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 Institute for Alternative Futures

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Forward Perspectives

A Formula for Leading Change

By [IAF Senior Futurist Marsha Rhea](#)

A simple formula for leading change can help you gain insight and generate momentum to overcome resistance to change. The formula reads simply: $\text{Change} = \text{Dissatisfaction} \times \text{Vision} \times \text{First Steps} > \text{Resistance}$. The wisdom is in understanding that resistance and change both have external and internal dimensions and vision is really the most powerful factor in the formula.

The Institute for Alternative Futures uses this formula in speeches and workshops to demystify the challenge of leading change. For a recent example, click [here](#) to hear an audio recording of an October 2007 presentation to the Association of School Business Officials annual conference. Slides from the presentation are available [here](#).

Dissatisfaction

Some skeptics believe people do not change until their dissatisfaction becomes so great that they will do something to escape the pain. Wise leaders intervene before the crisis. You can use the dissatisfaction to open people up to a powerful conversation about their aspirations for the future.

Vision

Vision is the most powerful factor in the change formula because a shared vision will help you break through resistance, keep you on course in changing conditions, and help you overcome

the dissatisfaction people are experiencing.

A vision is only a dream unless it is backed up with a strong sense of how you will accomplish it. A strategic framework can set out the audacious goals, strategies and next steps needed to execute the vision. More organizations are turning to IAF to create strategic frameworks and compelling visions for their organization that will inspire the changes they recognize are needed.

First Steps

You can get the traction you need for this new direction with a confident set of first steps. Identify early wins that will give your organization a sense of what is possible and inspire them for even more difficult steps. As Jim Collins advises in *Good to Great*, make sure you have the right people on the bus. Do they support the vision and have the right competencies to execute it? Be prepared to invest in the innovation and learning to accomplish audacious goals. Communicate your vision and goals regularly and make it a priority to celebrate the efforts people put into making the vision a reality.

Resistance

To understand why you are stuck in a situation you don't like, look at both the external and internal forms of resistance. Your history or the organization's politics may have a hold on you or your resources may be limited. Or your stakeholders may prevent you from taking any high stakes risks. These external factors may not be as inhibiting as the internal factors like fearing that you lack the knowledge or expertise you will need. You may be operating in a low trust environment where fear of failure is very real. However, the greatest form of resistance may simply be the comfort you experience continuing in the status quo.

Change

However much we may resist change, it is always happening. By taking stock of the trends, issues and new developments in the external environment, you can identify the opportunities and threats that shape the future for your organization.

Wise leaders also pay attention to the internal dimensions of change. Are you accepting assumptions that should be challenged? You need to be wise about what must change and what should not. You can lose your way without this deep internal orientation. But your core values, even your identity, can evolve over time as you adapt to increasing complexity in your world.

Leading change is never easy, but this simple formula can become a powerful tool for understanding where you are in the process and what you need to do next to shape a preferred future. It is not the resistance or the changing conditions that determine your outcome. What makes a difference is your ability to turn dissatisfaction into opportunity and help people find a shared vision worthy of the hard work ahead.

The Digital Geography of the 21st Century

By [IAF Futurist Devin Fidler](#)

It is only in the last half century that human societies developed a sense of what it means to live on a planet. The realization subtly shaped human history ever since. Now, we are on the brink of a shift in how we view the world.

The twentieth century saw a monumental change in perceptions as mass industrialization peaked and ultimately gave rise to an information age. Throughout this process, our worldview has been refined to incorporate those changes in the world we see around us.

Yet, our view of our physical surroundings is still evolving. Jess Elder, head of georeferencing projects at the Washington DC-based [National Geographic Society](#), argues that advances in georeferencing, real-time media and new approaches to information processing will once-again transform our sense of place.

Elder cites applications like Google Earth as early examples of this trend, pointing out that these programs invite individuals to look at their lives in a much larger global context. With a few keystrokes it is possible to zoom from a planetary overview to a view of your own front lawn. According to Elder, this is only the beginning.

