

The Bigger Game - A Tool for Transformation



Sara C. Smith
scsmith@slweb.net



it's all made up, inc.

Rick Tamlyn
rick@itsallmadeup.com

The Bigger Game - A Tool for Transformation

Bigger Game¹ - a Model for Change

The Bigger Game is an approach designed to accelerate change and create personal commitment to assure success in change initiatives. The Bigger Game is a nine-block model that focuses on motivations and behaviors that work on an individual as well as group level.

The Bigger Game provides the variety of perspectives that organizations require for considering any question. It is introspective - it asks yourself where you are and what's going on. It is also extrospective - a great tool to build your awareness of others. The Bigger Game process offers key behavioral approaches that encourage leaders to model and motivate change in others in an emotionally intelligent manner.

To leverage the Bigger Game as an effective tool for transformation, it is important to understand how the model fits into and supports recognized leadership theory. First, let's look at how the Bigger Game is supported by change theory. Then we will examine the composition of the Bigger Game model.

Let's look to Dr. John Kotter, noted author and professor in the Harvard School of Business, regarded as an authority in leadership and change. In particular, he discusses how the best organizations actually "do" change. In his book, The Heart of Change, Kotter says:

“During my lifetime, the emphasis in books and formal educational settings has been overwhelmingly geared towards analysis and thought. Feelings were seen as “soft” and talked about in a very fuzzy manner. More often than not, emotions were seen as a distraction (hence, “Don’t be emotional!”). Although very recently this has begun to change.”²

“The single most important message in this book is very simple. People change what they do less because they are given *analysis* that shifts their *thinking* than because they are *shown* a truth that influences their *feelings*. This is especially so in large-scale organizational change, where you are dealing with new technologies, mergers and acquisitions, restructurings, new strategies, cultural transformation, globalization, and e-business - whether in an entire organization, an office, a department, or a work group. In an age of turbulence, when you handle this reality well, you win.”³



Copyright © 2008, It's All Made Up, Inc.

¹ Bigger Game is copyright by It's All Made Up, inc., 2005 and used with permission.

² The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations, Dr. John Kotter and Dan Cohen, Harvard Business School Press, 2002, p. x-xi.

³ Ibid. p. 1-2.

The Bigger Game - A Tool for Transformation

Here is Kotter's Eight Stage Change Model:⁴

- Stage 1: Ensure that people feel an urgent need for change.
- Stage 2: Get the right people involved to lead change.
- Stage 3: Create a new strategic vision.
- Stage 4: Make sure the new vision is effectively communicated.
- Stage 5: Empower a broad group of change agents.
- Stage 6: Successfully pull off short-term victories.
- Stage 7: Consolidate the victories and go after more changes.
- Stage 8: Solidify the change in the organizational culture.

This model defines the steps that should be considered for organizational change. What may be lacking is acknowledgement of the complexities that exist. Kotter's model is linear. Typically change in organizations is neither linear nor totally predictable. A more holistic view of change should also include an understanding of the concepts found in Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis model of change.

In 1951, social scientist Kurt Lewin proposed a powerful view to understand change in organizations that incorporated group dynamics, field theory, and action research into a *systems* perspective⁵. Lewin pointed to the fact that just as in physics, organizations at rest (or in status quo) will naturally stay at rest. More simply stated, organizations are resistant to change and even successful change is a matter of moving forward several steps and then often backwards before moving forward again.

Change happens one person at a time and as Kotter has pointed out earlier, bringing people along is a critical success factor. One change management consulting firm tells their clients that in their experience, managers embrace change in two to four weeks and that the workforce embraces change in about 30 months (yes, months). What's the difference? Personal involvement, understanding and buy in at every level makes the difference. Think about it. Managers are typically involved in planning changes. They are given the opportunity to help tailor changes to fit the reality of their business. However, by the time the change initiative makes its way down to the people who actually do the work, there is more *telling* than co-active⁶ creation.

What we are talking about is how to motivate and engage people. Daniel Pink in his book, [Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us](#), offers the argument that living a motivated, satisfying life requires more than simply meeting the demands of those in control. To get the very best (and often the most) from people, you've got to give them the opportunity to pursue the very best in themselves. It's called flow. You may have experienced it yourself – being in the zone. That's flow. The highest, most satisfying experiences in people's lives occur when they're in flow. That is your aim as a leader - to invite the best people have to offer for their own satisfaction and the success of the organization.

The Bigger Game model is designed to energize and engage people to play bigger - to see their role in the context of something larger than themselves. The "game" activates the right side of the

⁴ Based on Kotter, John P. 1996. *Leading Change*. Boston, MA. Harvard Business School Press

⁵ Based on Lewin, Kurt, 1952. "Group decision and Social Change" In *Readings in Social Psychology*, ed. E. Maccoby, T. Newcom and E. Hartley, 459-73. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston.

