



# MORE FEARLESS CHANGE

STRATEGIES FOR  
MAKING YOUR IDEAS  
HAPPEN



MARY LYNN MANNS, Ph.D.

LINDA RISING, Ph.D.

Foreword by TIM LISTER

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER



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## Praise for *More Fearless Change*

“The hard part of change is enlisting the support of other people. Whether a top manager interested in improving your organization’s results or a lone developer promoting a better way of working, this book will give you tools and ideas to help accomplish your goal. Best of all, they’re presented in small, digestible bits.”

—George Dinwiddie, *independent coach and consultant, iDIA Computing, LLC*

“*More Fearless Change* is a great book. Through real experiences and concise analysis, Linda and Mary Lynn identify patterns that will help change leaders quantify the situations they often face. From there, they provide practical advice for dealing with and overcoming them. I found every pattern in *More Fearless Change* took me back to a specific place and time where I struggled to find the right approach to articulate my ‘great’ new idea and connect with the people around me. I went from conference talks and challenging questions from skeptics to meetings with colleagues where I failed to convey practical new solutions, or to quiet times on my own where I was downright frustrated with my progress. Linda and Mary Lynn have patterns for each that helped me think through to practical, positive solutions and prepare for the future. For a topic as challenging as organization change, it’s rare to find a collection of patterns that are as powerful as those you’ll find in *More Fearless Change*.”

—Neil Johnson, *principal hardware consultant, XtremeEDA*

“More secret sauce for positive organizational change! Mary Lynn and Linda make it sound so easy, but using their building blocks, it actually is. With books like these, change agents won’t run out of steam while resisters will run out of excuses.”

—*Jochen (Joe) Krebs, author of Going Lean, Agile coach, trainer, speaker, and incrementor*

“Keep the patterns in this book and *Fearless Change* handy. Whenever you are frustrated by an intractable problem, choose a pattern to try. If you still don’t get the desired results, try another. Others will join in your efforts, and you’ll feel the satisfaction as small successes start to add up. These patterns transformed me from an ineffective ‘voice in the wilderness’ to a valued collaborator.”

—*Lisa Crispin, co-author (with Janet Gregory) of Agile Testing: A Practical Guide for Testers and Agile Teams (Addison-Wesley, 2009) and More Agile Testing (Addison-Wesley, 2015)*

“*Fearless Change* and now *More Fearless Change* are required reading for my doctoral students. As they explore emerging issues and are learning new concepts and ideas, my students have been able to make significant changes to their professional workplace using these patterns for introducing new ideas. We look forward to *Even More Fearless Change*.”

—*Fred Grossman, professor and director of doctoral study in computing, Pace University, New York*

“This book, *More Fearless Change*, is creative work. I use these patterns with my students to take innovation into practice, and also with my collaborators working in industries to promote organizational change. This book is a significant read for people in academia and in the workplace.”

—*Takashi Iba, associate professor, Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University, Japan*

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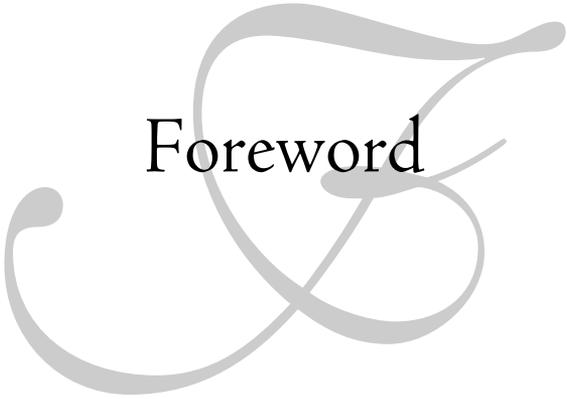
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# Foreword

On first noting this book's title, you might mistake *More Fearless Change* as a follow-on to *Fearless Change*, Linda Rising and Mary Lynn Manns' previous collaboration—but if you have not already read *Fearless Change*, don't put this book down to hunt for it first. *More Fearless Change* is written to stand alone as a collection of tactics and strategies for you to employ to increase your odds that the change you want can make it all the way from bright idea, through fruition, to “the way it is.”

