



## How to do change better

An ArtsProfessional feature in partnership with people make it work we help organisations change and develop

Meeting future challenges in the arts sector will not be about managing change, but creating it, says **Richard Watts**.



Ramps on The Moon production with Sheffield Theatres  
Photo: © Mike Kwasniak

The arts sector is always facing change. The particular challenges facing organisations can vary massively: from developing new income models, catalysing place-making, and shifting organisational culture, to managing capital programmes, ensuring good governance and enhancing relevance. But the root problem is often remarkably similar: while many organisations are 'change hungry', they don't have the skills, capacity or resources to realise their ambitions. And how can they choose between different models of change management?

**Change Creation**, a programme designed and delivered by **people make it work**, aims to address this situation. Over the past two years, we've been working with 30 organisations to support and galvanise an expert team of change creators. After more than 40 days of direct support, workshops, mentoring, research, tools, consultancy and action learning, all of the organisations have become part of a blended learning network that can tackle change collaboratively.

### Not managing change, but creating it

All our tools and models have been developed specifically for the changes organisations in the programme are delivering. Through helping them work through their practical challenges, we've developed a way of working that is not about managing change, but creating it.

Change management is traditionally seen as a set of tools and approaches for dealing with resistance and overseeing the implementation of new processes or structures. But our approach is much more proactive, dynamic and generative. We see the development of an appetite for change and innovation within an organisation as a creative act - one that enables everyone to bring changes to life. We call this building of the conditions and environment that make change inevitable change leadership, or change creation.

At the heart of our thinking is the 'eight elements of change' model. This highlights the crucial areas that every leader needs to focus on in order to ensure that changes are delivered, and don't drift into a cul-de-sac of never-implemented initiatives. The eight elements combine to create clarity, consensus, appetite, ownership, confidence, practicality and momentum. Following the steps enables change to be embedded and benefits to be realised.

### A more diverse workforce

You can see what our approach involves by looking at the work of Dan Bates, Chief Executive of **Sheffield Theatres** and one of the leaders on the Change Creation programme. Together with the **Ramps on The Moon** network, Dan is striving for a step change in the development of a more diverse UK theatre workforce that incorporates D/deaf and disabled individuals. He started off with the question: how do we embed inclusivity and relevance across our organisation, programming and people?

"We know diversity is essential to our success, so using diversity as a lens, we started with questions about who we are, what we do and how we do things," says Dan. "Where are we today and where do we want to be?"

Dan and his team have worked with Change Creation to create a new mission, vision and values, reflected in a new brand. They have made changes to their working practices in areas like recruitment processes (including hiring positive action trainees), improved inductions, daily staff briefings, and inviting staff to observe board meetings. They have also invested time and resources into staff engagement, training and development. This has led a strong and united team who are ambitious for change.

Dan's team has also developed a 'story of change' specifically focusing on diversity. A story (or theory) of change is a methodology for unpacking the causal relationships between our work and their outputs and ultimate impacts. Creating a story of change enables organisations to understand all the inputs they execute to create an impact, and also helps in the isolation of data and evidence at each step in the chain of effects to get clearer about where refinements might be needed.

The story of change in Sheffield has led to new initiatives such as Stage Sight (which aims to increase diversity in backstage roles), participation in Bectu's positive action programme, and local work with organisations in Sheffield's Cultural Consortium. Dan says: "We're proud of how far we've come. That inspires us to go further."

### What we've learned

It's exciting to see shifts like these taking place. What's also interesting to observe are the real benefits that come from bringing together leaders from organisations of different sizes and artforms: we've noticed a real shift in confidence, momentum and clarity among all the participants in the scheme. They're challenging each other to shape and plan for bolder futures.

Creating change is often like tending a garden - it takes time and care. But there are practical principles we've embedded in everything we do to enable change to flourish. The learning that the Change Creation cohort is teaching us includes:

- Clarity is a crucial, early priority that takes time and attention. Once we are crystal clear about where we are going, how to get there starts to emerge by itself. We've developed [tools to help you crystallise the changes you want to make](#).
- Building an appetite for change really is a fundamental step. Once everyone is change hungry across the organisation, half our work is done.
- Change is done by people, not to people. Building involvement early on develops ownership, momentum and quality.

