

PMPOV095 - Change Management and TOC

0:00:00.0 Mike Hannan: I think the cool thing, if there is one, is what TOC teaches is the reality is big changes, big improvements come from select few actual changes that you have to make, you don't have to change everything to change everything.

0:00:15.2 April Mills: Right, and I would say that as that relates to the work that I do is what I found was the biggest constraint to change being successful was this driving change versus driving people dichotomy and flipping that switch. And that's where I say it over and over and over again, is that is the value differentiator. Once I was willing to step through this paradigm layer, I had to have the fortitude to choose to do the opposite to get the benefit, and what I realized in doing that was I couldn't make anybody else think differently, but I had to think differently to get the benefit. I need my daughter to take all the dogs that are playing with chew toys underneath my desk out of here 'cause it's like they all ran in and are climbing on me, so unless we're doing like puppies and PMs or something.

[music]

0:01:08.4 Announcer: From the Washington DC chapter of the Project Management Institute, this is PM Point of View, the podcast that looks at project management from all of the angles. Here's your host, Kendall Lott.

0:01:18.7 Kendall Lott: Hello, PMs. Is it February already, and also still too early for spring. Our winter of discontent indeed. It is I, Kendall Lott, your co-host of PM POV, PM Point of View, with fellow co-host Mike Hannan. Mike, cold blast of ice and snow through the US since we last spoke, but here we are warm by the heat of rubbing the sticks of change management and Theory of Constraints together. So, two big topics. Two big theories. A lot of books written. Welcome, Mike, how are you doing, man?

0:01:49.3 MH: Doing fantastic, and I'm just so thrilled we have April Mills here and we're gonna learn a bunch from her tonight.

0:01:57.4 KL: And there's Mike preempting our guest again, but yes, we do have April. April, you on the call?

0:02:02.6 AM: I am here. Great to be here with both of you. Always look forward to conversations with you and all of your closest friends on the podcast.

0:02:10.7 KL: Well, it's because we know all the people that have all the cool stories to tell and actually the cool theories that cause us to think and ponder, so yeah, listeners, today we have April K. Mills, who is an author, and her background is strong in change and strong in Theory of Constraints. Indeed, one would say a guru in change and an acolyte of TOC. April, tell us, tell us about your books. Tell us your titles.

0:02:35.5 AM: So the first book from 2016 was 'Everyone is a Change Agent, a Guide to the Change Agent Essentials.' This is the book for anybody who thinks I've gotta wait until I'm the boss before I can do the really cool stuff I wanna do. I wanna tell you, you don't have to wait. Why not start today?

0:02:53.7 KL: So our first lesson today is you don't have to wait, and then there was the second book.

0:02:57.6 AM: And then the second book came out just this last summer, it's called 'Change Tactics, 50 Ways Change Agents Boldly Escape the Status Quo,' and that's more the handbook, the recipe book, The... Okay, I believe it, I'm a change agent. But now, what are my options? So I gave you a 50 that you can try depending on the situation you're in.

0:03:20.6 MH: I like to think of it as like the first book was, here's really the roadmap, and if you want some specific targeted things to apply on that road, okay, fine, here are some... Let's put some more arrows in your quiver for that.

0:03:37.6 AM: Yeah.

0:03:38.4 KL: Humans are like that. Here's their spiritual guidance. I thought the first one was poetic, challenging me to aspire and think great thoughts, and then the second one is straight out of the Old Testament, but we need 10 rules, give me the 10 rules, or I can't do anything. The people called out for the 10 rules and we back up the rules. And form of disclosure, I got to be one of your editor... Not your editors, one of your reviewers right before it was finished, and I will let the listeners know there were 51 and we had to find one to get rid of. So here's the point, we're already dabbling our toe into the third part, the third book that might be coming, but let's get on with it. So change management. So April, set us up first of all, why change, what do you care about change, what's the deal on change? Let's just go from that.

