



Change-Thinking

abstract

This piece explores the onset of the 'new dynamic frontier' -that being the rapid acceleration in the pace of Human progress in the last decade- and proposes Change-Thinking as a strategic way to find solutions to the issues raised by this New Dynamic World.

Change-Thinking recognises the paradox that HumanKind is changing its **behaviour** to accommodate progress more than its **manner of thinking**.

*note: The concept under discussion in this paper has no connection to Change Management.

introduction

This paper is NOT about Technology, History or even Cookery because Change-Thinking affects EVERYTHING.

Generally, Humans handle Change well when it comes to cyclical events – for instance, the changing of the seasons - but less so when it comes to events of an ephemeral nature, such as an accident or a flood.

Yet there's a certain kind of Change which is often rejected outright or certainly accepted only grudgingly, and ironically, this category of Change is arguably the most important: **Knowledge Change**

resistance to Knowledge Change

Simple examples of Knowledge Change might be: receiving 'new rules for driving a car in the EU' or, having to absorb 'new regulations for completing a passport application'. In both these cases, common denominators can be identified:

- An enforced change in knowledge-base by outside influence.
- Time investment required to assimilate the new knowledge.
- Inability or reluctance of users to spend ('waste') time absorbing the new information.

ref: Change
Thinking, part1
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Reflections

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Now I expect you might be wondering where this is leading – after all, being bothered by change is not altogether uncommon? Well here's the point, and it's highly pertinent to the Modern Age:

Historically, Life has continued through the Ages with a steady increase in complexity – shall we call it progress? Dividing the 20th Century into four equal periods of 25 years, highlights this steady advance.

However, in recent years that progress has dramatically accelerated:

onset of the New Dynamic Frontier

The onset of the 21st century has heralded the start of a paradigm-shift in the way we live and indeed, conduct our lives. Increasing sophistication of Technology has brought about unexpected convergence of activities so that latest IT tools are easily capable of both traditional and new tasks. For instance now, not just Word Processors use 'computers', paradoxically, so too do sewing machines, TVs and cars.

When early IT developers designed crude yet ingenious calculators to help the War effort, little did they realise where it would lead: Digital processing per se has become *passé*, yet it is at the heart of the technology which now drives novel forms of Communication such as mp3, mp4³, Web and Mobile Devices⁶. Importantly, this technology is also demonstrating an ability to interconnect or network globally, because it uses a common protocol or language. The Digital World has the potential to take over almost everything, anywhere and operate at high speed.

The result? A profound and unprecedented effect on Humans, not least, changing the '**pace**' at which we live. British scientist and writer Arthur C Clarke¹ said: 'advanced Technology will be indistinguishable from magic' – and to some, it already is.

So, this is where I'd like to introduce the L4J² concept of **Change-Thinking**

defining Change-Thinking

Change-Thinking requires a new perspective:

- Acknowledging the rapidly changing Human environment which is upon us, and embracing it by developing timely management strategies to maximise benefit and minimise chaos.
- Recognising that stability of Life-Skills can no longer be measured in a generation but more likely a decade or even less.
- Avoiding Knowledge Deficit before it becomes irrevocable by making resources more dynamic.

Example strategies: a) design Knowledge-Bases which 'demand' updates b) design verification into legacy Knowledge-Bases .

enter the 'Network Habitat'

Our World is fast becoming our 'Network Habitat': a new environment in which we need innovative strategies in order to benefit from, and manage everything successfully without missing out. This 'Network Habitat World' is a roller-coaster: if we stop for a second, we risk losing the thread –witness the alienation many elderly feel in this respect⁵.

Whether this future is desirable is 'up for debate', but one thing is certain: there's plenty of potential to leave a great deal of people lagging behind.

In this new paradigm World, **learnt skills are no longer set in stone**, everything is becoming **dynamic and fluid**.

Whilst past professional practice included 'handbooks & workshop manuals' and the term a 'job for life' was part of the British vernacular, in the 'Network Habitat World' by contrast, software tools are deemed poor if they require a handbook in order to be operated, and almost everyone is worried about 'job security' -a term sadly, also now in the vernacular.

So where are we now? We live at a 'half-way-house' where 'Knowledge Deficit'⁹ is rapidly and exponentially growing. To give you an idea of scale, according to IBM *2013⁴, ninety percent of all Global Data has been generated in the last two years. Our 'Network Habitat' is an alien World which many find hard to handle because it requires constantly renewed effort to understand. Remember that for many, active Learning finished the moment they left school.

facing Knowledge-Deficit

Here's an example of Knowledge Deficit (KD) that particularly concerns me, because it's happening in one of the most worrying sectors imaginable: **Education**.

In fact, in the UK, KD is to a certain extent endemic. Why should this be so?

- A surprising number of teachers still feel uncomfortable with I.T.¹⁰
- In the UK, everything is geared towards 'exam results'.⁷
- Curriculum topics and content resources, particularly in the Sciences, are falling behind Real World Practice. Delivery of out-of-date knowledge is evident and I believe I know why. When I trained as a teacher, I was told: 'the biggest effort in teaching is learning the syllabus, but once you've done that, you can just milk it' A true quote.
- Now, in a World in which even Gordon Moore's prediction of Technology Advance has been over-run, clearly the Curriculum itself needs to become **dynamic and reactive**.

It's easy to understand why Education might be particularly hit: updating Curriculum with its built-in momentum is a huge task, however NOT rising to this challenge means that next generation students are being let down. Science Knowledge Deficit is already happening, I have witnessed it first-hand in several local schools in the last few months

To my mind, this is a systemic failure more than a teacher issue. Time 'in the classroom' is already desperately tight and whilst lesson prep is the norm, it is 'the System' which must respond by applying **Change Thinking**.

Before I leave Education, I'd just like to explore the ramifications of teaching out-of-date syllabus. Even if we assumed that 21st century progress was to 'halt today', students are still going to graduate into the Real World with skills that do not satisfy the Market. This is a complaint we often hear raised by Industry, Business and Commerce in the Media.⁸

Now let's 'switch back on' progress. Can anybody possibly assert that skills taught today will have **any validity whatsoever in 2050?**

Aside from Education now, our new Network Habitat is having a broad and profound affect on our day to day Life, yet there is little talk by governments of Management Strategies to adapt. A serendipitous approach is insufficient, and to let this develop entirely organically without some consideration is, I believe, to court disaster.

I'd like to quickly highlight some other areas of our lives which the Network Habitat is affecting:

In **Business**, concepts of Sales & Marketing have shifted dramatically with the focus more on care, client ownership and aggregate position rather than simply a sales advert.

In the **High Street**, the new paradigm is taking shopping increasingly online, nevertheless there is little evidence of a governmental 'integrated shopping policy' as the boarding-up continues.

In our **Social Worlds**, the Network Habitat is presenting the greatest of challenges: how to liberate our interactions yet maintain some sense of order, coherence and duty of care to minors?

conclusion

In this short piece, I hope to have demonstrated the need for intervention to counteract Knowledge Deficit which is occurring due to the emerging Network Habitat. I also hope to have outlined the meaning and need for Change Thinking strategies such as our own L4J initiative.

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