

Change Agent Types

The True Purpose[®] Process

There is a number of different types of change agents. Depending on the details of your higher purpose, you may be called to work with individuals, groups, or organizations. You may deliver services, influence policy, or use a leadership platform to effect change.

The following list describes the different categories of change agents and how each creates transformation. Note that most change agents act as more than one of these, but usually have one or two that are primary:

Practitioner – Practitioners deliver services to individuals, creating change in one person at a time. They may have job titles like therapist, coach or counselor. Many Practitioners are trained in healing professions, like chiropractic, massage or acupuncture. They typically employ processes that require weeks or months to create deep transformation in an individual.

Consultant – A Consultant works with teams or entire organizations, affecting both the collective and the individuals in it. A team or organization that has been transformed by a skilled Consultant will continue to create change in its members and others it touches, even when he or she has moved on.

Teacher/Trainer – Teachers and Trainers design and lead programs for groups. The programs they deliver transform the individuals who attend. The programs can be workshops, trainings, or teleseminars; they may last hours, days, weeks or even years.

Activist – Activists rally support and employ influence to change policy and shift public perception. They may operate visibly or behind the scenes. Skilled Activists bring people and organizations on all sides of an issue together to create and implement powerful, win-win solutions that last.

Leader – By virtue of their position in an organization, association or industry, Leaders have the platform and power they need to create change. Usually, they first transform themselves, next, their organization, and then use the organization as an instrument to create change on a broader scale. Large and powerful organizations can be challenging to transform, and they create highly potent platforms for global transformation when they do.

Messenger – Through books, media, public speaking, seminars and blogging, Messengers deliver a transformational message to those who are meant to receive it. Their impact is usually very broad and temporary, challenging beliefs and behaviors and calling many people to change. Lasting impact occurs for those individuals who take the next step and engage in longer term processes, such as coaching or workshops. These deeper processes may be delivered either by the Messenger or some other change agent.

Social Entrepreneur – Social Entrepreneurs create businesses and organizations that change the world. Rather than seeking to transform existing organizations, they set out to create new ones that promote the change they are trying to create. The organization may model a new way of doing business, it may create change through its activities, or it may donate time and money towards the creating of a new world. Terms and concepts like corporate social responsibility, triple bottom line, and B-corporations are all expressions of this movement. Using their organizations as both models of and platforms for change, social entrepreneurs are able to influence many facets of life and society.

Innovator – Innovators create new products, services and processes that alter the way people live, work and communicate. Both tangible technological innovations (e.g. the plane, the telephone and fire) and intangible process innovations (e.g. voting, meditation and the scientific method) can have a profound and lasting effect on how we live and see the world. Innovators create these new, sometimes disruptive technologies and processes. They often need the help of other change agents in order to cause their innovations to be adopted on a wide scale.

Philanthropist – Philanthropists use wealth to support the activities of other change agents. By channeling funds to efforts that need them, Philanthropists are able to accelerate greatly the pace of change. Their resources often give them influence over the strategies that other change agents and organizations employ. Because many Philanthropists earned their wealth through success in business, their guidance about strategy can be extremely valuable.

Becoming a powerful and effective change agent usually requires internal transformation and external skill training. Some skills and growth are needed by all types of change agents (described in the document “Internal Requirements for Change Agents”); some are specific to certain types. It is our intent to help you learn what it takes to be successful making a living as a powerful agent of change.

Questions for Reflection

Choosing the right change agent type is an important decision; it affects your strategy and methods for creating change.

- Which of these have you traditionally used to create change?
- Which one frightens you the most?
- Which ones are most purposeful for you?
- What skills, resources and training do you need to succeed as a change agent?