0:04:23.1 AM: Well, I love that lead in because actually, I don't usually talk about the work I do as change management, because so many people think of change management as a role. A role someone's given, and usually, depending on where you started your journey, if you started maybe as a project manager, program manager, you might think a change manager is somebody who reports to you. Typically, if you talk to a change manager, they'll disagree, they'll say, I'm your peer, I don't report to you, and then a bit of chaos ensues. But oftentimes, change management is seen as a role or a function, and I instead like to talk about change agency, which is something everyone has, it's not a role on a project, it's what a PM should have as a skill, it's what a change manager better have a skill. And it's what everybody should have, so that you can shape changes that are happening to you as a change leader, so you can lead stronger and as a project manager, program manager, change manager, so you can do your role to your finest.

0:05:21.1 KL: But let's talk about why focus on change. What's the deal on change? We talk a lot about it, we all know that we are saying change happens much faster than it used to, and we've been going through this cycle for a long time with the ideas of acceleration, why does this grab you as a business problem, as a person who's a consultant and who's worked with any number of large... Well, actually... What organizations have you worked with?

0:05:43.6 AM: I've worked with the US Navy, I was there as a civilian engineer for a number of years. Today, I have a role as an internal consultant at Intel Corporation, in addition to being an author of these books, but I've also consulted with various companies and organizations around the world. But the key about change, which is really important, is that if you want better, you have to go through change, and I totally agree that not all change is improvement, but all improvement requires change. So I see it as a means to whatever end you're striving for, faster product delivery,

better adaption to the market, better joy at work, a stronger home life, a stronger community, whatever it is you need change skills to get to the goal.

0:06:28.1 KL: I hear, I see Mike licking his lips.

0:06:31.9 MH: Yeah, right. I would even go so far as to say if you aspire to thrive in any aspect of your life, personal, professional, whatever, it's all about constant evolution, constant growth, constant change, and not again as April said, not for the sake of change. Just change for change's sake, but because if we wanna be better then better means we have to change from where we are now. Wanna reach for the next rung, we have to climb the ladder. Well, if we can't press off the rung below us, how are we gonna do that, right?

0:07:03.6 KL: I'm glad you guys... And you hit on something there that's kind of the secondary comment from my own background. I got frustrated with it already becoming so common that it's got an industry wrapped around it, so I run into the people I will be a change manager as well, and so now, the problem is like, why would you do that? Well, here's the method, I'm like, but I don't think you've told anyone why...

0:07:24.4 MH: Why?

0:07:24.8 KL: Why that matters... Well, because change is good. I'm like, yeah, no, there's a business problem in here, I would agree with you, but there has to be a business. So one of the questions I would have is this, how would we focus why and where we need to change in these types of organizations, how do we know where to put our finger on it to actually make it matter in an organization? What are the signals?

0:07:46.1 AM: Well, honestly, I'll use the standard consultant answer when you're given a tough question, is it...

0:07:51.6 KL: Ooh it depends.

0:07:54.7 AM: Yeah, see? But it really does, because what I find is one of the major conflicts that I actually try to draw out my methods is that if I tell you what your biggest need is, you're more likely to ignore me than engage with me. But if I share with you what my biggest need is and what I'm doing about it, and then I ask, do you have the same need too and do you want to join me? I'm more likely to get a positive result. And that's the key in all of this is not to assume, whatever is my biggest problem, I should make your biggest problem. And that's where I see a lot of carnage happen in organizations, is a competition about whose need is more important versus actually understanding the business case, maybe how we need to sequence our needs and maybe partner together, so I got involved with this 'cause I just saw carnage when someone would take their issue and make it everybody else's issue really against their will, and... I wanted to stop that.

0:08:51.7 MH: You know, in fact... Let me jump in here. So not everyone is gonna be familiar as familiar with the Theory of Constraints as the three of us might be.

0:08:58.5 KL: I was gonna say I vibrate because she immediately brings in sequencing and...

0:09:03.3 MH: Yeah, yeah.

0:09:03.3 KL: Priorities and...

