

The Organization Life Cycle

A Self Help Guide

Handout A

A. The Dream

The change is “in utero”...

- A time of imagining and planning by the founders(s). Ideas exist only in people's minds or on scratch paper.
- Great excitement by founder(s)

Potential retreat questions	Self rating	Thoughts / Responses
1. What are the helpful and hurtful trends? (Consider STEEP formula.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
2. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing your business?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
3. Consider the trends and SWOT. Is there a need to reinvent, re-create and re – define? If so, imagine that it is the year _____ and the org. is highly successful. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are your customers, partners, and employees describing you? • What do we deeply care about? • What type of services/products are we delivering? • Who are we serving? • How are we serving our customers and partners? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
4. What desired outcomes can you extract from the above questions?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
5. What is the game plan (possible strategies) to help us achieve our desired outcomes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
6. Which elements of the game plan (i.e. strategies) excite you and why? Which elements of the game plan (i.e. strategies) scare you and why?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
7. Which strategies are our priorities? What strategies offer the best chance of helping us to achieve our outcomes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	

B. The Venture

The “venture” begins...

- The organization is in its infancy and childhood.
- A time of rapid change.
- There are few policies and fixed procedures. “Winter golf” rules (temporary processes) are OK.

Have you worked through the following?	Self rating	Plan for moving forward
1. Has the compelling business case for change been well thought through? Can you list the specific reasons driving the need for change? Answer the question in bullet form, “Why change?”	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin’ good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
2. Have you moved from the “dream” to the “venture”? Note: The “dream” represents the brainstorming of several individuals. The “venture” means that a business model has been created and can be visually displayed. (This step turns “vision” into a clearer picture.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin’ good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
3. Can the following be articulated? <input type="checkbox"/> Vision and mission <input type="checkbox"/> Operational goals <input type="checkbox"/> Process path (general next steps, not process maps) <input type="checkbox"/> Roles <input type="checkbox"/> Ground rules/parameters <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making process	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin’ good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
4. Has the potential impact (pros/cons) on employees or citizens been thoroughly considered? (Generate bullets outlining these impacts.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin’ good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
5. Have tools and support been developed to support the change. If so, please list. Are these tools well developed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin’ good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
6. Has the WIFM been identified? Please record.	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin’ good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
Stop! If the above have not been completed, communicating the change is premature!!		

The “venture” continues...

Have you worked through the following?	Self rating	Plan for moving forward
7. Have plans been developed to engage the employees or citizens? Have we specifically figured out how to engage them in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Vision and mission <input type="checkbox"/> Operational goals <input type="checkbox"/> Process path (general next steps, not process maps) <input type="checkbox"/> Roles <input type="checkbox"/> Ground rules <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making process 	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
8. Have the tools and support available to support the change been shared and are they understood?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
9. Has the WIFM been shared? Is it understood?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
10. Has a transition monitoring team been established?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	

C. Getting Organized

The change is “organized”...

- Charters are formalized. Project plans are fully developed.
- Specialized roles and responsibilities evolve.
- Financial controls and employment policies are created and refined.

Have you worked through the following:	Self rating	Plan for moving forward
11. Has a formal charter been developed? Is it understood?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
12. Has a formal project plan been developed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
13. Have new operational business processes been prioritized and defined?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
14. Is the technology supporting the change?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
15. Have formal financial controls been established and refined?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
16. Have formal measures of performance been identified? Have baselines been collected? Is a monitoring plan in place?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
17. Have specialized roles and responsibilities been clearly communicated and woven into job expectations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
18. Have competencies been clearly identified and assessed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
19. Has appropriate training been provided?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
20. Have employment policies been created to support the change?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	

D. Making It

The organization has “made it”...

- Customer and financial data indicates success.
- Reputation in the market is established.
- This phase can encompass many chapters of growth, crisis, reorganization and reorientation.
- While seemingly positive, there is an inherent danger of becoming an “institution”.

Have you worked through the following?	Self rating	Plan for moving forward
1. Have performance targets been achieved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
2. Is the reputation in the market (community) well established?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
3. Is there shared understanding of roles and responsibilities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
4. Is staff fully proficient?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
5. Are policies supporting organizational need?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	

E. Institutionalism - Undesired Phase

Becoming an institution...

