

A welcome challenge to the view that big change requires big programmes

(Posted by Chris Rodgers on his blog [Informal Coalitions](#) - 3 February 2008)

I've just finished reading an excellent book on organizational change, *Viral Change*, written by Leandro Herrero. The cover of the book states:

"Lasting change in the modern organization has less to do with massive 'communication to all' programmes and more with the creation of an internal epidemic of success led by a small number of non-negotiable behaviours."

The book was easy and enjoyable to read. And it was pleasing to come across an approach to change that doesn't advocate the top-down, project-based, all-singing-all-dancing methodologies that tend to dominate current management thinking and practice.

Central to *Viral Change* is the proposition that it is people's everyday behaviours that determine an organization's 'culture', not the formal statements, structures and processes that usually emerge from conventional 'cultural change' programmes. Having established this as a key principle of the *Viral Change* approach, Herrero identifies 15 conventional assumptions about organizational change. He then sets out to debunk these in the remainder of the book, which is usefully arranged into three complementary sections:

- In the five chapters that make up the first section, Herrero sets out his argument for the *Viral Change* approach. Here, he explores some of the conventional wisdom on organizational change, before putting forward his own insights into how organizations work and the implications of these for change-leadership practice.
- Section 2, comprises seven chapters which deal with the four main components of *Viral Change*. These are described as language, new behaviours, tipping points, and rules and rituals (or 'culture'). The framing of the change, the identification of a small set of "non-negotiable behaviours", and the propagation of these behaviours through the organization's informal influence networks provide the main focus of this section.
- Finally, Herrero summarises the approach that he tends to use when applying *Viral Change* in organizations, and ends by revisiting the 15 change management assumptions from a *Viral Change* perspective.

Overall, I found the book an extremely valuable resource as well as an entertaining read. Although it resonates strongly with my own perspective on the dynamics of change, it approaches the subject from a different viewpoint. This provided a healthy mixture of challenge to, and support for, my own thinking, as well as provoking further questions and insights.

More information

More information on *Viral Change* can be found on Leandro Herrero's own [blog](#). You can buy copies of the book here ([Amazon UK](#)/ [Amazon US](#)).



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