

# When change isn't strange

a smoothie story on achieving smooth business transformation

by Ian Richards and Filip Hendrickx



As he sat at the breakfast bar, waiting for his coffee to cool to drinking temperature, Chandra Patel pondered over his perpetual love-hate relationship with social media. He'd always felt that he was behind the curve and was often the last one to discover new apps and always the one that needed to be shown how to use them instead of using his intuition. Maybe it was his age he thought, or were people born with this natural ability or was this a gift only given to geeks and Generation Z?

He felt that he had lost his daughters to the child thief that is social media. Gone were the days where he would take them to his beloved cricket match at the Oval where they would watch every delivery and dismissal followed by a meaningful conversation about what went wrong and what went right. He missed the days where they would cuddle up to him and watch Sunday afternoon films such as Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and be engrossed in it from beginning to end. The wicked social media child catcher with his net had well and truly stolen them away from him and he rarely sees them without their heads stuck in their latest expensive smartphone catching up on the latest gossip with their friends similarly in their bedrooms, often on the same street.

His daughters laugh at him with his two generations old handset and his 56 Facebook friends. He plays along with it, stealing as much non cyber time as possible with them, joking with them that they should consider having some

self discipline and rationing themselves to 500 selfies per day. He sighs, resigned to the fact that he either needs to embrace this cultural change or fight it and face the consequences because he knows deep down that there is only one winner. After all, his friends say that their children are also the same.

He concedes to himself that he likes to keep in touch with relatives all around the world on Social Media, but truth be told, he was happy enough with photos sent via email, however, he must admit, that he hadn't sent photos to his parents in India for a long while.

It was a hate, more than love relationship he had finally decided as he grimaced having dared to taste the red hot coffee that was going to give him third degree burns if he hurried it. What he had enjoyed though was the launch of his company social media site, 'Infinity Supermarket'. He'd liked watching the numbers reach 300,000 followers and took great pride in showing his daughters at every milestone, trying his best to talk their language.

Chandra had been with Infinity Supermarket for 18 years, and although his progress up to UK Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Director had been steady, he had worked his way up from a night-time shelf stacker, and he felt that was pretty decent advancement for someone who left school with a couple of GCSEs and a youth cricket schoolboy international cap or two.

His appointment as Head UK Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Director was a recent thing, having lead the bakery division and the alcohol division in the past and done a good enough job without setting the world alight. As a result, he felt that he was still learning the ropes, the staff and their nuances.

Chandra was proud of having watched Infinity Supermarket grow from 3 stores in the North West to 156 stores Nationwide. Obviously their Unique Selling Point or USP of 'never running out of stock on any item' was resonating with the British public who were obviously sick and tired of going to supermarkets only to find that they did not have what they needed having made the journey. Infinity Supermarket was doing something right, was growing and his family were well provided for and he was extremely proud to be a part of the success story. Chandra saw this as a job for life and he was well and truly weaved into its fabric. It was just as well as he was too risk averse by nature to venture into a new company and compete with those that have qualifications coming out of their ears now that almost everyone has a degree. He feared that he would be exposed, somehow found out. He had risen up through the ranks, knew what he knew and enjoyed that comfort and safety of being part of the Infinity Supermarket family.

Everyone has a (hi)story.  
When initiating change, how  
well do you know and  
consider everyone's (hi)story?

“I have two kinds of problems: the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent.”

— President Eisenhower

What is urgent and what is important in Infinity's situation? For example: urgent = getting the viral communication under control; important = getting the processes right.

It was his eldest daughter that brought the article to his attention. “*Infinite amount of Waste: Infinity Supermarket wastes tons of fresh fruit and Vegetables every day*”. It wasn't clear who had written it, probably people with nothing better to do. There were a few damning photos on the article, in areas where he didn't recognise of tons of his fruit and veg on scrap heaps with a write up condemning the fact that there is so much waste whilst there are people starving in the UK and beyond. It had already got 70k likes which he was reliably informed meant that it had pretty much ‘gone Viral’, which Chandra was hoping wasn't as bad as it sounds. This was definitely one of those social media ‘hate relationship’ days.

Action was needed and action was needed fast. He needed to sort it out before Parinder Gill, Head of Fresh Food and his direct line manager contacted him to ask him what he is doing about it. The last thing he wanted to do was be on the back foot with this and look as if he doesn't have his finger on the pulse. At least he now knew about it first which was a blessing.

Surely there were processes to be followed? Were the staff not following these processes? Do we just throw the food out that have passed their sell by date? Are we buying too much stock?. We obviously have to buy too much so that we can meet our USP promise of never running out, but are we getting this drastically wrong?