*More Fearless Change* is not a recipe book for change. Rising and Manns are far too experienced in these matters to oversimplify the situation. It is a book of patterns—nuggets you pick up and inspect—and it is up to you to decide if one or another nugget would be helpful in communicating your particular idea campaign within your organization. The tactics and strategies are not specific to any organization type. If you see a need or an opportunity to improve the long-term health of your organization, and you want to see your idea through, and you are willing to work at it, I believe that *More Fearless Change*, as a coaching guide, can provide the key.

Actually, I would suggest that you read *More Fearless Change* twice, each time from a different perspective. First, try reading the book from the relatively safe perspective of you as *change agent*: You see a need for change, and



you have an idea that will facilitate that change. You need to convince those around you to join in, to invest in your idea, and to nurture it to full benefit.

Now from the scary view: After your first read, don't pick up *More Fearless Change* for at least a week. When you start rereading, imagine yourself not as the change agent, but as a *change recipient*. If you have been in this business a while, you can probably choose a real occurrence from your own experience; if not, go ahead and invent one.

Imagine, for example, that your job is being outsourced, and your company would like to outplace you as an employee of the outsourcee, which is located in <pick a distant place that does not thrill you>. You see that these requests are basically reasonable. You understand the business case the company is making. You see that this is absolutely not a case of Bad People Behaving Outrageously. You get that. So, how do you want to be treated? Which information do you expect, and from whom? Which promises would you ask for? Which time frame do you want to decide your path?

In the context of the real world, *More Fearless Change* reveals itself like a 3D stereogram. First you see it as a book to help you advance your ideas, then as a book to help you understand the complexities of how people react to proposed change.

Rising and Manns are the voices of honesty and fairness as they treat what is usually called change management, but it is not change "management" they are talking about. Theirs is a *campaign for change*, and their book is about changing the minds and behaviors of smart, emotional, real people, each of whom carries personal and career experiences from his or her past. What they address is not management, and therefore it is most worthwhile for all of us to look for help. Now turn the page. You can always read *Fearless Change* later.

Tim Lister  
The Atlantic Systems Guild  
New York, August 2014

# About the Authors



**Mary Lynn Manns** is a management professor at University of North Carolina–Asheville, where she was recently awarded Distinguished Professor of Social Relations for her work in change leadership. She has a Ph.D. from De Montfort University in Leicester, United Kingdom, where her thesis focused on the introduction of patterns into organizations.

She has continued her work with numerous presentations at a variety of conferences and in organizations that include Microsoft, amazon.com, Avon, and Proctor & Gamble. Her publications include *Fearless Change: Patterns for Introducing New Ideas*, co-authored with Linda Rising. At her university, she guides students of all ages in learning the tools (patterns) for leading change and competing as social entrepreneurs. In 2013, Mary Lynn was the commencement speaker who transformed the typical model of speeches by encouraging the graduates to take the first steps toward changing the world as they got off their seats to dance. In her spare time, Mary Lynn helps individuals make personal change by leading “Zumba for People with Two Left Feet” workouts.



**Linda Rising** is an independent consultant based in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee (just east of Nashville). She has a Ph.D. from Arizona State University in the field of object-based design metrics and a background that includes university teaching and industry work in telecommunications, avionics, and tactical weapons systems. An internationally known presenter on topics related to patterns, retrospectives, the

change process, and how your brain works, Linda is the author of a number of publications and four books: *Design Patterns in Communications*; *The Pattern Almanac 2000*; *A Patterns Handbook*; and, co-authored with Mary Lynn Manns, *Fearless Change: Patterns for Introducing New Ideas*. Linda has been an amateur recorder player for more than 50 years. She and her husband, Karl Rehmer, are part of three performing groups. They also enjoy bike riding, even when the hills in Tennessee are pretty steep. They also serve as board members for Habitat for Humanity of Wilson County. Find more information about Linda at [lindarising.org](http://lindarising.org).

A large, light gray decorative swirl graphic that frames the chapter title. It starts from the bottom left, loops around the top, and ends at the bottom right.

# Share Information and Seek Help

When you have a good idea, you are anxious to share it. You want to investigate what others may think about it, identify some supporters and potential resisters, gather some hints for moving forward, and get some help. Unfortunately, this is not always easy. The patterns in this chapter will help you achieve these goals—Elevator Pitch, Town Hall Meeting, Go-To Person, and Future Commitment.

