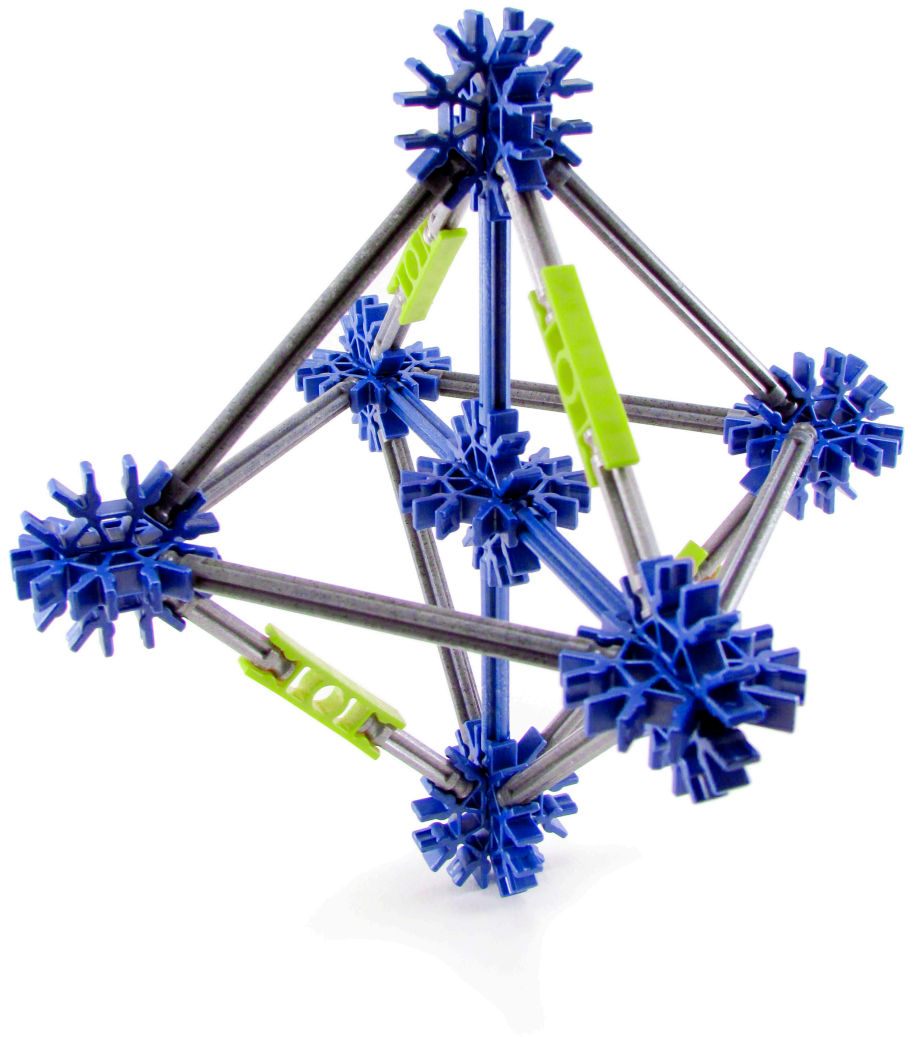# Deloitte.

Getting Unstuck
How to work *As One*
in government

About GovLab

Deloitte's GovLab works closely with senior government executives and thought leaders from across the globe. As GovLab Fellows, we conduct research into key issues and emerging ideas shaping the public, private and non-profit sectors. Through exploration and analysis of government's most pressing challenges, we seek to develop innovative yet practical ways that governments can transform the way they deliver their services and prepare for the challenges ahead.

Contents

Executive summary

Why do some transformative government initiatives succeed on a grand scale while others fail? The answer lies in the abilities of agencies to translate individual actions into collective power. Getting big things done in government requires employees and organizational partners to commit to a single set of objectives. Working cultures should match what needs to be done. Messages should come from those parts of an organization that employees most identify with and trust.

Only then can an organization act "As One."

By the time initiatives get stuck, it's often too late to recalibrate organizations and implementations to deliver results. The time to act is before they get stuck — but how?

The *As One* approach involves taking the pulse of an organization before beginning a change and shaping the change strategy accordingly. When leaders know the right questions to ask about their employees and have the tools at their disposal to answer those questions, they can anticipate challenges and address them before they grow into crippling obstacles.

The identity of a government organization, its commitment to an initiative's objectives, and the way its employees work together each play a role in how employees respond to a change effort. *As One* delves into all three elements to identify the places where miscommunication, resistance, or cultural mismatches can occur.

It's not enough to simply anticipate problems, however. The *As One* approach also includes a set of targeted interventions that span the lifecycle of an initiative: from planting the seed of change to making it grow and helping it survive.

The *As One* lens can empower public sector leaders to stay ahead of the factors that derail government initiatives.
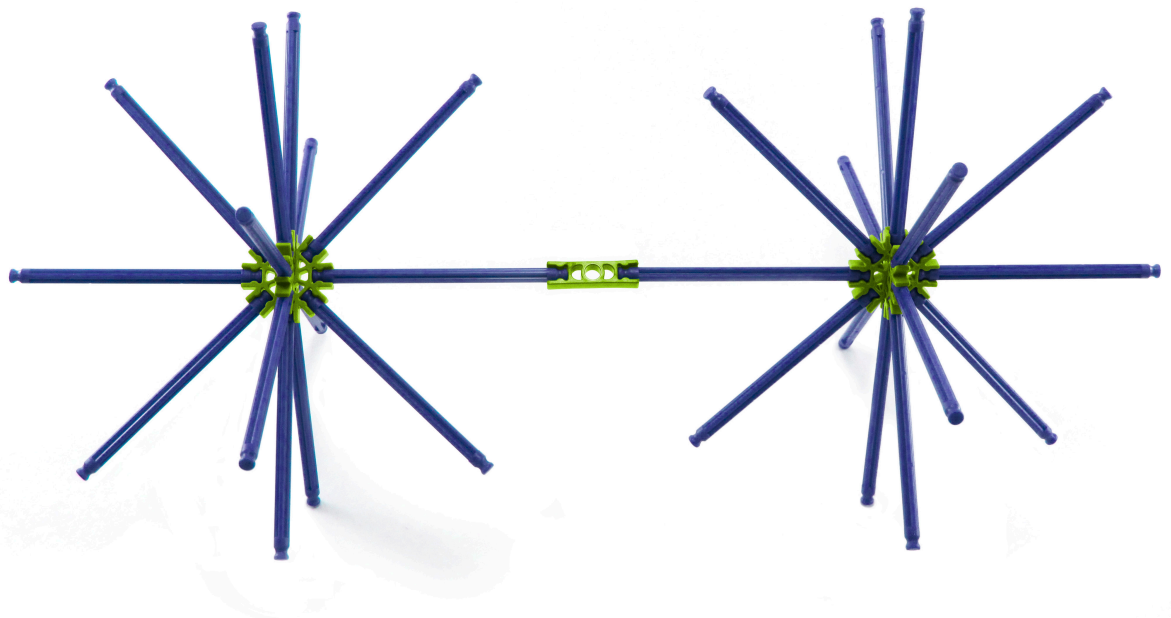
Why does government need *As One* thinking?