⁶ The Coaches Training Institute first used "co-active" in this context. It means an alliance between two equals for the purpose of creation. Co-active goes beyond "collaboration" because it implies mutual respect along with equality of position.

The Bigger Game - A Tool for Transformation

brain - emotions and creativity - before engaging the left side of the brain for analytics and planning. It taps into what motivates people and helps create flow.

When you combine these three factors: the thoroughness of Kotter's change model, the systems awareness from Lewin and an understanding of what engages and motivates people, you get the picture of success that comes from the evocative approach of the Bigger Game as a tool for collaboration and transformation.

The **BIGGER GAME** Model

The Bigger Game helps individuals, teams and organizations create meaning, conviction, courage and growth to help achieve desired goals. And by “playing” a game, you invite those around you to bring a light, creative ethos to the seriousness of work.

Let's examine the model in some detail - the paradox of simplicity and complexity. If we deconstruct the model a row at a time you will notice that the top row focuses on moving out of the status quo by tapping into deep, often personal motivation. You will begin to see how effective the Bigger Game model can be as an ongoing tool.

The top row of the Bigger Game Board begins its focus on the individual. It is a tool of introspection: “How am I responding?” It also invites the player to shift and use the model to be curious of others - “What is *their* response?”

Comfort Zones suggest being aware of the human tendency to resist change on a personal level - think of the cancer victim who can't seem to quit smoking. Comfort Zones can serve us or not serve us (i.e. Humor can be a great gift unless it is a merciless weapon). What is important is being aware of Comfort Zones and the impact they are having - on you, on others and on the organization.

A key Bigger Game concept is that people won't leave comfort zones unless there is a good enough reason to change... imagine the cancer victim who is finally able to stop smoking because they realize they want to see their children grow up.

Hunger speaks to what people really want that is bigger than the trivial activities of the day. Hunger yearns for that which satisfies deeply. There is hunger at all three levels of awareness: me, others and the field. The *field* is a larger view of the world. It can be the organization, the industry, perhaps the world. Again, a tool to have people look beyond their day to day operation.



Copyright © 2008, It's All Made Up, Inc.



The Bigger Game - A Tool for Transformation

Compelling Purpose connects the hunger a person feels with a sense of responsibility to do something about it. Compelling Purpose is personal - people may be compelled by the same thing but their reasons are personal. This square begins to point us to action.

The top row of the Bigger Game Board is a place to ask questions of self and others to better understand drive, motivation and what holds us back.



At first glance, the bottom row of the Bigger Game Board suggests looking beyond the individual toward the group or corporation. And that is true. The paradox is that those squares also speak at an individual level.

On the left, **Sustainability** is a reminder that anything worth doing requires strategic planning and commitment over time. It also means great effort should be balanced with great renewal. The alternative is a risk of burnout of the game and the player(s). Annie McKee and Richard Boyatzis support this theme and provide a deeper look at the qualities of resonance and renewal in their book [Resonant Leadership](#).

Allies – that we can't do it alone is another term with double entendre. A common belief is that Allies are always on our side: believing as we do, provide networking and perhaps willing to join us in the game. In the Bigger Game, Allies can be (and should be) anyone. Consider this - if negative information is often as valuable as positive, then the Allies square invites us to a broader perspective. If we remain curious, our competition can serve as tremendous allies. They provide different perspectives, approaches and interpretations. All are valuable making competition important allies.

Investment reminds us of the strategic nature of the game. It's important to remember that Investment suggests if we are committed to move change forward, the change must be included in plans, measurements and budgeting for the future. One double entendre reminder: Investment should be considered *for* the Game and *in* the Bigger Game player.

The middle row of the Bigger Game Board represents the move to action. The three squares in the middle remind us of the balance required for success in change or business in general.



The **Assess** square points to being aware of impact. It is that type of awareness without judgment that is a cornerstone for emotional intelligence as described in a leadership context in [Primal Leadership](#) (Book and Harvard Business Review article) by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee.

The importance of the **Gulp** square is the reminder that creating change requires a commitment to push boundaries in a way that will sometimes take the breath away in a literal *Gulp*. It has been suggested the opposite of Gulp is a yawn - or boredom.

The remaining square is **Bold Action**. Bold Action is intentionally in the center of the Bigger Game Board. Its position is critical because all elements of a Bigger Game touch and are influenced by Bold Action. Perhaps the opposite of Bold Action can be named "typical behavior" or *business as usual*. Bigger Game players have been heard to say, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten." Change requires Bold Action.

The Bigger Game - A Tool for Transformation

Summary

The Bigger Game is a playful, easy and fun metaphor. It is a concept that will take you only five minutes to learn and a lifetime to live.

The Bigger Game offers a highly effective system for innovating and evolving as individuals, groups, or organizations. The method, when rigorously applied, helps individuals and groups intentionally define what they want to accomplish. It is designed to create a paradigm and perspective shift, and will inspire you to develop your full potential, to be your best, and to do your best to have a lasting, positive impact.