Our first book introduced the In Your Space pattern and pointed out some ways to keep your idea where others can see it and hear it frequently. We have since changed the name of this pattern to Persistent PR because this name does a better job of capturing what you are doing throughout the change initiative. Spread the word, even though this takes time and effort. Despite your persistence, however, people might not take the time to listen or might misunderstand your message. Even if you believe “there is no such thing as too much communication” during times of change, you might still struggle with how to do this effectively.

Mary Lynn encountered many of the challenges in creating and communicating consistent messages while leading the development of a new idea on her campus. The answer was to use many different methods, with the hope that one or more would catch the attention of each person she was trying to reach.



## Elevator Pitch

When you begin, and throughout your journey, you need to understand what your message should be. You can't, and probably don't want to, share all the details of the idea with everyone you meet. Instead, you and your team need a concise pitch that opens the conversation—an elevator pitch. This summation is by definition brief, but it can spark curiosity and invite questions. Fewer words, with a conversational style and a good opening line, will capture attention better than long prose.<sup>1</sup> As Anthony K. Tjan recommends, you don't want to over-sell to the point of diminishing returns.<sup>2</sup> An elevator pitch helps you and your listeners focus on what truly matters at that time. As the idea develops, the team can, and should, update the pitch so that it always provides an accurate summary of what's going on.

## Town Hall Meeting

When you feel prepared to share your message with a larger group, it might be time to hold a town hall meeting. Try to invite as many voices as possible—involve everyone. This can be an efficient way to provide an update on the idea, gather ideas, identify supporters, and ask for their help. If you are successful at attracting a large, diverse group, this can be an exciting sign that people are interested, but it can also create bedlam as all of their voices struggle to be heard. Be prepared to provide strong leadership during the meeting so that the message is clear and all speakers make their points.

## Go-To Person

The town hall meeting and your team's continuing use of your elevator pitch will likely attract some innovators and early adopters. Keep a list of these people. They are potential go-to people who can help with tasks that crop up as you and your team develop the initiative. This list may contain the names of people you can "go to" for any number of special skills you will need along the way.

### Future Commitment

If you are able to anticipate some of your needs, you can ask for a future commitment from busy people. If given some lead time, they may be more willing to help. This allows everyone to plan ahead.

Mary Lynn recently asked a colleague to help with a project that was due to begin in four months. The colleague agreed more quickly than expected, so there was a bit of surprise in Mary Lynn's voice when she conveyed her thanks. "No need to be surprised," her colleague replied, "the main thing that persuaded me is that I don't have to do it now."

### Where to Go Next

The patterns in this chapter will help you keep others informed about the idea and request help, but won't necessarily persuade them to jump on board. Building persistent PR with a solid elevator pitch and town hall meetings at strategic times is only a start. Your go-to people, and others whom you are trying to convince, need to be emotionally tied to the idea before they will accept it. The next chapter has some patterns to help you achieve this end.

# Future Commitment



*Max is often asked to review journal articles. He chuckles when he explains that he will agree to a request if the due date is a month or two away, even though he tends to write the review a day or two before the deadline.*

**To make it more likely that you will get help in the change initiative, ask others to do something you will need much later and wait for them to commit.**



You are an evangelist or dedicated champion. You know you can't carry out the change initiative on your own. You have a to-do list that includes tasks

that could be done later, and you know there are people in your organization who could help.

### **You need help, but people are busy.**

When you ask for help, individuals are likely to think about all the things they must do in the upcoming days or even weeks and reply, “I’m sorry, I don’t have the time right now.” However, research shows that we are bad at estimating what we will do later, so we are more likely to sign up for tasks to be done at a later date. The illusion is that there will be more time in the future. When individuals agree to do a specific task on or by a specific date, they are even more likely to live up to this agreement.<sup>42</sup>

Dan Gilbert, in his book *Stumbling on Happiness*,<sup>43</sup> notes that when we think of distant events, we create a high-level image of what will happen. That is, our brain sees an “object” that looks smooth and lacking in detail, with stressors and costs that appear smaller and insignificant. We often fail to realize that the detail-free event we are imagining now will be the detail-laden event we will ultimately experience.

