

In Times of Change, Enlist a Motley Crew

By Suzanne Vickberg



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Successful leaders recognize the power that diversity of perspective offers. When people with different ways of thinking and working come together, there's great potential for more creative problem solving, sounder decision making, and stronger performance—all enviable outcomes.

This appreciation of diversity's power can get lost when a major change initiative is underway. In such circumstances, leaders are sometimes tempted to stack transformation teams with those who most easily embrace change. This type of person is often called a pioneer.

Pioneers offer a wealth of new ideas, and since they crave novelty, change efforts tend to inspire and engage them. Pioneers' imaginative nature means they can envision lots of ways change will bring good outcomes, and their enthusiasm means they will likely spread that attitude to others. For all of these reasons, pioneers seem to be the perfect ambassadors of change and the type you'd most want on a transformation team, right? Well, not quite so fast.

While pioneers are often creative, they tend to lack interest in the details and may need help translating their vision into an actionable plan. Pioneers in charge of forging through change often leave others clueless as to how the vision might become a reality and what others' individual roles in the transformation might be. And while pioneers are naturally amenable to change, they don't always understand just why others seem resistant or just how to go about getting them on board.

While pioneers can be invaluable in times of change, their contributions can be more powerful when combined with the skills, perspectives, and strengths of different types of people. At Deloitte, we use the concept of business chemistry to understand people's different working styles and help teams be more productive. We look for the presence of three other perspectives in addition to those of the pioneers. A truly diverse team would also include guardians, who seek stability; drivers, who pursue challenge; and integrators, who crave connection. Each of us is a unique mix of these types, but most of us lean toward one or two of them.

Guardians bring order and rigor to a team, and they're perhaps best positioned to help translate a pioneer's vision into an actionable plan. Also, as the type that's most fond of the status quo, guardians are a great source of intel on why others may resist the change and what might convince them to embrace it. While they're at it, guardians will keep a

close eye on risk management, carefully considering the implications of each decision, which can protect the team from making big mistakes.

Drivers generate momentum and keep a team from getting stuck in the discussion phase by pushing for action and demonstrable progress. They might suggest experimenting with different ways of doing things, and if there's any sense of competition involved, they just may push even harder. From a driver's perspective, why just talk about change when you could be doing it?

PIONEERS value possibilities and they spark energy and imagination. They're outgoing, spontaneous, and adaptable. They're creative thinkers who believe big risks can bring great things.

GUARDIANS value stability and bring order and rigor. They're practical, detail-oriented, and reserved. They're deliberate decision makers apt to stick with the status quo.

DRIVERS value challenge and they generate momentum. They're technical, quantitative, and logical. They're direct in their approach to people and problems.

INTEGRATORS value connection and they draw teams together. They're empathetic, diplomatic, and relationship-oriented. They're attuned to nuance—seeing shades of grey rather than black and white.

Integrators draw teams together and are perhaps best equipped to make sure everyone is on the same page. They'll keep an eye out for anyone getting left behind. By activating their innate power of empathy, integrators can help determine what is needed to bring everyone up to speed.

The strengths of each type, when brought together with the others, are

likely to lead to a more successful transformation overall.

What does this tell us about boards and board composition? It suggests that boards really can benefit from diversity of business chemistry types, as each of these types—pioneers, guardians, drivers, and integrators—contribute to making the whole greater than the sum of its parts. So, as your board considers

its own succession planning, or the next time your board embarks on any kind of change, don't just look to the usual suspects. Enlist a motley crew.

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