"Within the next decade or so, we will begin to see geographic frameworks becoming central to the organization of information across the internet," Elder predicts. For example, digital advertisements that can be tightly focused to a particular geographic area have already been developed. Beyond this, geographic search engine applications are being perfected that allow people to more effectively "search" their physical surroundings, not only for local businesses or addresses, but also for historical events, new stories and ultimately perhaps even individuals.

According to Elder, all of these trends point toward a richer and more layered sense of place in the future and National Geographic Maps is keen to stay ahead of the curve. Recently, for example, the organization developed [Meta Lens](#), an application that allows organizations to precisely georeference their media collections, information archives and data feeds.

The further development of applications of this type could be all the more important as societies are increasingly called upon to address problems in a coordinated way and on a planetary scale. For example, these technologies will ultimately allow for the simultaneous real-time analysis of environmental and development-related pressure points worldwide. As human activity increasingly has impacts on a planetary scale, digital geography promises to be a key tool in the effort to design interfaces that make activity on this scale sustainable.

Trends and Insights

Imaging Science Prepares its Legacy for Healthcare

In 2005, the Institute for Alternative Futures worked with the Academy of Radiology Research (ARR) to develop a Blueprint for Imaging in Biomedical Research. The Blueprint foreshadows remarkable improvements in our ability to understand the human body, intervene and improve health.

Dr. Elias Zerhouni, a leader in imaging science and Director of National Institutes of Health, had challenged the ARR to convene scientists from across scientific disciplines to develop the blueprint. Their exchange showed where the leading edge of imaging science is heading, and the contributions coming from imaging are described in a recently published [Blueprint for Imaging in Biomedical Research](#) (BIBR). The blueprint supports Dr. Zerhouni's aspirational statement before Congress: "As the 21st century begins to unfold, we are poised to make quantum leaps in our knowledge about how to improve people's health."

The BIBR describes how imaging is leading a change in the culture of science and contributing to health. Today's competitive scientists working within the silos of their disciplines are moving to more collaborative teams that integrate multiple disciplines. Imaging science is leading the way in "build[ing] networks for research collaboration among imaging investigators from different disciplines and institutions."

These collaborative networks of researchers will be aided in their endeavors by the ability to view changes at the smallest levels in the body. New imaging technologies are giving researchers the tools they need to understand how cells organize into tissues, organ systems and whole organisms. Atomic force microscopy and related technologies "are yielding methods for imaging biological structures with resolution at the atomic level, providing important manipulative capabilities for nanoscience."

These new tools are vital for identifying biomarkers. Biomarkers have the potential to dramatically improve the prevention and treatment of disease by acting as surrogate endpoints. Once these pre-disease states are recognized more focus can be placed on the prevention of disease. These biomarkers will support research into treatments for all the major diseases from hypertension to cancer and Alzheimer's. Beyond the many new therapies that biomarkers can help deliver, there is an even larger promise of systems change in healthcare. The identification and targeting of biomarkers for key diseases is a key development for biomedical research that IAF first forecast in 2001 in [Co-evolution: Innovation and Regulation of Medical Products](#).

Imaging is also leading to new understanding of the brain/mind dynamic through functional mapping of the brain. This knowledge will spread well beyond healthcare to how we operate in our personal and professional lives. For example, brain research is changing how management gurus view leadership. Recent breakthroughs in brain research are showing that traditional methods of [creating change and inspire learning in organizations](#) are not as effective as reshaping their expectations about the future.

Taken together, the new imaging technologies described in the BIBR will help usher in two widely recognized improvements coming to healthcare systems. The first is the ability to predict and prevent disease. The knowledge of pre-disease states will bring early treatments that effectively mean many patients may never experience the symptoms that today define most diseases. The second big change is the identification of subpopulations of patients who respond to a therapy and those who are non-responders, or who face greater risk of side effects.