Chandra admitted to himself that he probably didn't have the understanding expected of someone in his position in this area and probably should have run a tighter ship. In fact, he cannot remember the last time he saw a report on the amount of waste that was generated. He wasn't even sure that he had ever asked for such a report or seen one.

He felt his anxiety rising, he knew that he had no real time for this, not this month especially. He was going to the West Indies for a week to follow the cricket, he had been saving for it all year and had therefore set aside the remainder of this month to contribute to the strategy and business plan that had to take priority. Knowing well enough that panicking wouldn't do any good, Chandra took a metaphoric step back, and framed the problem so that he could put an action plan together.

The problem was apparent for all to see "Infinity Supermarket was throwing too much fresh fruit and vegetables out into disposal sites across the UK". Hmmm, he reframed that.... the problem was that "it was claimed the Infinity Supermarket was throwing too much fresh fruit and vegetables out into disposal sites across the UK".

Should Chandra regularly see an operational report such as this? When analysing an As Is way of working and designing a To Be, are you considering organisational structures? Do you consider the advantages and disadvantages of hierarchical control with managers having in depth business knowledge vs team and employee accountability and autonomy with leaders providing guidance?

Fully understanding the problem will be key to engaging the right people and getting the solution right.

If this were true there were the following considerations:

- Infinity Supermarket was losing money through incorrect supply and demand
- Although the fruit and vegetables were obviously biodegradable, the supermarket had a moral duty to make good use of the produce that were simply not in pristine enough condition to sell on the shelves.

Chandra had so many questions...

- Is this a UK wide issue?
- How much waste are we throwing out?
- How fresh is the produce that we are throwing out
- What is the procedure for fresh produce that can no longer be sold on the shelves.
- Is this communicated to staff and are they consistently following it across the 156 locations?

Chandra was sure that he didn't have all the questions. He knew he didn't have all the answers, and knew for certain that he didn't have the time to delve into the weeds and sort this out.

David Green had a good working relationship with his senior client, Chandra. Having started off as a parent child relationship due to historic difficulties with the contract, David was pleased to have found a common interest in cricket that he could exploit to build a report with his senior client, however he often felt that he probably overused this and needed another conversational anchor to balance the small talk.

David had recently joined 'Starbrite Consultancy' from another leading consultancy firm. David had risen to become a Managing Consultant in his previous firm. He had put up with the constant periodic personal portfolio building, walking the treadmill of asking for feedback from people with no time to give it to evidence his performance at every review step and for what? to be told categorically that he had 'reached his ceiling' by his so called 'career mentor'.

David had taken offence at this as he had always done what was expected and could not shake off the injustice of it. Certainly not coming from a consultant that he actually recruited and trained who had overtaken him. Now in his 50s, David had not lost his drive for delivery excellence, was a stickler for detail and as his ex colleague and best friend once described him, 'anal' when it came to following procedure and 'doing things the correct way'. But David had now lost his drive to climb the ladder, or moreso, his previous employers had

ground his ambition down into fine dust and he had found a new, less bureaucratic home with Starbrite Consulting.

David's aspiration was no longer with climbing the consultancy ladder, he earned enough money, he'd seen his children through university and they now had families of their own, however he still had this overwhelming passion for Business Analysis in a world where he still felt didn't have enough Business Analysts to ensure that global businesses landscape functioned as effectively and as efficiently as it could. After a few Gin and Tonics, David's favourite rant was his astonishment that Business Analysis was not officially taught through the entire education system as a topic in its own right. That there was no Business Analysis A-Levels and very few Business Analysis degrees.

He would talk about how, in the dark ages, there were programmers and business users who couldn't talk the same language as one talked a language called 'Techy Geek' and the other talked a language called 'Business'. This unhappy situation resulted in the invention of an 'Analyst Programmer' who was, in David's mind effectively, a programmer with a personality, or a business person who had the ability and desire to record programmes on their old VHS video recorder.

This is where David joined the battle, as the next generation in this area - a Systems Analyst. Someone who would take an interest in the business and capture their needs and 'translate' their requirements into systems specifications that the programmers and other people that understood tin and wire could build into a technical solution which didn't always provide the desired result.

David would go on to say that he soon realised that the bad perception of Systems Analysis was as a result of an army of diligent and dedicated people doing exactly what they were asked to do. Depending on how many G&Ts David had, he would explain how he was part of, or very often 'lead' the revolution into Business Analysis which he said once became the fastest growing profession in the World. This revolution was fuelled by the need for Business Analysts to understand the client's business, to ask the right questions to get the right answers, to challenge requirements, to break large problems into more digestible chunks and present these complex situations back to the client in an easier and understandable way so that together, they could come up with the most appropriate solution.