In contrast, when we think about the near term, we tend to be concrete and make plans with more detail. This leads us to consider more carefully whether we can do what needs to be done. When we make future plans, we tend to think in higher level, more abstract terms—we pay more attention to whether taking action will result in good things for us. Because of this bias to think about an event down the road more in terms of why we want to do it and less in terms of how it will get done, we tend to embrace goals and plans with potentially rich rewards that turn out to be logistical nightmares. For near-term events, we tend to make the opposite mistake: We turn down something fun or rewarding because it seems like too much of a hassle.<sup>44</sup>

*Therefore:*

**Approach individuals with an item that isn’t urgent so they can put it on their to-do list on a future date.**

Take the time to plan ahead. Work with your team to create a concrete action plan for the list of things the change initiative will need in the upcoming months. Next to each item, write the name of a possible go-to person. Approach the person with a specific task and the time period in the future in which that task must be completed. If possible, the two of you may even want to negotiate the specific due date.

Wait for your targets to say “yes,” but don’t worry about trying to get them to agree right away. Even those who initially react negatively to helping may eventually come around. Use patience and draw them in little by little—stay in touch with information that will encourage them to become more interested in the change initiative.

Once the individual agrees, solidify the commitment by recording the date and sending it in writing or by email. Send gentle reminders periodically along the way. Even though these reminders can help people stick with a promise, they can also be annoying—so include an exciting update of what is happening and where those individuals will fit in.

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The Future Commitment pattern provides a solution for the natural response you often get from busy people. Suggesting a later date is likely to be the hook that will draw them in. Even if it’s a small commitment, it can inspire the person to do bigger things.

However, this approach doesn’t work all the time. Those who over-commit in the present are also likely to over-commit in the future. Just because you have agreement from individuals, it doesn’t guarantee that they will follow through. Send gentle reminders but have a backup plan in case they can’t deliver on their promises. Always be on the lookout for new team members—involve everyone.

*Amanda was leading a two-year project at a university. Recognizing she would need to depend on academics who always have many balls in the air at any time, she periodically took the time to look ahead and make a list of things that would be needed later as well as to identify the go-to person for each task. She approached each person to ask for help as far as possible ahead of time, usually during a semester break when academics tend to feel less overwhelmed (use of The Right Time pattern). During the lead time before each person’s expertise was needed, she would gently remind the individual of what he or she had agreed to do. This was a great way to involve these busy people.*

*Janice tries to encourage women to host “parties” for her jewelry business. She discovered that most women replied with stories of their busy lives to explain why they couldn’t find the time to prepare and host a party. When Janice changed her approach and suggested they host a party several months down the road, the women were much more likely to agree.*

*When an upcoming task surfaces during a team meeting, Christina makes sure the deadline is set before everyone leaves the meeting (use of the Next Steps pattern).*



*She does this by asking the team members to consider the parameters and then setting the date that works for them. She has observed that this approach allows the team members to “own” the date and makes it more likely the task will be completed on time.*

*This website claims to offer the smartest way to set and achieve your goals: <http://www.stickk.com/>. Individuals can sign up to commit (commitment contracts) to a personal change goal by a certain date. By signing and agreeing to a specific date, they have made a commitment to the goal.*

# Town Hall Meeting



*When members of Congress return home for their annual August recess, many representatives and senators hold in-district town hall meetings to hear from their constituents. The American Diabetes Association sent an email to remind people that “these meetings are a great opportunity to speak directly with your elected officials. They listen to the pulse of their constituents. Show them that Diabetes Advocates are a vocal part of their community.”*

**As early as possible and throughout the initiative, schedule an event to share updates about the new idea, solicit feedback, build support, uncover new ideas, and bring in newcomers.**



You are an evangelist or dedicated champion who wants to explore the issues in a change initiative. You may be at the beginning of your journey, interested in identifying problems and possible solutions. Alternatively, you may have experimented in your own work by deciding to just do it, or you may have completed a trial run and are now willing to discuss the progress report and thoughts about the next steps to take. You have something to report about the change initiative, and you are willing to listen to what others have to say about it.

**It is difficult to stay in touch and involve everyone during the long period of time that is often necessary for a change initiative.**

Feedback is essential—you don’t want to work in a vacuum. It might seem easier to trust your own judgment and do what you think is best, but in doing

so you risk taking actions that do not provide real help for the organization. You might even be far enough removed from the day-to-day operations that you have lost touch with the real needs in your organization. You don't want to miss important information or run the risk that people will feel ignored.