A recent Washington Post-ABC News poll found that dissatisfaction with government is at its most significant level in more than a decade.[1] One reason is the number of large government initiatives that do not seem to achieve their intended results.

Government workers are often frustrated as well. A recent survey indicated that most senior public sector executives believe that government today is less capable of effectively managing large projects than at any time in our past.[2]

The intelligence breakdowns prior to 9/11, the Katrina response, and the financial meltdown and its subsequent economic challenges have made front-page news. But behind the headlines are all too many quiet failures — cases in which important public initiatives simply don't work as well as they should.

Consider some recent examples:

• The U.S. Census Bureau implemented a $600 million program to modernize two phases of the 2010 Census by switching to digital handheld devices. Project challenges resulted in a return to pencil and paper for the nonresponse followup phase.[3]

• In 2004, the U.S. Department of Defense introduced a "pay-for-performance" system to replace the General Schedule. The program was abandoned in 2009.[4]

In each case, a large, potentially transformative, initiative encountered difficulties because the people charged with implementing the change were not aligned in terms of identity, commitment, or working culture. In short, the organization wasn't prepared to act "As One."

Contrast these examples with some transformative results in the public sector:

• In responding to President Kennedy's challenge, NASA successfully put a man on the moon, achieving one of the greatest technical and bureaucratic successes of all time. How did it succeed? By getting NASA engineers, private contractors, and university researchers to collaborate successfully.

• In 1996, President Clinton signed a massive welfare reform bill that is considered one of the most effective reforms of a social program in American history. How did it achieve its objectives? Federal, state, and local officials aligned their efforts and worked cooperatively.

• YouthBuild, a small nonprofit in Harlem, evolved into a nationwide program funded by the Department of Labor and administered by the Employment and Training Administration. The program helps rebuild houses in disadvantaged communities and reshapes the lives of young people.[5] Today, 273 YouthBuild programs have changed the course of more than 92,000 teenagers' lives and built more than 19,000 units of affordable housing in 45 states.[6] How did YouthBuild find this level of effectiveness? Thanks to aligned and collaborative efforts that included a successful public-private partnership and the support of local communities.

These cases demonstrate an important lesson: *the difference between success and failure often depends on an organization's ability to transcend traditional, command-and-control hierarchies.*

As One is a systematic approach to collective leadership described in the book of the same name by Mehrdad Baghai and James Quigley.[7] Grounded in numerous case study reviews of collaboration in the public and private sectors, the *As One* approach is particularly critical when trying to achieve desired results in government.

Getting big things done in government — launching new programs, implementing budget reductions, or achieving difficult agency missions — requires effective collaboration. Members of an agency, command, office, bureau, or division should commit to a single objective. Multiple layers of bureaucracy and levels of government should work in concert among themselves and, when needed, with private companies and nonprofits.

Before committing to a significant, transformational initiative, leaders should understand the culture of the agency or agencies involved. The *As One* approach provides a rigorous toolkit for leaders seeking to achieve this understanding and accomplish the desired results by transforming individual actions into collective power, both inside an organization and with external partners.

How do you get the members of your organization to act *As One*? The key lies in asking the right questions of your employees, finding the answers to those questions, and using this knowledge to shape your strategy.

How do you get the members of your organization to act *As One?* The key lies in knowing the applicable questions to ask about employees, finding the answers to those questions, and using this knowledge to shape your strategy.

A new approach

The *As One* approach focuses on asking pertinent questions and acting on that information. More formally, it consists of three parts:

- A diagnostic to assess the nature of your challenges and opportunities;

- The development of a set of targeted interventions; and

- A systematic strategy for broadening the adoption of *As One* behaviors.

Without a broad analysis and targeted strategy, any change effort is liable to founder on the underlying chaos that affects large organizations and inhibits collaboration.

At the heart of the *As One* approach are a few fundamental questions:

- Do employees think of themselves as part of an organization, or a smaller group within it?

- Are employees committed to organizational goals?

- Do employees have the same ideas about how they work together?

More simply, **who** do employees view themselves as (identity), **what** are they committed to (commitment), and **how** do they work together (collaboration)?

Who
Identity

+

What
Commitment

+

How
Collaboration

Identity

In complex, hierarchical organizations, it is critical for leaders to learn which parts of the organization employees feel they most belong to. Do they identify more strongly with their own office, their division, or the agency as a whole?

The answer can reveal where messages must come from to motivate employees to listen and act upon them. Employees are much more likely to be engaged when their efforts are linked to the organizational unit with which they identify.

If employees identify strongly with their local offices, local leaders should deliver messages and instructions. If they identify more with the department as a whole than with any one division, messages delivered by headquarters are more likely to resonate.

In general, organizations in which employees share the same loyalties and identities are more effectively able to achieve their missions. That sense of identity makes them care about shared success and more willing to tackle tough challenges.

Baghai and Quigley define this quality as ***shared identity.*** Measuring shared identity is the first step in seeing an organization through the *As One* lens.

Scenario

Your department is transforming a process to cut costs within one of its divisions. Some core tasks formerly completed by one division team are being transferred to another team's shared services center, which will save the department money and eliminate redundancy.

Who needs to communicate the nature and necessity of the changes?

You know that your staff identifies strongly with their teams and the department as a whole, but not their division.

Thus, you decide that the message about the task transfer will come first from department leadership, but it will be followed by discussions led by team leads to explain the reasons for the transition.