0:09:04.1 MH: So you don't have to even know what Theory of Constraints is or care about it to appreciate the fact that one of its biggest contributions is breaking conflicts of the kind that April just described, the carnage and my needs versus your needs. And I assume that because I solved my problem, that therefore your problem has gotta be the same and you just apply the same solution and everything will be better. But what the conflict resolution approach of Theory of Constraints posits, which has been so powerful for me, even in my marriage, right, is what I call honor all the needs, challenge all the assumptions.

0:09:47.7 KL: Oh yeah.

0:09:50.4 MH: Okay? So if we have different needs we're trying to achieve, and that's why we find ourselves at odds, right, that's why we find ourselves completely oppositional. Rather than having my need be the one that's more important and try to run ram shot over your need so that my solution wins, why not challenge us together to come up with a solution that addresses all the needs, because if we actually share the same goal and let's say that same goal is to help our organizations thrive, which requires change, right. Then the only reason we could possibly be at odds is because we have failed to challenge the right assumption, and that's powerful, so I'm really curious to get April's take on that in the context of the word change.

0:10:36.2 AM: Yeah, I think too often where I'm called in or where my books end up making the first big difference for people is when they've been stuck in those conflicts of trying to downplay other people's needs to get their needs met, or ignoring other people's needs in their push to get their needs met. And they've been looking for tactics to bulldoze better instead of honor and work together.

0:11:02.1 KL: More efficient carnage instead of actually causing improvement.

0:11:06.1 AM: Yep, yep. And so what you look for, if you look into some of the literature, which is accurate and depressing is like, say you were to look at pro-size assessment of change. They do a survey every year and the top two things are usually, my change would go better if the senior leaders would make people obey me, and if people would listen, and those are both reflections of what I call driving people. Which is using coercion, threats, forced to compel others to change, and their argument is, is it would work if people [would] obey and I try...

0:11:42.1 MH: Do what I tell them.

0:11:43.2 AM: To posit something else. Yeah.

0:11:45.5 MH: Do what I want them to do.

0:11:45.6 KL: Well, you've actually hit on one of the main themes that pops right out in your book, actually in both of them. This idea that we don't drive people, and so tell us a little bit more about that, where you're headed with that for a second. Sounds like a bad marriage, you and what you see in your organization sometimes...

0:11:58.4 AM: Well, and unfortunately, it is this status quo, and I admit in the books that that's how I behaved when I got my first little taste of power, was I went out because I knew what I was proposing would work, and most people know if only they would do as what I'm asking, it would work to get the outcome, they feel justified that the ends justify the means. That's an old saying, and the means are driving people using coercion and threats to compel others. It's what we see modeled to us, so it's what we mimic...

0:12:29.0 KL: So what do you have to do instead?

0:12:29.4 AM: And all I'm trying to suggest is there's a better way.

0:12:31.7 KL: Well, so the theme is don't drive people, drive change?

0:12:35.5 AM: Drive change, and what driving change is, is focusing on the change, choosing that change for yourself and clearing the obstacles for others to choose it too, which means if the goal is better data clarity in some financial institution or an organization that's striving to use big data to solve problems, you don't go in and talk about how the engineers won't put the data in right. You say the company has a challenge with clear data, what are the obstacles that are stopping the engineers from putting the data in right? How can I partner with user experience or others to help clear those obstacles so it is easiest as possible to get clean data? That's very different. If you went to look at most data change implementations, it would be all around telling people, telling them again, training them again, reminding them, again, getting their boss to punish them when they don't do it correctly. That's driving people. Driving change is actually designing a system where people go, oh, that's fantastic, and I'd love that, and it's really more in the wheelhouse...

0:13:36.5 MH: Sign me up.

0:13:37.6 AM: That people actually do that as well.