Use of the Personal Touch pattern will help you understand how individuals can use a new idea and how they are feeling about the change. While individual conversations throughout the change initiative are important, one-on-one meetings with everyone in the organization are likely to take more time than you have. This type of contact will be especially difficult, or even impossible, in large organizations. The Persistent PR pattern is useful for communicating information, but it has limitations for creating a dialogue where emotions can be uncovered.

*Therefore:*

**Hold a meeting to solicit feedback, build support, get new ideas, intrigue newcomers, and report progress.**

Use the Personal Touch pattern to individually invite as many people as you can. Involve everyone—encourage attendance by participants with diverse backgrounds and ideas. Make sure you give particular attention to those who are most affected by the change.

Before the meeting, talk to skeptics (that is, use the Fear Less pattern) to avoid being caught off guard. Use the Corridor Politics pattern to influence the tone of the meeting before you open the discussion to a large group.

Send out an agenda ahead of the meeting. Begin by focusing on the purpose of the meeting. Give a brief history and status report of the change initiative (in other words, use the Just Enough pattern). Solicit feedback and brainstorm new ideas. Check your ego at the door and explain that you are there to increase everyone's understanding, including your own.

Demonstrate leadership—because if you don't, people with an agenda of their own might potentially create chaos. Be clear about the rules for conducting the meeting (for example, how questions and comments will be handled).<sup>62</sup> Watch out for ineffective discussions and endless debate. Be willing to politely put these matters in a "parking lot" for later or for offline discussions.

End the meeting by summarizing the next steps and welcome volunteers to be go-to people. Be sincere when you ask for help. Sometimes a group will expect a leader to provide all the answers. There is a fine line between

appearing incompetent or weak and performing the vital task of bringing others into the conversation.

After the session, stay in touch. Continue the conversation and post progress updates for everyone to follow.

=====

Using the Town Hall Meeting pattern will build visibility for the new idea and provide for a “pulse check” of the community. You can solicit feedback and collect other ideas. This pattern also gives you a chance to gather support and build a group identity. Most importantly, everyone has the opportunity to get an update and become involved in the initiative. People are less likely to complain later and more likely to take ownership if they are kept informed and have been given a say in the changes that could be made.

However, attendees may want the meeting to reach a consensus or they may expect their individual suggestions to be followed. If disappointed, they could get angry and work against you. Be sure to set clear expectations at the beginning of the meeting, and gently remind everyone periodically about the intent of the meeting. Be honest about your ability to please everyone; make sure they understand you can’t do everything. If individuals are passionate about their suggestions, you may wish to encourage them to become evangelists and make their ideas happen—this is a good opportunity to bring in more volunteers.

*Ralph, the head of a library, was retiring after 30 years of service. The administration decided that it was a good time to examine the organization’s structure and procedures to determine which changes could be made. One representative from each department was invited to a series of meetings where these issues were studied. Their rough ideas and recommendations were then presented in a follow-on meeting with everyone in the library. The results of these meetings formed the basis for the new leadership as Ralph’s retirement drew closer—changes in the org chart, decisions regarding Ralph’s replacement, and modifications to some processes and library facilities.*

*Alice was hired as the new president of a university. It was a time for change. Alice saw issues that needed to be addressed. Her staff scheduled a series of meetings to gather input for a strategic plan. Everyone on the campus was personally invited over email or phone to attend one of the sessions. Each meeting began by setting the expectations for the session and the suggestions that would be gathered. During the meetings, Alice presented a list of specific questions. The responses were recorded, and a summary of the*

*results was sent to each participant. Everyone was kept current on how the summaries were being used in the strategic planning process.*

*When Congressman Chip Cravaack held an invitation-only, \$10-per-plate luncheon, protesters were there. Cravaack asked the crowd if they wanted a town hall meeting and they responded with an enthusiastic “yes.” “OK,” he replied. “We can hear each other and have a good dialogue.” During the meeting, one college student challenged Cravaack’s assertion that programs must be cut to spare taxpayers, while another asked why he wasn’t raising taxes on people who could afford it. The questioners and the congressman didn’t come to an agreement, but in the hour-long meeting nobody threatened anyone, which was later referred to as “progress on the civility front.”<sup>63</sup>*