Shared identity playbook

1. Determine the parts of the organization with which employees most closely identify.

2. Use leaders of those parts of the organization to deliver messages.

3. Strengthen employees' identification with the organization as a whole, rather than its discrete parts, through consistent messages, methods, and expectations.

Commitment

Strong employee commitment to mission objectives generally drives effective organizations. Motivating individuals to work together toward an objective works only if they are committed to it. If not enough members of an organization support a strategy, it will likely be resisted or simply ignored.

Building this commitment is particularly critical in government, which often lacks the ability to provide traditional incentives for individuals and organizations. Are your employees ready to support organizational objectives? Are they committed to the tasks required for achieving the desired result?

Answering these questions can reveal which strategic objectives may require increased focus, communication, and support, as well as which strategic objectives may need to be reshaped. In addition, understanding employee commitment will highlight groups in your organization that need greater attention.

Baghai and Quigley use the term ***directional intensity*** to explain how strongly organizations work together toward shared objectives. Evaluating directional intensity for critical objectives is the second step of the *As One* approach.

Scenario

Your agency is consolidating multiple office networks into a single cloud system to improve access speed, security, and reliability. Each local network currently has its own protocols, interfaces, and administrators. The effectiveness of the transition depends on local end users providing information and requirements to the implementation team.

What aspects of the transition to the new system do end users support or oppose?

You discover that the majority of end users in local offices are committed to improving network speed and reliability. They oppose the consolidation, however, because they believe security will be compromised. Also, a large share of network administrators at the local offices are undecided or unaware of the consolidation's objectives.

To increase the number of committed users, the implementation team drafts a series of agency-wide newsletters on network security that highlight the advantages of the consolidated network and invite all local office administrators to a facilitated session to discuss the upcoming changes.

Directional intensity playbook

1. Determine which strategic objectives lack employee commitment or awareness.

2. Identify the groups that lack this commitment or awareness.

3. Focus change management efforts on these objectives and groups.
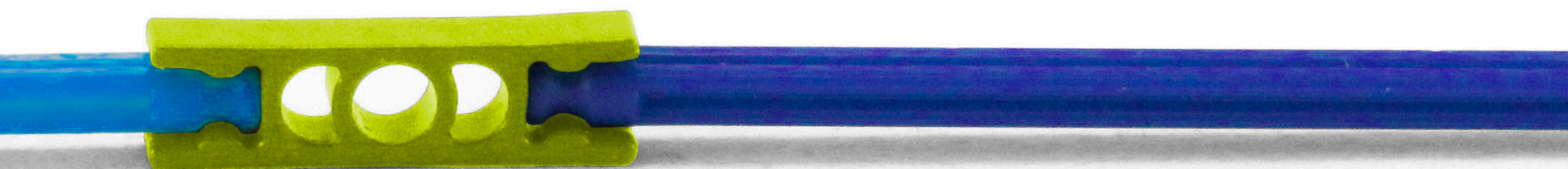
Collaboration

In government, collaboration can span organizational and political boundaries. If varied groups have different interpretations of how to approach work, they will find collaboration difficult, and achieving the desired result will be unlikely.

How do rank-and-file employees perceive the ways in which they work? Do their leaders have the same perception? Do middle managers? Baghai and Quigley use the concept of *common interpretation* to explain the degree to which perceptions of how work should be done can clash or match within an organization.[8] Assessing common interpretation is the final step of the *As One* approach.

The alignment that occurs when different groups in an organization share a common interpretation of how work should be done can enable major initiatives to be effective. Over time, as missions and circumstances change, organizations should revisit their approach. Few do, however. Without such ongoing reassessment, people can find themselves working together in ways that may be unsuitable or even counterproductive to mission objectives.

Achieving a common interpretation of the work to be done across groups is critical. If common interpretation already exists within an organization, you should strengthen the organization's ability to operate in this manner. If it does not, try introducing new ways of working that achieve this common interpretation — and thereby further your objectives.

Scenario

Leadership at headquarters believes that their organization is based on hierarchy, a command-and-control culture, and a compelling vision from leaders, so it runs the organization accordingly. Employees in the field see themselves more as a flexible pool of team members who complete objectives through frequent interaction and communication and set directions from the bottom of the organization upward.

This mismatch in interpretations about how work gets done will prevent strategies from being executed effectively, as employees respond with mixed success to forced top-down directives imposed by leadership. They will deliver more effectively when given autonomy and room to operate.

Common interpretation playbook
1. Assess employees' perceptions of the ways in which your organization operates.

2. Determine if these models of behavior do, in fact, further your objectives.

3. If they do, tailor strategies to strengthen the common interpretation. If not, introduce new ones.

Getting unstuck: Seeing through the *As One* lens

Any change effort can present obstacles that stymie an organization's initiatives. The government environment, moreover, presents special obstacles of its own. To be most effective, government leaders must overcome both types.

As One provides leaders with the information required to anticipate and surmount these obstacles by seeing organizations in a different light. The *As One* approach asks applicable questions and uses the answers to open the way for informed interventions *before* initiatives get stuck.

A post-mortem look at a large government initiative through the *As One* lens illustrates several reasons why it failed to achieve its desired results. The case study below examines the background of an initiative, its outcome, and how the *As One* approach can illuminate what went wrong — as well as what could have been done differently.

Introducing performance pay at the Department of Defense

Background
In 2004, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) began an initiative to introduce a performance-based compensation system for its 600,000 civilian employees, which make up almost 35 percent of the federal workforce.[9] The National Security Personnel System (NSPS) was initially projected to cost $158 million.[10, 11]

The General Schedule pay scale, which determines compensation for the majority of government employees, has long been criticized as an inflexible system that rewards tenure and disregards individual performance.[12] The federal government had attempted to deploy merit-based, "pay for performance" programs for years in settings including the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station, National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency.[13, 14]

In 2006, the Department of Defense began implementing the NSPS.

What happened
After years of resistance from DoD employees and unions, and widespread criticism throughout the program's life, President Obama signed legislation in October 2009 formally repealing the NSPS and returning affected employees to the GS scale by 2012.

Many reasons have been cited for the difficulties of NSPS, including evidence of discriminatory payouts, a questionable business model, exorbitant transition costs (as high as $10,000 per FTE), drastic deviations in payouts between different levels, and falling morale due to the program, but these are only part of the story.[15]

A view through the *As One* lens: What went wrong
Examining the NSPS project through the *As One* lens reveals several critical factors that played a central role in the program's demise, and some strategies that could have addressed them.