- The organization shifts from external results to internal style, from staking out territory to occupying it.
- New people are chosen less for their talent or motivation than for how they will fit in with “us”.
- Reputation is a given, not something being earned. There is a sense of having arrived and a loss of urgency about moving on.
- Form becomes more important than function.
- Once an “institution” is reached, organizations no longer follow the same natural order. Three choices exist including: Denial, Formalism and Revitalization

Revitalization is the only choice that avoids eventual organization demise.

Three Pathways out of Institutionalism:

Pathway	Characteristics	Leader’s Plan
Denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins with the idea that the organization is as strong and vital as ever. • Stakes its hopes on its reputation and the tried and true systems it has developed. • It is the quickest path to the remaining danger zones; closing-in and termination. 	Avoid -- or – Lead through Closing In and Termination
Formalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves a flurry of restructuring. • Some selling of old business and acquiring new ones to re-focus on “our core businesses”. • Reflects an effort to re-define and strengthen the organization’s traditional culture. • This path may lead to short term success but ultimately insulates employees from revitalization. • This path still leads toward closing-In and Termination. 	Avoid -- or – Lead through Closing In and Termination
Revitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May involve some particular project. • Begins with new or newly articulated Dreams and one or more Ventures. • It results in Making It but does so by beginning over again rather than by trying to inject vitality and effectiveness into an aging organization. • To succeed, this effort requires good strategic planning, a well-coordinated reorganization scheme and tactics for dealing with the transitions that everyone will have to go through. • A critical choice for mature and relatively inflexible organizations that are losing out to younger and more vital competitors. 	Manage endings phase of transition, then start over with new or newly articulated dreams and venture.

Symptoms to watch for...	Self rating	Path we may be on...
Are we failing to acknowledge the brutal facts of a changing business environment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Denial → Closing In → Termination
Are we assuming that because we are a government, we have little or no competition?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Denial → Closing In → Termination
Are we reluctant to seek improvement opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Denial → Closing In → Termination
Are we trying to create a new approach with our traditional culture?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Formalism → Closing In → Termination
Are we restructuring with the goal of accomplishing the same old venture?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Formalism → Closing In → Termination
Are we “refocusing” on “our core businesses”? (Have we forgotten/lost sight of the Dream?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Formalism → Closing In → Termination

KEY QUESTION: *If you are in Denial or Formalism, is Termination the appropriate goal? If so, refer to section F, “Closing In and Termination”. If not, the only pathway to success is through Revitalization.*

Symptoms to watch for...	Self rating	Path we may be on...
Are we willing to start over with a new (or newly articulated) Dream and one or more ventures? (May involve some particular project.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Revitalization → The Dream → The Venture
Are we open to creating a new tradition, a new culture, to support the new venture?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Revitalization → The Dream → The Venture
Are we committed to providing good strategic planning, a well-coordinated reorganization scheme, and tactics for dealing with the transitions that everyone will have to go through?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe <input type="checkbox"/> No	Revitalization → The Dream → The Venture

KEY CONCEPT: *If you are in Revitalization, it is important to lead your team through the Endings phase of transition before you can effectively move forward with a new Dream and/or Venture.*

The Revitalization pathway begins here...

Have you worked through the following?	Self rating	Plan for moving forward
1. Have losses been acknowledged (reporting relationships, physical space, job meaning, comfort zone, identity, control, structure, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
2. Has the team celebrated/honored its past? Consider a "closure" opportunity. (Idea: Offer each team member a memoir of the past such as a business card, mug, pen, group photo, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
3. Do we have a plan for ushering in a new beginning, complete with a new identity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
4. Has a transition monitoring team been established?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	

NEXT STEPS: *The pathway through Revitalization moves from here to the positive aspects of the organizational life cycle, beginning with a new Dream (section A).*

F. Closing In and Termination

The decision is made (not always consciously) to end the organization...

- Characterized most often by ongoing denial and/or formalizing.
- Focus on problems versus solutions.
- Cynicism, fear, anger, confusion, victim mindset, etc.

Have you worked through the following?	Self rating	Plan for moving forward
1. Has a conscious decision to terminate been made? If so, to whom has this decision been communicated so far?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
2. Do you have a plan for completing work necessary to honor remaining commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
3. What is the plan for helping employees transition out of the organization?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	
4. How will this change be communicated to various stakeholders (customers, employees, vendors, etc.)? Do the stakeholders clearly understand what has ended.. and what has not?	<input type="checkbox"/> Lookin' good! 😊 <input type="checkbox"/> Half-baked <input type="checkbox"/> Whoops 😞	