He would argue that as a result of this revolution, Business Analysis had grown at such a rate that it was too big to generalise Business Analysts as a whole anymore and it then got sliced and diced into core Business Analysis (at the centre of everything of course), and then splinter group specialities such as Business Architecture, Change Management, Data and Analytics, Customer Experience, UX design, Product Management and more than likely a few more, depending on where you work.

David liked no more than debating the past present and future of Business Analysis with anyone who wanted to listen, and it was this storytelling ability that David had that endeared him to more junior members of staff who saw him as a father figure, a coach as well as the lead Starbrite Business Analysis on the Infinity Supermarket Account.

As he sits there wondering if the culture of sending so many emails around his company is truly effective, the phone rings.

David hears Chandra's familiar voice, "Hi David. It's Chandra",

David, having had a feeling that Chandra would call him today, responds with his semi scripted response "Hi Chandra, great to hear from you. What do you think of the Surrey's collapse at the wicket yesterday?"

Chandra sighs "Yeah not good, I was there, we also need a new captain, the field positions were all wrong, they were knocking us around all over the place."

David, feeling adventurous tries to inject a bit of humour : "Hmmm yes you may be right, anyway, they are 79 for 4 at the moment which is great..."

Chandra responds confused, "Who are?, Surrey won't start batting until around midday"

Hoping that this attempt at humour doesn't backfire, David retorts "Ha! Bread rolls in Infinity Supermarket!" and is rewarded by polite laughter, Chandra having heard this joke many times, is surprised at how he got caught out, but he is not that surprised as he has a lot on his mind..... Impatient, he quickly turns the subject to business....

"Listen David, I need your help, I need one of your business analysts to help fix this problem that has been brought to my attention through social media... you may have seen it..."

David scratches his head. He has seen opportunities due to knee jerk reactions such as this disappear as quickly as they appear, but he doesn't have anyone on the account that he can free. Reaching back to head office, he gets told about a 'bright young thing' Abbie Townsend who is currently on the bench having apparently shone in her last assignment with a South coast county council streamlining their refuse collection service. Perfect he thought!

Abbie's first thought on receiving the phone call was "great, a brand new market and a different experience". Abbie had wanted to make a career for herself with a stable and reputable company with this kind of diversity being the main reason why she joined this firm. In an age where employees continually move from company to company in search of progression, more pay or just for a change in scenery, Abbie preferred to demonstrate her loyalty to one company and trust in them to make sure that she was rewarded for her loyalty and commitment. Her only fear was boredom, however with so many accounts, Abbie felt that the diversity of the work that Starbrite could offer would hopefully ensure that she would always be presented with new, exciting challenges which would ultimately result in her becoming a more rounded and adaptable Business Analyst.

Abbie's background as an officer in the Armed Forces had given her great stakeholder management skills. She was destined for a great career in the

Knee jerk reactions often trigger us into delivering a solution rather than analysing a problem.

Ask yourself:

1. Am I being presented with a solution, rather than a problem?
2. Have the right people been involved to define this problem?
3. Is this the root cause, or do we need to delve further?
4. Does this problem really have to be solved right now, or do we have time to consider options?

— Be a great problem solver now! by  
Adrian Reed

The result of any business transformation attempt depends very much on the engagement of all people involved. If you let people shine and show them trust, they will surprise you.

Who is involved in the problem that triggered the change? Who will be involved in executing the solution? Are they collaborating on problem and goal definition? Are they co-creating the To Be situation?

military before she was medically discharged after 4 years due to injuring her knee on exercise on Salisbury Plains. Employers seemed to like to recruit from the forces due to their inbred discipline and commitment to finishing the task in hand to completion. Abbie was just that, at 23 years of age, she was fresh and malleable enough to excel through the corporate jungle whilst having the grounding of a self disciplined, self motivated leader who respects the chain of command.

David will be fine to work with, albeit quite formal, Abbie mused. The instruction was clear, do some research around Infinity Supermarket, find that social media article and prepare for a three way phone interview with the client.

“Oh one last thing Abbie”, David commented when the conversation seemed to be complete, “I hear that you have some ideas about your own ways of doing things and take resource from operations to help you do your work.”

Abbie responded “I wouldn’t quite put it like that myself, but sure, I like to think that I have fresh ideas on transformation, born really by helping refugees from a war torn region of Eastern Europe with my time with the military. I found that if you inflict change on them, they are not interested and will likely reject it, so as an alternative I facilitated the necessary changes to their lives and helped and guided them to design their own solutions and

implement their own decisions. This also seems to be working for me in business so I'd like to continue in that vein if that is ok with you?"