Identity disconnect
Examining identity issues at DoD could have revealed an important flaw in the NSPS approach. Overwhelmingly, DoD employees did not identify with the group of supervisory reviewers ultimately responsible for their ratings. In other words, although part of the larger organization, performance reviewers were seen as outsiders.

Though supervisors still wrote assessments of employee performance, final ratings and compensation depended on the decisions of distant "pay pool" panels with which employees felt no connection. They did not know who was on these panels or how they made their decisions. Widespread complaints highlighted this disconnect between employees and the managers assessing them.[16, 17, 18]

Darryl Perkinson, national president of the Federal Managers Association and an employee subject to NSPS, summarized the way that employees felt about the panels in an NSPS Review Board hearing: "The Pay Pool Panels and Sub-Pay Pool Panels are out of touch with the objectives and job functions of the employees whom they are rating."[19]

As in many large organizations, a significant proportion of DoD employees had vague or outdated job definitions with ever-changing work objectives and performance criteria. This added to employee concerns about the arbitrary nature of the assessments. These challenges might have been overcome but for the lack of connection with pay pool assessors, which proved to be a pivotal obstacle to employee acceptance of NSPS.

"Defense workers' pay is based on collective decisions made by the 'pay pool'… which includes managers that may know very little about an employee's performance."
— National Federation of Federal Employees memo on NSPS

"The pay pools violated one of the primary tenets of salary management — employees need to know what they can expect. According to reports, immediate supervisors had no control and were unable to explain how an increase was determined."
— Howard Risher, author of *Planning Wage and Salary Programs*

"The situation is exacerbated by assessments that are reviewed by members of a pay pool panel who might have little familiarity with the particulars of an employee's job."
— John S. Monroe, "Pay for Performance Haunted by NSPS Failure"

Lack of commitment

Any assessment of the commitment of DoD's civilian employees to the overall goal of tying pay to performance likely would have found some support for the concept.[20] Perkinson confirmed as much in the NSPS hearing: "We support the premise of holding federal employees accountable for performing their jobs effectively and efficiently and rewarding them accordingly."[21]

Employees were far from committed, however, to the actual performance objectives set down by NSPS, which they perceived as flawed and ill-informed.[22] In fact, the rating process was met with considerable resistance. This highlights a critical shortcoming of DoD's implementation: the department did not build or even gauge the commitment of employees and managers to NSPS performance objectives.

DoD did not involve employees and managers across the organization in planning the deployment. According to one federal pay specialist, they had "no meaningful involvement" in NSPS planning, and thus "no sense of buy-in or ownership" for the program.[23] The impression grew among employees that the performance objectives they would be expected to meet had been "handed down from the top levels of the organization with little regard for the day-to-day responsibilities of frontline employees."[24]

Employees also strongly opposed the notion of a forced ratings distribution curve, which they believed was a core objective of the NSPS ratings system.[25] DoD denied that a forced rating curve was in effect, but employees remained skeptical.[26, 27, 28]

Brenda Farrell, a director at the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), warned that "employees' confidence in the system" could be "undermined" by the "unspoken forced distribution of ratings" that would happen if NSPS did not have "meaningful distinctions" between different ratings.[29] Her words proved to be all too true.

"There is … serious concern that… NSPS will be undermined by a forced distribution of ratings. NSPS guidance has already been disseminated… that indicated a majority of employees should be rated at the 'three level.' Agency managers… feel pressure to maintain a specified distribution."

— National Federation of Federal Employees memo on NSPS

"Unless implementation of NSPS encourages meaningful distinctions in employee performance, employees may believe there is a forced distribution of ratings, and their confidence in the system will be undermined."

— April 2009 GAO report

"Managers and supervisors have reported extreme pressure… to maintain a specified distribution of funds or performance ratings … despite claims from DoD leaders that this should not be occurring."

— Darryl Perkinson, national president of the Federal Managers Association

Collaboration mismatch

The final feature of an *As One* review examines how the organization approaches work. One of the chief concerns with a sweeping initiative such as NSPS was that it required "a fundamental shift in the culture at DoD, a shift for which the organization was not adequately prepared."[30]

Moving from the General Schedule to pay for performance was indeed a fundamental change. More importantly, NSPS attempted to impose an inflexible structure on a huge, diverse organization.[31]

The DoD is an enormous and complex organization that encompasses a wide range of cultures and work styles. This made the rollout of a new wage structure challenging enough, but the lack of a unified, standardized mode of operation across the organization made it all but impossible to implement a change on the scale of NSPS.

> "Few companies have workforces the size of the Defense Department's, but they cannot match the number, diversity and geographic dispersion of DoD's units. DoD is a unique conglomerate; its many units have different missions, cultures, and management styles. No large, highly diversified company would try to force-fit a uniform, rigid salary system in every business unit."
>
> — Howard Risher, author of
> *Planning Wage and Salary Programs*
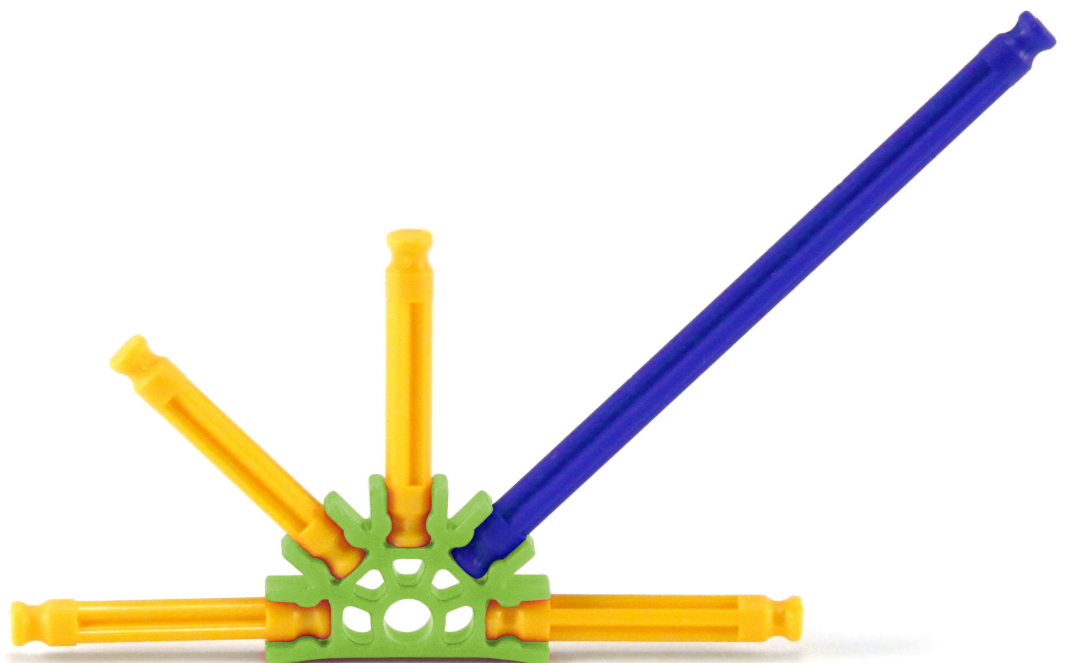
What could have been done differently?