0:13:37.7 KL: Yeah, and Mike I think that walks right up into how you exposed me to the Theory of Constraints there a little bit or that whole modeling system around it, what she was just talking about there. Which is you have to find what the actual problem is the actual block as opposed to you didn't do what I said, and so I think we're gonna need to take a quick side step now, to pull out a couple of the key things on... What's the key things that we need to know? Both of you are gurus in this, or both of you are very well read in it, tell us what we need to know about that, that's gonna apply to how we see organizations here. Some key tenets.

0:14:12.9 MH: Yeah, there are a few pillars to Theory of Constraints that I think are useful for all of us, whether you care to become a Theory of Constraints expert or not, and we won't go through each one. But there are things like inherent simplicity, inherent goodness of people, inherent potential in organizations to achieve great things. And so if you buy into those things, that's not to say that every single human being ever born was great, right? But the point is, too many of us, too often find it too easy to say, well, that guy is just a jerk, or that woman is just power hungry. Or that person's a psychopath or whatever, and that might even be true, but the point is, it's a cop out. It's a...

0:15:03.2 KL: People are complex and they're not labels.

0:15:06.2 MH: Yeah, and it's too easy to deflect blame away from yourself or deflect agency really away from yourself, and isn't it better to say, well, what if I just haven't dialed into their need yet, that might actually be something I should honor, because maybe there's a genuine need there that they have dialed into that none of the rest of us has that could be really impactful and powerful for the organization, and so bottom line is, if you subscribe to the tenets or at least agree not to let yourself off the hook so easily, right. Then you can start to say, well, okay, well, then we probably, if we're all part of the same organization, we probably have some shared goals, and if we have some shared goals but different ideas on how to achieve them, then it's just a question of well the different ideas are based on different assumptions. Which assumptions are stronger than others? And now we have an actual discourse that we can de-personalize the conflict, it's not me versus you. It's what assumptions are stronger than what other assumptions, and how do we craft a solution together that actually leverages the best of all these strong assumptions to achieve the shared set of needs that we all have to try and help this organization thrive?

0:16:25.5 AM: Yeah, well, and what I would say is that there's a great line that people have used, right, people don't mind change, they don't like being changed, right? There's plenty of changes we choose in our life, we fight past parents to get to freedom and adulthood to make our different decisions and choices and create change in our lives. But we loathe the person who says you have to do this thing, even if we wanted to do it, now that they've told us we must, it takes a little bit of the personal joy out of it. And so it's not even that the change is good or bad, it's the way we approach each other in it, that can produce that drama, and that's the big key that I try and call out, it's not if you've gotta go chase after a market in order to keep the company profitable, it's not... Maybe I shouldn't pick that 'cause it's too hard for my team and they've had a rough year.

0:17:17.2 AM: That's not what I'm suggesting. What I'm suggesting is, if you're gonna go after that market, you go and say, I'm doing all that I can to go after that market, what are the obstacles that might be standing in your way that we can get you over together. Because we're not gonna change the market we're going after, but I'm not gonna say if you don't go as fast as I do, it's because you don't care, and I need to discipline you or come behind you and kick you or replace you with somebody else who will care more. And all of those things which I meet so many people and they don't intend to inject this negativity into their systems, but the status quo is built on negativity, unfortunately.

0:17:55.3 KL: Wow, that's a big claim and...

0:17:57.4 AM: And when we mimic on it, that's what you get. And so I see people who actually end up accidentally damaging relationships instead of growing them.

0:18:06.0 KL: Mike?

0:18:06.0 MH: I'll take all that and just gonna sprinkle on top this notion of all that stuff I mentioned about the TOC pillars, the inherent simplicity, inherent goodness of people, etcetera. I like to recast that as something I call the how might we mindset?

0:18:24.7 KL: I was gonna say, she sounds like you.

0:18:26.4 MH: Okay.

0:18:27.0 AM: Yeah?

0:18:27.9 MH: And really, if you think about it, if everyone, or not everyone, but let's say the predominating cultural theme, is that in general around here, whenever faced with an obstacle, people convene, even around the water cooler or whatever that looks like in Zoom world now. And just say, well, how might we overcome it? How might we thrive as an organization? How might we address our shared needs together? How might we challenge assumptions that are keeping us stuck? All those things are way more inviting to the kind of agency April talks about, then how come you... Right?