David, sceptical, said "Well this is very different to the military Abbie, and every time I have dealt with Chandra, he has both wanted and expected a traditional approach", and then instantly felt bad as it wasn't the truth, it was David who preferred the traditional approach. In fact he had no idea what approach Chandra was open to.

Not wanting to quash her enthusiasm and energy he gave her some leeway by saying "Ok, I'll keep an open mind and let you impress me with your approach but let me make it clear that they're going to be pressing you for answers and solutions as a result of the comments on social media, which means that you are responsible for delivery, which automatically means that my head is also on the block. I will give you all the support you need and will work with you but just please bear that in mind. I'll send you the interview invitation shortly".

“Yes I have conducted some research” Abbie said once the nervous anticipation that accompanies every telephone interview subsided.

Sensing that David, having made the introductions, had given her the floor. “Firstly, if I may...” she gained in confidence “one thing I am struggling with is that you have this USP linked very cleverly to your ‘Infinity’ company name stating that you don’t run out of any stock, however that isn’t very lean is it? Surely it means that you are going to get waste and potentially lots of it which will prove quite expensive.”

Chandra ran through the usual company mantra explaining that

“whilst Infinity Supermarket doesn’t have the buying power to compete with the budget supermarkets, nor the quality to compete with the high end supermarkets, we have found a niche in the market where our customers don’t experience the disappointment of a wasted store visit nor the disappointment of alternative or even missing products with our delivery service. I agree that we are not very lean, and we have to increase our costs in certain areas as a result, however our customers really value our produce promise, which is evident in our growth in recent times to 156 stores. It is just what we do with the waste that is now under scrutiny and especially the waste in the fresh fruit and vegetables department so I don’t want any

challenge to our strategy coming out of this Abbie. Staying true to our USP is a message that is always strongly communicated by our board”.

Feeling he has made himself perfectly clear, Chandra softens his approach with “I hear that you are Starbrite’s waste disposal expert and that we are very lucky that you are available. Can you please tell me more about what your approach would be?”

Abbie, feeling her chance to impress has arrived launches into her thoughts with a mixture of self deprecation and hard sell.

“So yes, unfortunately I appear to be the Starbrite expert of household waste, but I do have solid Business Analysis skills and mastery of the extensive Business Analysis toolkit and I feel that that can always be applied to any situation”.

“So firstly, I need to do some detailed research and discover what is supposed to be happening with the waste. I’d like to see if there are any policies, processes or procedures that give us guidance, and if there are, what shape they are in and why people are not following them. This will probably mean a lot of digging around in Head Office performing some documentation analysis”.

“When the territory and the map disagree, believe the territory.”

— Swiss Army Manual

With the solutions you design, are you changing people or engaging people to initiate change themselves

Are you transforming a business or enabling a business to transform itself?

Sensing silent agreement “To coin a military phrase, I would also like to get out into the field, observe what the employees are actually doing in the stores and understand what challenges they face and see if procedural change is really required, or if it is a training issue. My approach is very hands on and I strongly believe that the employees need to be part of both the problem identification and the solution going forward. I always feel that if you bring the employees along with you on the journey, or even better, let them drive the change, they buy into it more and the change will stick”.

“Are you happy for me to progress on this basis?” She asked “It worked very well on my last assignment where I made it easy for the refuse collectors, operations centre and customer liaison groups to come up with the right solution and it is still working as designed today”.

Chandra replies, with an air of caution “Yes, I agree that it is definitely worth looking to see what processes we have and see what the hell they are doing out in the store, however having come up through the ranks myself, I can tell you now that the majority of the staff are interested in is their staff discount and watching the clock so don’t hold out too much hope for any ingenious help coming up with a solution from the floor. Having said that, yes you have my blessing to propose whatever it takes to get a result but I am going to need to see results pretty quickly as this is pretty urgent. I will arrange for you to have access to the key stakeholders in head office and if you don’t mind

travelling, I will give you contacts in several stores that will help you. All I ask is that you keep me in the loop and justify every change that you need to make”.

Abbie smiled inwardly. Travel was not an issue for Abbie, in fact she was used to it and enjoyed the nomadic consultancy lifestyle. Abbie was single. That suited her at this time in her life and ever since her long time goldfish, 'Thirsty' was placed in a travel sweet tin and buried in the bottom of the garden with his favourite shell, Abbie had no dependencies. Happy with the autonomy granted to her, Abbie promised to keep the communication lines open with regular updates and started her new investigative adventure.