A number of *As One* tactics could have addressed some of the critical obstacles confronting NSPS.

Establish identity

Job evaluations and pay raises are intensely personal and inextricably linked to morale. Any kind of messaging on the subject must come from groups within the organization with which employees strongly identify.

If DoD leaders had anticipated the disconnect between employees and the administrators of the pay pools, they likely could have created initiatives to familiarize employees with their reviewers. They also could have given known and trusted managers the responsibility for the ratings. Such efforts to connect employees with evaluators might have helped NSPS mitigate its crippling identity divide.

Build commitment

Leaders who do not build employee commitment for major initiatives do so at their own peril. DoD leaders could have identified both the lack of employee commitment to the performance objectives as well as their strong opposition to the rating method before the initiative stalled. Engaging employees and managers early in the planning of NSPS and making a concerted effort to demonstrate that the system was not based on a forced distribution curve could have built stronger commitment to the program.

Adapt for collaboration

The ways in which people work together must match the objective. In DoD's case, the wide range of work styles and cultures across many groups of employees created a strong obstacle to the establishment of a common, merit-based pay system. DoD leaders could have started an organization-wide cultural transformation effort prior to NSPS to reorient and standardize work styles across the organization and accustom employees to the new expectation of individual accountability for performance.
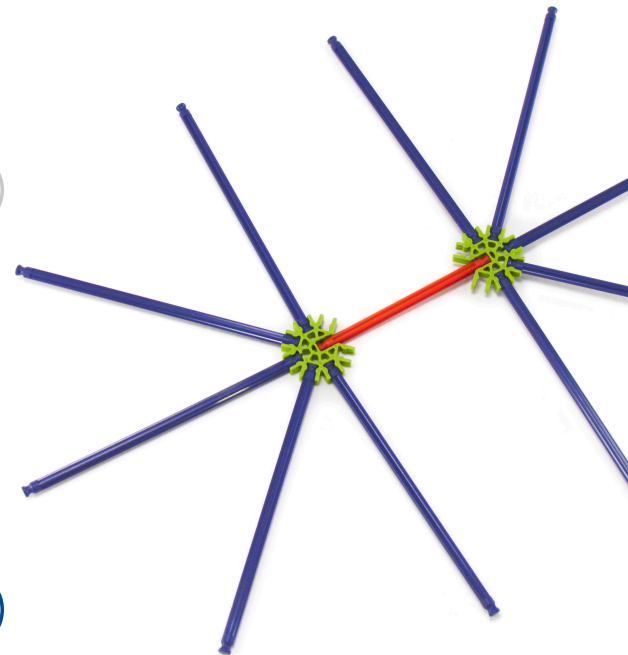
Putting *As One* to work: Interventions

The *As One* approach begins by assessing the current state of operations within an organization. Government executives should identify the leaders employees trust, the objectives to which employees are committed, and how employees perceive that work gets done in their organization. The results of these assessments can illuminate potential challenges, pinpoint particular workforce groups to engage, and identify failing business models. The next step is to deploy *interventions* to address the findings.

The following section breaks the process of cultivating change in government into three stages: "planting the seed of change,""making it grow," and "helping the

change survive" after implementation. Within each stage, there are multiple interventions to strengthen shared identity, directional intensity, and common interpretation.

While timelines and implementation plans are specific to individual organizations and projects, the interventions during each phase can occur sequentially.

These interventions can help public sector leaders overcome obstacles and get unstuck as an initiative moves from introduction to implementation.

Plant the seed

Make it grow

Help it survive

Putting *As One* to work

Plant the seed

+

Shared identity

- Determine who people trust
- Draft teammates
- Get the workforce invested
- Take advantage of existing social networks
- Use social media

Directional intensity

- Get fired up
- Find the weakest links
- Post the agenda
- Display the target
- Identify critical business events
- Define the approach
- Do a test run

Common interpretation

- Introduce new behaviors
- Identify critical workforce segments
- Become an anthropologist
- Choose the most effective fit

Make it grow + Help it survive

+

Interventions

- Build a platform for your messengers
- Encourage stakeholders to lead causes that matter most to them
- Grow workforce involvement

- Brand the workplace
- Brand the change effort
- Transfer the messenger function

- Break the change effort into manageable chunks
- Explain the reasons for the effort
- Use incentives
- Create new habits

- Use "sprints" to accomplish smaller goals
- Send progress updates
- Put on your "party hat"

- Explain connections
- Reward pioneers
- Brand your new work style
- Alter poor fits
- Make it easier

- Display the change
- Encourage desired behaviors over time
- Make sure it still works

Plant the seed

In the beginning of a change effort, it is important not to overwhelm the workforce all at once with the specifics of the change. Rather, during this phase, government executives should set expectations, strive to get employees on board, and generate enthusiasm for the initiative. Such interventions "plant the seed" of change within the organization, priming the workforce for implementation.

Early steps can help executives get the ball rolling. For example, if an organization lacks a shared identity but demonstrates strong directional intensity at regional levels, government executives should begin by using regional messengers to communicate with employees about change efforts. Over time, they can transfer message delivery from trusted regional leaders to senior executives, after other shared identity interventions have taken place.

Interventions to strengthen shared identity

- **Determine who people trust.**
  People listen to trusted sources more than unfamiliar ones. Keep this in mind when identifying messengers throughout an organization who can deliver communications on the change effort.

- **Draft teammates.**
  Once you have learned who your employees trust, ask and encourage them to deliver the message to regional and local teams.