This widely anticipated ability to personalize the selection of medicine was described by IAF in [The 2029 Project: Creating an Ethical Future for Biomedical R&D](#).

News and Events

The DRA Project Holds Disparity Foresight Briefing on Addressing Social Determinants of Health

The leading Democratic presidential candidates have, rightly, focused on healthcare in the recent primaries. However, between the debates on which health plan will do the most to increase access to care, there is something missing in the debate. Access to health care will only do so much if we do not also address the social environment and the systemic problems that make entire communities sicker than they need to be.

The DRA Project in conjunction with the Congressional Hispanic Congress and with support from the American Cancer Institute held its first DRA Foresight Briefing on December 6th, 2007 in Washington, D.C. Despite the rare flurry of snow in the capital it was standing room only as 115 policy-makers, congressional staffers and non-profit leaders gathered to go beyond access to care and learn more about *Reducing Disparities Faster: Addressing the Social Determinants of Health*.

[IAF Founder and Chairman of the Board](#), Clem Bezold, opened the session by placing the movement to eliminate health disparities and the DRA Project in the larger context of society's inexorable movement toward justice and equity. Just like the civil rights movement, the antislavery movement and the women's rights movements, the pursuit of equity (fairness) is part of a larger trend that will take time, but with support it can be accelerated.

Larry Cohen, executive director of the [Prevention Institute](#), spoke on the importance of community health in reducing health disparities. As IOM noted, "It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural, and physical environment conspire against such change." Cohen proposed four policies and practices needed for a solution to health disparities:

- Increase government funding that emphasizes prevention as well as medical care and research
- Design and implement a national strategy from a social determinants perspective
- Train health leaders in a catalytic role
- Support initiatives at the community level that focus on community health determinants (e.g. REACH and Steps to a Healthier US)

Stephen Thomas, director of the [Center for Minority Health](#), believes in the importance of reaching minorities in the communities they live in. Thomas connected our struggles today to eliminate health disparities with the origins of the minority health movement with Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute. Thomas also shared the positive findings of the new and innovative approaches the Center for Minority Health has taken to reach African American communities.

Dr. Amparo Castillo, project director of the [Midwest Latino Health Research, Training & Policy Center](#), identified empowerment and mobilization of the community as key factors to success based on his experiences on the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP). Castillo recommends that those who want to tackle disparities focus on an ecological model that targets individual, family, community and systems change and that they form partnerships early with both public and private sectors.

Rosemarie Henson, deputy director of the [National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#), talked about the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health ([REACH U.S.](#)) initiative. Unlike other public health approaches, REACH empowers community members to seek better health in culturally innovative and effective ways. The initiative has been successful in bridging gaps between the health care system and community and creating changes social and physical environments to overcome barriers to good health. The REACH US program shows that focusing on community health can eliminate health disparities.

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation has graciously hosted a webcast video, slides and a transcript of the DRA Foresight Briefing [here](#) on their website. Slides and copies of the handouts at the event can be downloaded [here](#) at the DRA Project webpage.

The DRA Project will be having another DRA Briefing in March of 2008. Look to the IAF Newsletter for more information as a date and speakers are selected for the event.

Upcoming Events

The Looming Diabetes Crisis in Georgia: What We Need to do to Change Our 2025 Forecast, The Sixth Annual Statewide Diabetes and Cardiovascular Conference, IAF Senior Futurist Bill Rowley, MD, January 30th, Augusta, GA.

Vision 2021 for Schools and the Principalship, [Colorado Association for School Executives 8th Annual Winter Leadership Conference](#), IAF Senior Futurist Marsha Rhea, January 31st, Denver, CO.

Obesity and Diabetes in 2025, University of Mississippi Medical Center Metabolic Disease Policy Conference, IAF Senior Futurist Bill Rowley, MD, February 11th, Jackson, MS.

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