0:19:05.6 AM: Right. Yeah.

0:19:07.2 MH: How come you haven't done the thing I told you we have to do yet in order to thrive, right?

0:19:13.0 KL: Why don't you, right? So yeah, that's a problem. I find myself running into it. Give us some more on the tenet side here that you guys are thinking about that comes out of that theory out of TOC that helps us understand how we can move through change better. I'm gonna still build the links there, so inherent simplicity, a kind of assume positive intent. Assume a collaborative approach, as you said, addressing the needs, what else you got?

0:19:44.2 AM: I think the combination comes in in the fact that where Theory of Constraints, say if you're dealing with a problem of flow, flow of value, flow of results, flow of information, addresses the what I call the organizational physics. The change efforts, the tactics I try to put out there address the organizational dynamics, right? So work flows in certain ways, and you can set up the physics of your organizations, your business processes, your hand-offs, your capacities, which is what TOC a lot of times is addressing to help those things flow. But if you do that in a way which says, let me go tell you how to run that system, versus let's us... How might we together understand how to run that system, you can get results through force, but they won't sustain, they will drop off the moment you take your hands off the pushing, and that's unfortunately what I've found in this post- or during COVID time is a lot of project managers and program managers who were driving people in the office with their presence of, I go to his desk and I stay there until he does the task, were lost when we went virtual because they could not use their physical presence to menace.

0:21:07.5 KL: Wow, very negative. Alright. Is anyone using a physical presence to enlighten and engender change or cause empowerment?

0:21:16.3 AM: Well and on the reverse side, they would say, you know, I went and I built relationships, I asked him them how their kids were, and so I would talk them into doing the work for me. So whether it was the soft side of it or the harder side of it, it was a loss of that through my presence, I convey it, and when I've talked to folks, I said I had no drop-off in capability and capacity going virtual because people don't do things for me. They do things with me, and I do things for them. And if you more often than not, do things with people or for them, you will continue to get results, but if people do things for you, the moment the organization changes, the moment the politics of the environment change, the priority of the project in an organization changes you will face these oh no moments. Because what was moving, stops moving, what was working, stops working, because the system was... And I'm an engineer by training. The system was fragile because it was running on fear of consequence, not relationships.

0:22:22.3 KL: I love your analogy there, of flow of a little bit, 'cause you just made me think of the idea of the rivers, the rivers find the best way to go, and you're trying to contour and that I thought... So the intervention is like putting in dams, for example, and then I thought, okay, so you can force the change until you stop maintaining the dam, and then people will have their way... Right, is kind of the analogy I was thinking as you said that.

0:22:44.8 AM: Yeah, well...

0:22:44.9 KL: It requires maintenance? If you're forcing people...

0:22:47.2 AM: Yeah, and you can even see it in a positive sense too, if you've got a leader that's got a ton of charisma, that people just wanna do things because that person is there and you're maybe a program manager underneath them and you're like, You know... Don't you wanna do this with Bill, 'cause Bill's really got our back and whatever, and you're using Bill as a positive. Like, don't you wanna be with Bill on this? And then Bill leaves, that change collapses just as fast as if Bill was we got to do it or Bill's gonna be angry. The mechanism is still the same, I'm not doing it because I understand it, I believe it, and the system is set up for me to thrive and me to get the outcome I need. I'm doing it because you're here reminding me that I shouldn't let down Bill and that's what I see so often.

0:23:29.1 MH: Let me add to that. So April and I, so even though we're both adherents to TOC thinking, we're not always the biggest fans of TOC culture, let's say, okay. And in fact...

0:23:44.7 KL: In that sense what's an element of the culture that we have to watch out for?

0:23:47.9 MH: I'll describe. So we decided to collaborate on a presentation to give at a Theory of Constraints conference about why TOC implementations are so dependent upon that forceful leader persona that April just described.