The phone rings at Chandra's office within 5 minutes of the interview, Chandra answers "Hi Parinder, I was just going to call you....I guess that you are calling about the feature in the social media about our waste?..... yes it's 'gone viral', but I'm all over it, I have already dispatched a Business Analyst to investigate as I am maxed out at the moment with our business plan, so leave it with me and I will get back to you as soon as I hear anything”.

In a BA role, you are usually also inflicting change on your sponsors.

It was a fleeting moment, but Abbie met Chandra outside meeting room 201 in head office. She knew that he would be there and had taken the desk nearby so that she could see the room just by lifting her eyes from her laptop screen. She wouldn't have had advance warning that Chandra was in the building if he wasn't meeting Jack Butler, the all American college boy and manager of the new flagship supermarket in London's West End.

It was her chatty hot desk neighbour, Claire who had noticed on the room booking system that Jack was 'in the building'. Claire went on to say that there was a certain buzz when Jack was 'in town' and all the girls would apply fresh lipply and flash their eyes at him and smile.

It was no more than smalltalk with Chandra, she awkwardly introduced herself to him who knew too well that she'd only had a few hours work time since they'd talked. He had not introduced her to Jack during the conversation who was busy responding to what she thought must have been an urgent text and conversation was brief whilst they waited for the room to be vacated by those feeling the pressure of a senior manager waiting for them to finish and leave. Still, it was good to put a face to a name and Abbie had done just that.

Abbie emerged from her work quite pleased with the progress that she had made. She had found more than she had expected to. Process models were

important. She had been astonished how so many companies do not have process models, in any kind of format. Do employees in these companies really understand how they deliver their products and services? How can they ensure reliable and consistent results for their customers? How can they create awareness that every person's activities are part of a bigger picture, and influence other people's tasks and results? Abbie had experienced multiple times how good process models are really helpful in creating a shared understanding of how a business runs, and analyse it in order to truly streamline your service into an efficient and cost effective future, or 'to-be'.

Unfortunately for her, she had found out that anyone who had ever written anything of any instructional use within Infinity had left the company a long time ago. So all she was left with was several old high level generic process models with some simple notes that seemed so old that she was convinced it would fetch a good price at Sotheby's. Yet she felt fortunate, at least she had found something and exhausted that avenue, knowing that so many Business Analysts in her position find nothing at all.

On closer inspection, Abbie found that the process models were poorly written. She found that process flows disappeared down black holes, that the detail in there was inconsistent, with a high level of detail for some activities and an extremely low level of detail on other activities, making it difficult to see the forest for the trees. It was certainly not modelled by someone

Not every organisation has process models, but every organisation has processes.

Is everyone aware of your (their) processes?

Is your organisation's  
approach to process  
management and  
improvement hindering or  
enabling change?

experienced in Business Process Modelling Notation (BPMN) or any of its predecessors. And while process steps were mentioning several business concepts, there was no explanation or definition, no glossary let alone a formal information model.

Still, it was a starting point and basically said that the staff needed to identify all food before they go out of date and put them “on offer” prior to them going out of date (no specifics), and basically where they are out of date then dispose of them in an “appropriate way”, which she thought was so ambiguous, it wasn’t worth the paper that it was written on.

Abbie also found some statistical analysis on waste. This would have been really useful to compare with today’s stats, however the data seemed really old and she suspected that they were projected volumes for an age old business case, a document that provides an argument for investment in change. Surely there was some central reporting that would monitor current volumes she thought.

Needing a break and a stretch, Abbie grabbed her mug and headed to the kitchen. Deep in thought about her next steps, she heard a deep American voice...” I hear that you are our new saviour to fight off the evils of social media? My name is Jack Butler” and he holds out his hand.

“I didn’t know that meeting was about me” Abbie said cheekily shaking his hand.

“Ha! it wasn’t, but I had to find out who it was that Chandra was keeping all to himself.....mine was a meeting to close down the Bakery rollout programme that I played a supporting role in” Jack replied in his American accent that Abbie couldn’t place.

Abbie knew that Jack was playing down his part in the Bakery. She had learned from Claire that Jack was Chandra’s go-to person for all his initiative ideas. “This is my first day in head office...” Abbie said stirring her coffee, “ I am just here doing some research before I head out to a few stores to find out more. I hear you run the new Flagship store in the West End?”

“Yes, but I didn’t know that you were researching me” Jack said with a wicked grin that made Abbie wish she’d never said it. Noticing her embarrassment, Jack continued with his air of confidence, “so what would you like to know?”