- **Get the workforce invested.**
  Invite the workforce to help implement the change effort and align their priorities with desired outcomes, such as more workplace flexibility or streamlined reporting mechanisms. When people are invested in an initiative, they feel more responsible for its success.

- **Take advantage of social networks.**
  Existing social networks within an organization play an important role in circulating information and providing support. If possible, develop communications materials or learning events that specifically target members of formal social networks in an organization. For example, you could establish a brown-bag lunch series with agency leadership to answer questions or speak at book clubs and status meetings.

- **Use social media.**
  Provide previews of the upcoming changes to employees via social media sources such as Twitter, Facebook, and internal blogs and Websites.

Interventions to invigorate directional intensity

- **Get fired up.**
  The beginning of a new effort should produce excitement about the future, much like the beginning of a cruise. Like a cruise director, you can capitalize on this initial enthusiasm by creating a buzz about the change and keeping people informed about it. For example, use a marketing campaign to generate interest in the benefits of the change effort, such as reduced bureaucracy or increased workplace flexibility.

- **Find the weakest links.**
  In the beginning, not everyone will jump on board. A cruise director's job is to learn who is not enjoying the trip and find activities that engage them. Similarly, government executives should build buy-in from the entire workforce by identifying people with the lowest level of commitment and finding ways to reach them.

- **Post the agenda.**
  Preview upcoming events for the workforce. For example, you could distribute a document to all employees that outlines leadership priorities for the change effort.

- **Display the target.**
  To build commitment, describe the desired end state of the change effort in an easily accessible format, such as a downloadable file on the agency's website. This document should include measurable outcomes such as standards to maintain, number of services to be offered, and operating locations.

- **Identify critical business events.**[32]
  The success of a change effort will depend on specific events, such as meetings with key individuals to build buy-in, closing field offices, or completing training in new systems. While such events may occur throughout the implementation, they should be prioritized according to their impact on the objectives. These "critical business events" should be paced, completing a few at a time before moving on to the next event.

- **Define the approach.**
  Articulate a detailed approach for tackling critical business events to reach the end goal. Provide a roadmap for reaching the destination by defining milestones along a timeline. For example, an agency wishing to reorganize its financial management office might cite milestones such as completing employee training for new job functions within six months.

- **Do a test run.**
  At the beginning of the implementation, select a demonstration project to test the effectiveness of the approach. You can use the demonstration project as a case study and make refinements before implementing the larger effort.

👓 **Interventions to strengthen common interpretation**

- **Introduce new behaviors.**[33]
  To encourage people to work in a new way, introduce and incentivize new behaviors that directly contribute to a goal. For example, if increased information sharing is a goal, you can deploy an internal microblogging forum like Yammer and reward early adopters. Over time, these new behaviors will become routine.

- **Identify critical workforce segments.**
  You should identify the employees needed to carry out business-critical events and equip them with the authority, resources, and skills they need to be effective.

- **Become an anthropologist.**
  An anthropologist studies groups of people to identify their cultural order and values — the way they work together to achieve common goals. To identify the preferred way for your employees to collaborate, look

at well-executed events in the past and determine the working patterns that led to their success. For example, did the effort depend on small teams working in collaboration, or did the workforce respond effectively to top-down leadership directives?

- **Choose the most effective fit.**
  Different business models are needed for different situations. For example, top-down interactions, such as those between a commander and his troops, might not work well in a grassroots initiative that relies on crowdsourcing. Pick the most effective approach for implementing the change effort and achieving mission objectives.

Planting the seed of change at the Veterans Health Administration

Under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Kizer, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) streamlined its organization and bolstered performance and accountability.[34] In 1995, Kizer created a "Vision for Change" to make the case for transforming the VHA. Kizer began by engaging public and private stakeholders throughout the reorganization process. He assembled the "510 Team," made up of VA employees in human resources, regional offices, public affairs, operations, and medical centers, to help him create the vision and relay the message.

Kizer distributed the vision document to every VHA employee. The Vision for Change outlined a plan to reorganize VHA field offices, headquarters, and performance measurement to more effectively accomplish his goals. Kizer clearly expressed his goals for a new shared identity and mission culture: "The planned organizational structure… provides a template upon which new attitudes and behavior will be encouraged and rewarded, and around which a new organizational culture can grow."[35]

Kizer transitioned the VHA from a regionally based system of freestanding hospitals and clinics into 22 consolidated Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) throughout the country. Kizer built trust by decentralizing decision-making to the VISNs and giving them greater authority over regional health care delivery. He also maintained transparency through a rigorous quality review process. These steps helped to create a shared cultural identity that put greater focus on customer service, and inspired various parts of the organization to work collaboratively across boundaries. Studies, independent ratings, and articles since the implementation of the changes in the 1990s have affirmed the "best in class" level of care at the VHA.[36]

Make it grow

After introducing a workforce to a change effort, it is important to build and maintain momentum. The following interventions can improve communications with the workforce and establish behaviors that ultimately help to institutionalize change.

Interventions to strengthen shared identity

- **Build a platform for your messengers.**
  Give messengers — those you've chosen to communicate the change effort to employees — a forum to deliver the message, whether via traditional platforms such as monthly meetings and conference calls or social media platforms such as Twitter, Yammer, or blogs.

- **Encourage stakeholders to lead causes that matter most to them.**
  Ask them to contribute ideas and lead small-scale initiatives that emphasize particular organizational values. For example, if a junior employee has a passion for social media, encourage him or her to lead change efforts online. Allowing employees to pursue personal passions within a change effort increases the likelihood that they will be invested in its success.

- **Grow workforce involvement.**
  Choose proponents for change to lead small-scale, targeted efforts. Then, over time, involve more of the workforce in the initiatives. As more people are integrated into a change effort, the workforce becomes more accountable and responsible for its results.

Interventions to invigorate directional intensity

- **Break the change effort into manageable chunks.**[37]
  Sweeping changes can seem overwhelming; sometimes, the hardest part is just getting started. To make changes more manageable, introduce them in small doses in tight timeframes. Once a task begins, it becomes easier to continue over time.

- **Explain the reasons for the effort.**
  Use your messengers to communicate the reasons behind a change as well as the anticipated benefits. This will give employees an appropriate context for understanding the change and reduce confusion and resistance.

- **Use incentives.**
  Provide tangible incentives for workforce members who demonstrate appropriate change behaviors or contribute to the completion of critical business events. Such rewards encourage others to change their behavior and demonstrate commitment to a change effort.

