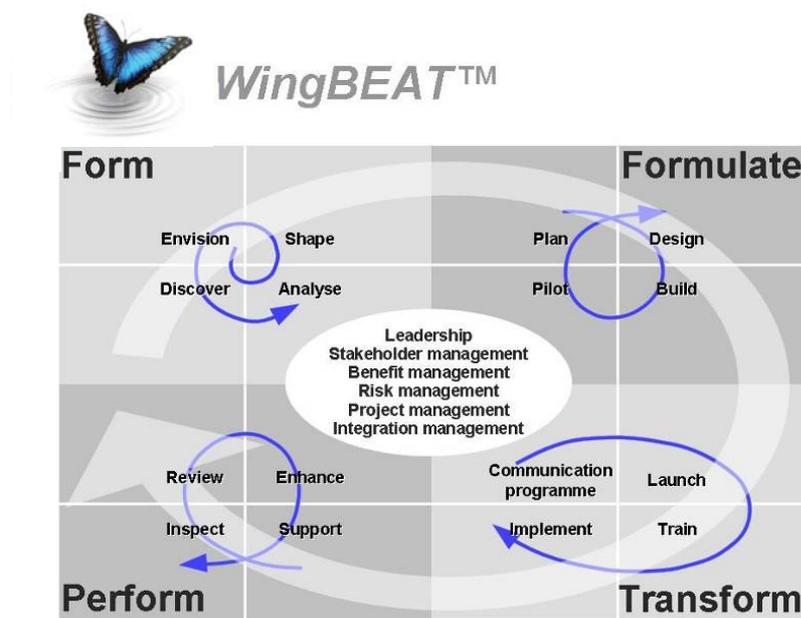
The first big step forward is to realise that the stated objective needs to be recast. While the certification issue provides focus and a “compelling event”, the real challenge, and the way to get “buy in” from everyone who will be affected, is to explain that the initiative is a very necessary part of the development centre’s programme to survive and thrive.

The sponsor realises that he and his team will be unlikely to achieve the objective in time by drawing only on their own skills, so he invites *ChangeBEAT* to help.

The team realises that an integrated change programme is required and chooses to call the initiative the Business Improvement Operating System [BIOS].

### ***WingBEAT* – Taming the Beast**

The team uses *ChangeBEAT*’s *WingBEAT* to define and execute the programme. Its iterative, four phase approach (*Form, Formulate, Transform* and *Perform*) provides a blueprint for the change programme.



In the *Form* phase the change is envisioned, tested and shaped with the sponsor and a group of key stakeholders. This group articulates the vision. "BIOS will be the way of working at our company and our vehicle for driving continuous improvement."

The business objectives of the programme are clearly set out to support this vision by "improving predictability, time to market, efficiency and throughput." These ideas will form a key part of the communications programme to follow.

In its lair, the Beast sniffs the air and ventures outside. Something is happening, and it goes to investigate.

Once a shape for the programme is agreed, it is defined in detail in the *Formulate* phase with an expanded set of key stakeholders, and piloted with representative groups of people throughout the organisation. BIOS deliverables such as system customisations, websites, training workshops and the communications programme are carefully built and piloted to confirm their effectiveness.

Key processes from each functional area required to deliver a product are also identified and prioritised for implementation. During this process the pilot groups express their issues and concerns (and the Beast's ears prick up) but as these issues are meticulously

addressed they become converts to the approach and emerge as champions for the programme within their own parts of the organisation.

The Beast is attracted to these sights and sounds, but is unsure what to make of them. It circles round, curious.

During the *Transform* phase a comprehensive, managed internal communications programme ensures that everyone in the organisation knows what BIOS is, why it is important, what is expected of them, and the support they will be given.

In all cases it is their own manager who explains this to them in team meetings. The sponsor hosts an all-company meeting to mark the programme launch, and explains what it is all about. Workshops and training are held to familiarise everyone with the processes and tools required for the new way of working.

As the messages are given to the people from their own managers, the barriers to change are broken down. Without fear, the change team reaches out to the Beast, carefully and respectfully, and scratch it between its ears. The Beast ducks his head and wags his tail.

The *Perform* phase is then launched in a series of co-operative post-implementation inspections and reviews.

It is recognised that this phase of the process is vital. Even if a superb job is done in *Form*, *Formulate* and *Transform*, if there is no *Perform* phase then everyone will agree what a great change programme it has been, but will then return to their desks and do the same as they always did.

In the BIOS programme all the necessary support is provided during the *Perform* phase. Excellent communication leads to a clear understanding and cooperation with the programme.

Tamed at last, the Beast returns obediently to its lair, circles a few times and goes to sleep, in the sure knowledge that somewhere soon there will be the chance to feed again.