Abbie, seizing this opportunity, said “Well I know that we are pretty skinny on process and data, but as you are a manager, what is the leadership culture here around change?”

Jack said “it is a bit more relaxed this side of the big pond, thank goodness but that may be due to our stores not being micromanaged. We are organised

Culture has an important impact on how organisations and people deal with change. Yet culture is defined by everyone's individual behaviour, including yours.

“It's easier to act your way to a new way of thinking, than to think your way to a new way of acting.”

— Jerry Sternin

flexibly and make decisions quite quickly, however we do need to justify significant change. Chandra for instance likes to see a sound business case which took up lots of my time on the bakery programme. Other managers are more relaxed. We have a healthy appetite for risk but again only typically if it is justified and a good strategic fit, which is normally communicated from the top. So I don't have complete autonomy over my store, but I always say that it is better to ask forgiveness than permission. Don't you agree?” Abbie outwardly agreed wholeheartedly, although her old military beliefs in obeying the chain of command alerted her senses.

“Listen Abbie, I have to catch the next train to get back to West London, so I must rush, however please come and visit my store. I have only just taken command of the ship but there are a lot of good things for you to see as well as a lot of bad things, so please come and visit, meet some of my staff and stay as long as you like”. Handing her his business card, Jack said formally “It was my pleasure meeting you Miss Townsend, and I look forward to seeing you soon.”

Abbie returned to her hot desk as Jack left the office in a hurry, and immediately saw Claire glancing over the top of her reading glasses with a wicked, knowing, wry smile.

Any hope Abbie had harboured of immediately getting a clear picture was soon dashed. She had set aside three hours at each store, but in all fairness could have gathered the information she actually got in less than half the time.

Her instant thought was of the lack of autonomy at the store. She did manage to interview several reluctant members of staff and asked open questions such as “can you please explain to me the process for dealing with the fruit and vegetables that are past their ‘sell by’ date?” but was responded to with short answers such as “whatever the boss says”, or “depends on either the mood of the team leader, what day it is or how much waste there actually is”.

Abbie wondered if the environment was right in this particular business to facilitate change. She smiled inwardly as she recalled the sketch she had once noticed which had a manager say to his employee “Now get back in that goddamn cubicle and start thinking outside the box!” Was that the case here she mused?

One thing was clear and that was that the business had grown at such a rapid rate, that the procedural infrastructure had not had time to catch up, and was therefore poor and often non-existent. The poor staff were battered by constant change and were scarred by constantly changing instruction that was poorly communicated. It was no surprise to Abbie that they treated

*Repeatedly imposing change leads to change fatigue.*

“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”

— Rumi

Detailed process descriptions can enable standardisation and consistency. However, they often don't clarify the process' intent or purpose.

A shared intent and purpose can be a powerful trigger for change.

anyone heralding more change with contempt and suspicion and almost dread.

But Abbie was different, couldn't they see that?, then she caught her reflection in the toilet mirror with her high heels, business suit and laptop protruding from her oversized handbag. ‘Hmmm’ she sighed, “that would have to change”.

She did find someone who could produce copies of the process maps that she found in head office, however she was told that they never looked at them, nor use them for training. They were too complex for those to use on the ground. The staff didn't understand them and were never shown how to read them. “As long as they had them, they were covered for audit, and also to prove that we invest in our people”, one manager had said.

She was warned about the culture on the shop floor by Chandra she recalled, yet that didn't stop her having higher expectations in her mind. Wishful thinking on her behalf, however at least she now appreciated the importance of the supermarket shop clock and the staff discount to the staff who worked at the store day in, day out.

On her way out, she noticed the Staff award scheme on the wall. There was a picture of the ‘Employee of the Month’ in a star in the centre of the frame. She

wondered what this particular employee had done to get this prestigious award and what behaviours that drove out in the workforce. She guessed that these were the people who acted positively when they saw the need for change. She couldn't tell, there was no citation with the photo. That was surely the point of the Employee of the Month award wasn't it? to motivate the staff and to drive out the right positive behaviours. She certainly hadn't witnessed it, although she couldn't recall speaking to this Employee of the Month so she let the thought drift from her mind.

Driving back late after her last scheduled visit to the Midlands, Abbie wondered if the staff had a good understanding of the wider network of supermarkets, to learn from them and to generate ideas based on what they saw and experienced from the competition. Or was it too much like a painful 'busman's holiday' to visit another supermarket in their own time? And why would they? They had their generous 20% staff discount from Infinity Supermarket. Abbie makes a mental note to self, to ask at the next visit ... at Jack's store.