- **Create new habits.**[38]
  To build new behaviors into employee work processes, pair them up with routine behaviors. For example, if you want your workforce to record the time they spend on individual projects at a more detailed level, you could embed time recording prompts into routine actions like saving files or checking email.

Interventions to strengthen common interpretation

- **Explain connections.**
  Demonstrate how workforce priorities are aligned to new objectives and how a change effort can improve what your workforce values in the organization.

- **Reward pioneers.**
  Use incentives to compensate employees who demonstrate desired behaviors, and communicate the availability of such rewards to your workforce to encourage others to follow the lead of the initial "change makers."

- **Brand your new work style.**
  Connect newly introduced behaviors to a new approach to work. For example, an organization that wants to automate its process for reimbursing travel expenses should brand the new work model as a faster way to be reimbursed.

- **Alter poor fits.**
  Change and update processes that no longer fit a new work model. In the travel reimbursement example, the organization could restructure its financial management workforce to support the new system and reduce redundant processes.

- **Make it easier.**
  It can be difficult for a workforce to adopt new approaches if other ways have become institutionalized. If possible, automate new processes to reduce the burden on your workforce.

Fostering changes in doctrine

The deployment of the 2007 troop "surge," which sent more troops to Iraq to maintain order, increase security, and regain control of lost strongholds, gave General David Petraeus the opportunity to alter the U.S. military's approach to fighting Iraqi insurgents.

Gen. Petraeus oversaw the writing of the first U.S. Army and Marine Corps manual on counterinsurgency published in more than 20 years.[39] *Field Manual No. 3-24* outlined Petraeus' vision for successful counterinsurgency operations, some of which were departures from established norms. When the new manual debuted in 2006, it met some resistance.

Petraeus was determined, however, to install the manual's approach across military operations in Iraq. He set the stage for new priorities in counterinsurgency and communicated the reasons for the change. He embarked on an in-person, base-to-base campaign to convince military leaders to adopt his new approach. He found higher levels of commitment to the approach in more experienced soldiers who understood the need for the change.[40]

In addition, Petraeus replaced combat training classes with courses designed to build new competencies in negotiation, peacekeeping, and information sharing. Assessments of performance were tied to the material covered by this training, rather than solely on existing classes on combat and strategic warfare. Soldier progress was documented and communicated. As a result, soldiers developed a better understanding of how to build relationships with local Iraqi leaders, the practical and academic contexts of counterinsurgency strategy, and the skills needed in community building.[41]

Help it survive

The following interventions can help government organizations cement their change efforts and make them last.

Interventions to strengthen shared identity

- **Brand the workplace.**
  Place a mission and/or vision statements throughout work environments and online systems to remind employees about their organizational culture and identity.

- **Brand the change effort.**
  Tie slogans to the change effort so that your workforce can quickly and easily recognize the impact of the change on their daily lives. For example, if a new, automated financial management system makes "better, faster, and cheaper" operations possible, you can use this motto to brand the upgrade.

- **Transfer the messenger function.**
  Over time, you should transfer the burden of delivering critical messages from trusted messengers to organizational leadership. As shared identity is built over time, the influence of messages from these leaders will increase.

Interventions to invigorate directional intensity

- **Use "sprints" to accomplish smaller goals.**
  Don't overwhelm your workforce with change all at once. Change that happens too rapidly in the beginning can lose momentum. Instead, use "short sprints" — concentrated efforts to achieve interim goals — to maintain urgency throughout a project.

- **Send progress updates.**
  Make sure your workforce understands how a change effort is proceeding. Create a blog, a Twitter campaign, press releases, reports, and town hall meetings to keep change fresh in the minds of your employees. Such updates also keep you accountable to your workforce and to your goals.

- **Put on your "party hat."**
  Celebrate effective change efforts throughout an organization.

👓 Interventions to strengthen common interpretation

- **Display the change.**
  Sometimes, changes to work processes are easily forgotten. To keep changes at the top of mind, use media to inform and remind your workforce about new ways of conducting business. Even simple tactics like placing updated placemats and postings around the office about a change can reinforce the message.

- **Encourage desired behaviors over time.**
  Implement initiatives to continue change behavior over the long term, such as updating online systems, streamlining workflows, and changing performance management systems to measure progress.

- **Make sure it still works.**
  Not all change is created equal. Manage the performance and progress of your new approach, and evaluate whether it remains the preferred model to achieve your goals. If you find flaws, fix them to get the effort back on track.

Making change survive

Some of the most powerful tools available to government leaders are the important societal missions of their agencies. When individuals see the link between their work activities and the larger mission, they increase the intensity of their engagement.

Governmental organizations can make change more attractive by aligning a mission to specific job functions. In addition, they can reward change behavior with nonfinancial incentives valued by employees and by engaging employees early in the conversation about a new initiative to gain their buy-in.[42]

In *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, authors Chip and Dan Heath discuss how organizations can encourage positive change. They suggest building habits to support behavioral changes into everyday work environments and using "triggers" to remind people to use the new routine instead of falling back into old behaviors.[43]

Broaden perspectives with social media monitoring

As the world becomes more complex, so do the issues facing governments. They often must grapple with problems that exceed the jurisdictional authority of any governmental entity, such as terrorism, pandemic disease management, and climate change. And most public issues also affect the private and nonprofit sectors.

Analyzing only an organization's culture and operations is not always sufficient when it comes to making decisions that have impacts outside an organization. The levers of power in government, including decision-making and funding authority, are spread across many stakeholders. Federal leaders should consider all of these diverse influences, both internal and external, when implementing large-scale change efforts.[39]
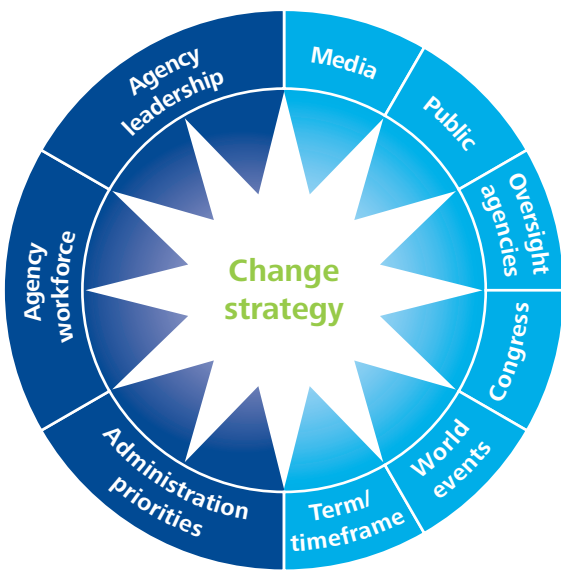
To determine the effect of such influences on the change effort, government executives can gather feedback from inside and outside of an organization through social media monitoring.