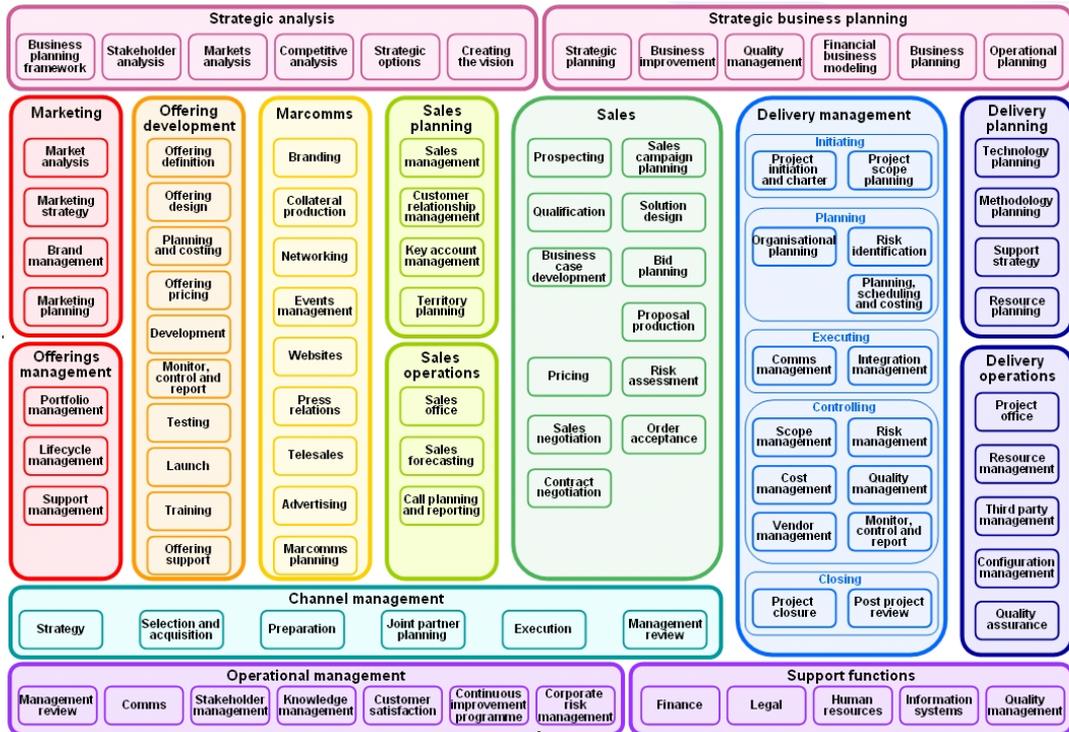
The Taming of the Beast does not happen by magic. Throughout the change programme the team works hard on its core disciplines. Within the overall framework of *WingBEAT*, proactive leadership, programme management, risk management, benefit

management and stakeholder management all play a vital role in the Taming of the Beast.

**BIOS – results**

The first taste of success is delivered when the organisation easily passes the re-certification audit. The auditor comments that despite the rapid implementation the system is well established and among the best that he has seen.

For the first time the development centre has a process map of all its activities (a customised version of *ChangeBEAT's ProcessMAPPER* below) which is used as both an effective vehicle for communication and further improvement, and a graphical front-end to the BIOS process management system. Many of the processes are populated with customised versions of *ChangeBEAT's ExecKIT*® which provides briefings, tools and process guides.



## Business success after two years



Following the change efforts, business results at the development centre are transformed. Project milestones hit increases from 25% to 75%, and any slippages are actively managed so that the product developments themselves are all on time.

Measured customer satisfaction is increased by 70%, and ISO certification is retained through the introduction of a real continuous improvement culture.

## Lessons learned?

It is a major error to think that a new IT system can be used as a Trojan horse to reform an organisation without a supporting, integrated change programme.

Changes in behaviour are the real objective of any corporate IT initiative and must be put at the centre of an integrated change programme, rather than treated secretly as if they will be an incidental by-product of a system implementation. What doesn't get managed rarely gets done.

The political issues generated by the change must also be understood and addressed as a part of an integrated change programme. The Beast likes nothing better than a vested interest dressed up as a righteous cause!

The sheer fear that change can generate should never be underestimated. Change is a frightening thing for people, and always will be. It is indeed a Beast that must be tamed if change programmes are to succeed.

In the case study we have seen that programmes which ignore or misunderstand this Beast will fail to deliver anticipated benefits, and may be destroyed altogether along with the careers of their sponsors and managers.

On the other hand, those change programmes which understand and engage with the Beast using structured change management techniques such as *WingBEAT* can tame it, deliver their benefits, and

enhance both their host organisations and the careers of their sponsors and managers.

### What next?

If you have a Beast of a change that you need to make to your organisation, or a Beast running amok, then call *ChangeBEAT* - Beast Tamers by appointment!



*ChangeBEAT* defines, develops and executes change programmes that help achieve enduring business benefit rapidly and reliably. Our people have practical field experience, and are equipped with *WingBEAT*, our proven change methodology, and our extensive tools. We are professional, pragmatic and action oriented.

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