Is regularly taking an outside-in look a natural part of everyone's activities (inside and outside of your organisation)? Is it routine? It's a great, continuous driver for change that can come from anywhere in your organisation.

Not having understandable or consistent processes triggered creativity in dealing with the problem of waste.

“I mainly got the cold shoulder....” Abbie vented to David, conveying the difficulties she experienced at almost every store. “But I did find out some important points...”

“Firstly, all stores throw out lots of fruit and veg at an alarming rate. Some proactively catch it before it passed their sell by date and reduce the price and put it on the ‘offer’ shelves. Some offer it to local farmers, one even offers it to the homeless shelter, but most just threw it out for the bins as it takes less effort. I did come across one store that had the approved process diagrams, but they didn’t understand them and never looked at them”.

David wasn’t surprised, he had expected as much.

Abbie continued, “I was really disappointed though David, you would have thought that they would have wanted to be the best that they could be and be striving for excellence, wanting me to help them and giving me all the assistance I needed, but I was treated like an unwanted intruder. I had the feeling that they may have felt threatened as if I was going to cut the workforce and ask those that remain to do more work as has happened in the past.”

David, recognising this behaviour said “This is all part of stakeholder management Abbie, and it comes with experience. I was once the Business

Analyst on a Prisoner Escort business. The escorts themselves were low paid, working in suppressive environments with difficult clients, had poor processes and inadequate technology. They had seen analysts like me come and go, with failed change initiative after failed change initiative and were sick of it. It was difficult as they had the knowledge that I needed, obviously I couldn't just make it up, yet they wouldn't talk to me”.

Abbie, genuinely interested but also feeling the need to respond “So how did you get around that then David”?

David continued “with a generous mixture of patience, honesty and empathy Abbie. I sat in the staff breakout area with the escorts and told them that if I was in their shoes, I would feel exactly the same and would also be tired of talking to ‘people like me’. I told them that maybe these business analysts had over promised and under delivered in the past and that I would do all that I could to make sure that wasn't the case this time”

Abbie asked, “did they believe you and talk to you?”

David replied, “yes, eventually, but it took time. Like getting a wounded puppy from the dog pound, they had been hurt before so I had to build up trust and prove to them that I genuinely want to make their business better. In addition to that, I needed to unlock the ‘What's in it for Me’ factor to grab their

Are you relieving symptoms,  
solving today's problems, or  
creating a resilient  
environment that is built to  
deal with future challenges?

imagination. They needed to know that if they spent their spare time transferring their knowledge to me then they would get better working conditions as a result. It is like building a contract with a get out clause”.

“A get out clause?” Abbie asked.

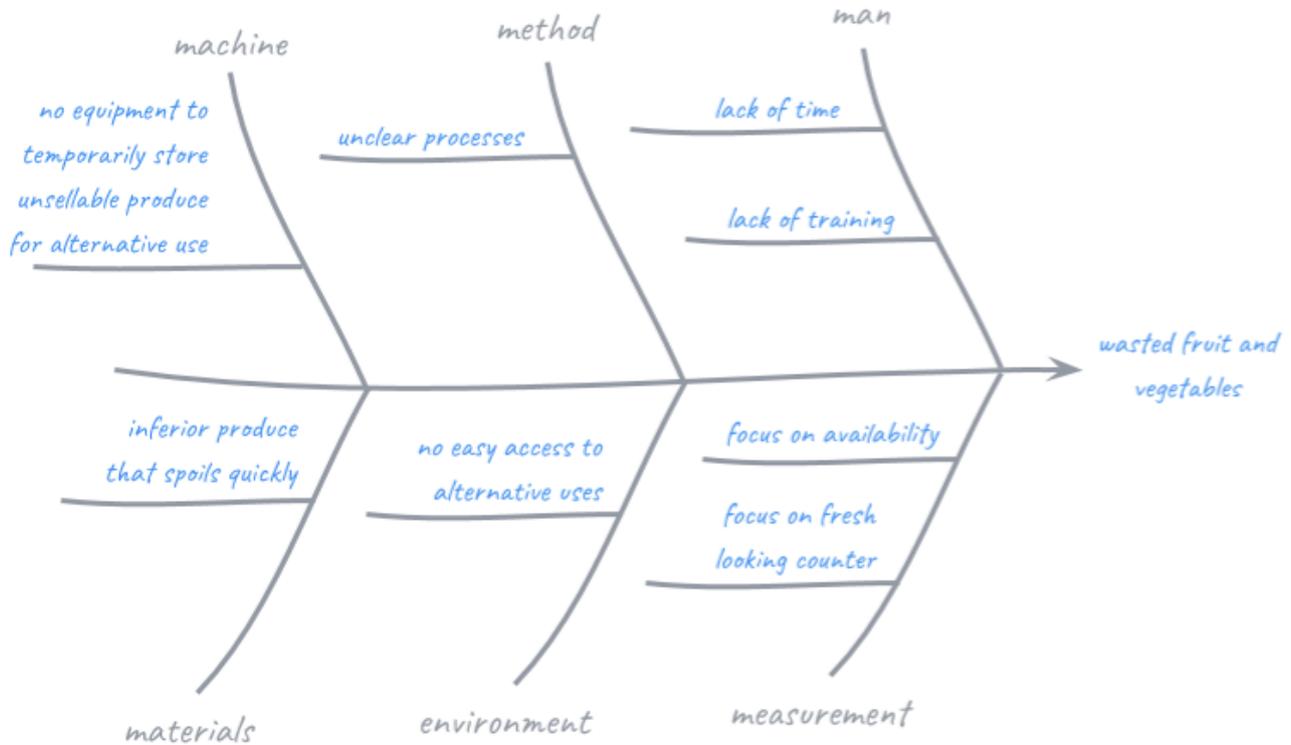
“Yes, the agreement only buys you a portion of their time, it doesn't give you the whole lot. Customers are an impatient lot, and that is why you need to feed them with quick wins, or low hanging fruit as it is sometimes called, so bear that in mind”. Abbie nodded in agreements making a note in her notepad that she had to go and harvest some low hanging fruit.

