



# Change is dangerous – be careful!

It is important to recognise that people making change happen is disruptive. Any organisation facing disruption tries to restore balance. Heifetz and Linsky, in the book “Leadership on the Line” (Harvard Business School Press, 2002), talk about four basic methods organisations use to prevent change and restore equilibrium:

“When exercising leadership, you risk getting marginalised, diverted, attacked or seduced. When people resist adaptive work, their goal is to shut down those who exercise leadership in order to preserve what they have.”

Examples of marginalisation might include:

- demoting, sacking or relocating someone
- listening to the person only when they are talking about their designated area of relevance, ie women only being asked to comment on issues directly related to women, such as childcare or the shoppers creche
- undermining someone’s authority or credibility by the way you react to them, talk about them, behave towards them
- identifying someone entirely with the issue they represent – so you can ignore them when that issue is no longer a fashionable or pressing issue
- setting up a small scale, pilot project which has no impact on the mainstream.
- giving a small, generally insufficient amount of funding to a new group.

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Examples of diversion might include:

- encouraging or compelling someone to widen their agenda so broadly that they lose focus and impact
- promoting someone and giving them more responsibility
- overwhelming the person with other demands, ensuring that they are kept extremely busy.

Examples of attack might include:

- turning the focus of attention away from the change issue and onto a personal issue, making the person the topic of conversation, not the issue
- being physically removed or controlled, eg demonstrators being restricted by police
- being attacked for your character, your competence, your family or the company you keep
- misinterpreting your views
- being physically attacked, injured or even assassinated.

Finally, Heifetz and Linsky talk about seduction, a politically charged word. They define seduction as taking someone out of action by attracting them with something that has special appeal to them.

Examples of seduction might include:

giving the person something they want,

- money
- power
- influence
- access
- status
- attention
- flattery
- position
- praise

in order to exercise control over them now, or later.

Everyone who wants to make change happen needs to be conscious of their personal weakness. What is yours?