Examination of internal social media, such as organization blogs, wikis, community pages, and enterprise microblogging and virtual collaboration platforms (e.g. Yammer, Rypple, or Salesforce Chatter) can provide insight into how employees feel about a change effort and augment the information gleaned from the *As One* diagnostic. Such analysis can help to identify immediate challenges and other obstacles to change.

Taking the pulse of change: *As One* and social media monitoring

Internal	External
As One diagnostic	Blogs and formal reviews
Internal social media analysis	Social media sentiment analysis

Executives can also explore external feedback on a change effort through social media sentiment analysis. Such analysis of external perspectives can yield a fuller understanding of a change effort's progress and highlight obstacles not yet identified internally.

Sentiment analysis produces a tangible measure of the attitudes and issues surrounding an initiative across social media. It tracks the sources people use to obtain information on the initiative, what aspects of the initiative are getting traction, what elements of the initiative people care about, how well the initiative is understood, and the positive or negative cadence of the online dialogue around the initiative.

Together, *As One* and social media monitoring can provide a view into the progress of initiatives and potential challenges by addressing both internal and external perspectives.

Conclusion

To get big things done in government, the appropriate groundwork must be laid for change to take hold. That means asking pointed questions about whether an organization is ready to act *As One*. Once the workforce culture and operations of an organization are properly understood, *As One* interventions can bolster change throughout the lifecycle of an initiative — from the moment the seed of change has been planted, through its growth across an organization, to its long-term survival. Moreover, social media and sentiment analysis can help government leaders to better understand and anticipate internal and external obstacles to change along the way, and to refine their approach accordingly.

The components that make up the *As One* approach — shared identity, directional intensity, and common interpretation — are attractive not by their analysis but by their outcome; performance goes up and is sustained longer if people **believe in who they are** (shared identity), if they **believe in what they have been asked to do** (directional intensity), and if they **believe in the manner in which they are to execute those tasks** (common interpretation).

Will your organization get stuck as it tries to change — or will it act *As One*?
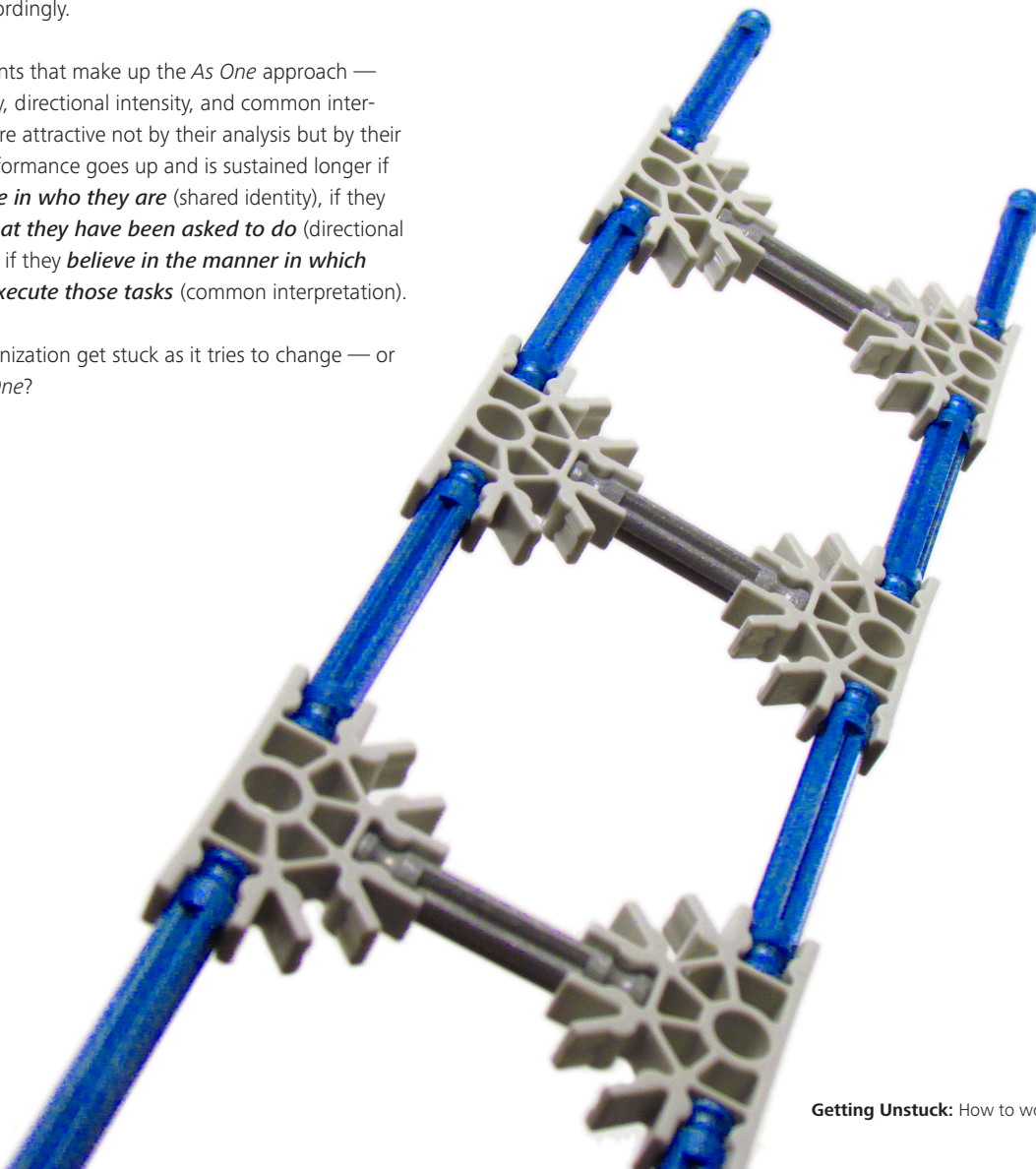
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22. See 22-27.

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