Change can be daunting. But in our view, leading effective change is not only rewarding - it's necessary for survival. We tend to find that as well as time, leaders looking to create change need the right processes and tools. If you'd like to hear more stories about how your peers have made changes in their organisations, [take a look at the Change Creation cohort](#) and give one of them a shout.

Richard Watts is Director of people make it work.  
[www.changecreation.org](#)  
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This article, sponsored and contributed by people make it work, is part of a series sharing insights and learning to help organisations facing change challenges to grow and develop.

The first Change Creation programme has been funded by Arts Council England and ends this September. Resources and tools are available online for anyone to access. A second programme is starting (without subsidy) this autumn due to huge impact of the first and overwhelming ongoing demand. This time it's open to all arts and cultural organisations across the UK and we'd love to help as many organisations as possible - large and small, in any artform. For more information contact [I.twemlow@changecreation.org](mailto:I.twemlow@changecreation.org)

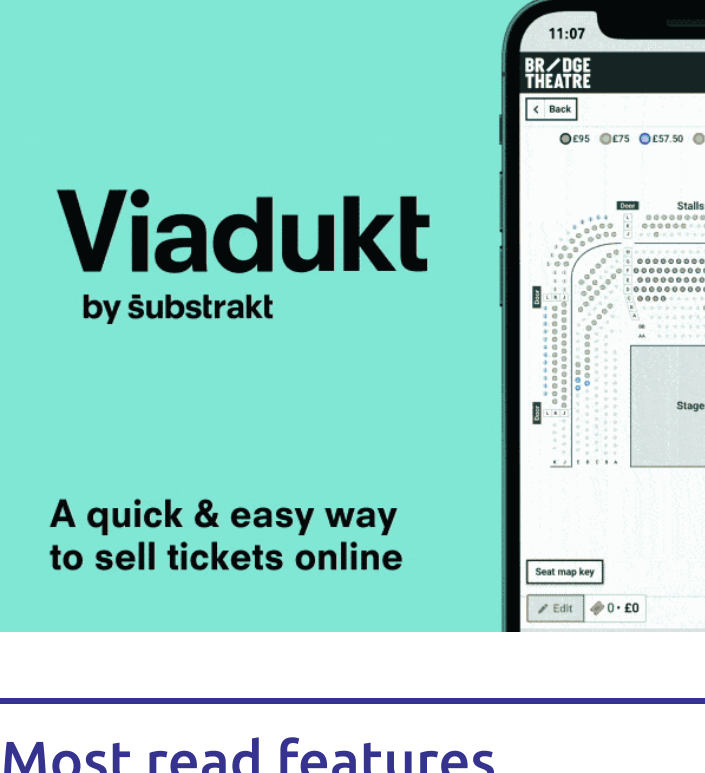
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Published: 18-07-2019

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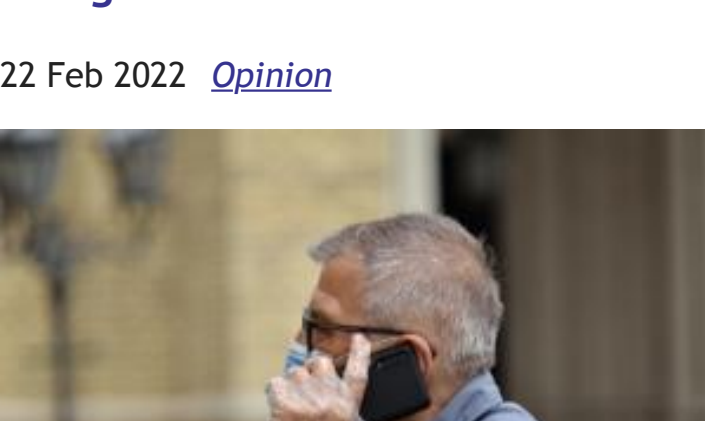


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