Abbie, feeling enlightened said, “I'm visiting Jack's store tomorrow. He seems to be more engaging, but if it's the same over there, I'll definitely take up your prison technique.”

Ensuring that Abbie doesn't get too carried away, David warned “Just be careful that you don't take on too much, your remit is to fix this waste issue, not change the whole culture of the organisation, which is a much bigger mountain to climb.”

Heeding the warning, Abbie produced her Ishikawa/fishbone diagram which modelled the possible root causes of the problem. “I have also created this

diagram which shows what the potential problems may be. I believe that the main problem is that the processes are either unclear and too vague, or too



impractical to be of any use, as these issues was mentioned in most of the stores I've visited.

“It is evident that all processes have been poorly communicated or diluted through staff attrition, and that is probably down to poor leadership and communicating the process in a way that the staff find it difficult to understand and this is the reason why it is not implemented consistently. As a result, the individual supermarkets are doing whatever they want with the waste.

David, impressed says, “Looking at this holistically, isn't there a general waste policy and procedure that we need to take into consideration for other departments within the supermarket?”

Abbie replies “Yes, there is, however there are certain legislative controls around non biodegradable produce so the staff definitely need to know what to do with that. Whilst we can learn from the way that is communicated, fruit and vegetables have no legislation around it, and is therefore somewhat neglected. However there is a moral duty on the supermarkets to prevent waste or make best use of it.

Reading between the lines of the fishbone diagram, it becomes clear that the company focuses on availability of fresh looking produce. Staff today are not

incentivised nor rewarded to see waste as a problem and go beyond basic procedures or quick solutions to deal with it.

So focussing on a better waste handling process and enforcing its strict application seems to be the logical solution. But the first solution is not always the best. That's why I like to use variations of the five why technique to challenge my own thinking.

If I use it to find the business benefit Infinity wants to realise, I can link the solution to organisational goals and values. I find this often engages people, as they understand why change is necessary. It also opens up our minds to think of creative alternatives.

I will be verifying all this with Jack in his flagship store tomorrow."

*Infinity Supermarket will improve its waste processes and enforce their strict application*

*Why this solution ? ↓*

*Current processes are not consistently followed*

*Why not ? ↓*

*Current processes miss clear KPIs that are strictly controlled*

*Why ? ↓*

*Current processes are incomplete and unclear*

*Why ? ↓*

*We haven't been focussing on process improvement*

*Why not ? ↓*

*We've been focusing on growing our store network and running our shops*



*Process management initiatives to ensure people follow rules*

*Why this solution ? ↓*

*Current processes are not consistently followed*

*Why do we want to improve that ? ↓*

*It will help decrease fresh produce waste*

*Why do we want that? ↓*

*To show customers we care about ecology*

*Why do we want to show that ? ↓*

*To counter the risk of losing customers and to demonstrate profit and ecology can go hand in hand*



*Engage people to work towards the goals you are trying to achieve*

# How can **Business Analysis** help in achieving change?

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[altershape.consulting/books](https://altershape.consulting/books)

Ian and Filip