0:24:05.9 KL: Tell us... Well, let's start with one thing first. What are people trying to get out of a TOC implementation? We don't know what that is. So it means, they're doing something to get something back.

0:24:13.2 MH: In an end to reach for the next higher rung of performance to help the organization thrive at the next level, okay. And there have been so many incredible success stories from Theory of Constraints, and by the way, they're not alone, some pretty big Agile transformations, and...

0:24:30.3 AM: Lean has this oftentimes too, right. Shrinking cycle times, lowering inventory levels, improving inventory turns, whatever those measures you're going after...

0:24:38.1 MH: The total production system, all based on Lean, kind of spawned Lean in a way. So, but the notion is, okay, well, if it was a system-wide thing and the only one that controls the system is the senior leadership, and the senior leadership has all the charisma, and we all wanna follow what the senior leadership says, and we all implement the change that will improve the entire system. And it works. And we're thrilled. Wow, that's amazing. But then as April described, when those leaders leave, then what? And the sort of uncomfortable truth in the TOC world is very, very few of these big dramatic gains in performance sustain after those leaders leave.

0:25:25.8 MH: And that's, I think, at least in part, what motivated April, you tell me April if I'm wrong. To say, well, that's not sufficient. We can't rely on that. That's obviously, if it's not sustainable, why should we all... Even bother learning it?

0:25:41.7 KL: Like I tell you, it strikes me as a little bit irrational then, so that implies the new leadership does not operate on the organization's best value outcome, so are we assuming that leaders don't actually understand or have the ability to analytically see what is considered good value for their organization? 'Cause the market solves that problem, right?

0:26:00.0 MH: I don't know that it does.

0:26:02.7 AM: It depends on your market position, how long you can last, and the sad truth is, the status quo is most of your competitors are equally as deficient in these spaces, which is why when a TOC implementation comes in, I joke that it's like if you were in horse and buggy times and a salt flats racer went by, you wouldn't see the car, you'd see leaves blowing. Because things don't move that fast and TOC implementations are like that. People will say, you know, I dropped my cycle time to a third or a tenth of what it was in three months and people are like... Nothing happens in three months and they're like, But it happened and people don't believe it. And the unfortunate aspect is the status quo rushes back in and you're affected.

0:26:43.6 KL: You said it earlier, and then you just now expanded it for me, not being a management guy like you guys are, in that sense, my background is in economics and political science, and you've managed to ring both those bells and one of them that I took a note on here was, your implication is that there's an equilibrium of negativity at any given status quo level, right. And we could think of it as some sort of energy balance, that an organization has some level of negativity that keeps it from going, but enough to produce value, positive things happening, or I would call it organizational assets versus organizational debt that would allow them to keep going. And then you just said, Oh, well, here's the other news too, the entire market's like that. The market's in equilibrium as well...

0:27:23.8 AM: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

0:27:25.7 MH: Absolutely.

0:27:27.0 AM: Yup. And there are countless stories...

0:27:28.7 KL: And so we're trying to disrupt that, I assume, for a higher balance of value.

0:27:33.9 AM: Right. And the competitive advantage of these methods...

0:27:38.1 KL: There you go now.

0:27:39.2 AM: Is so powerful because they are easily mimic-able and yet people won't mimic them. It's the conundrum that a lot of people face when they watch Elon Musk be interviewed walking around the space port. And while he's being interviewed, I watched a video, while he's being interviewed, he's changing his engineering thinking about one of the designs. Anybody could be that open to an insight, adapting their thinking. Most organizations would then run that through

80 layers of engineering review assuming it's not right, to prove it's not right, instead of testing it thinking maybe it's right, and implementing it. And he's got competitive advantage because he's not held back by all of these assumptions of how the status quo should work. He says, if it gets in my way, I'm gonna eliminate it. Now he's a rare case of being able to do that, so more people can do that. If you are open to the possibility that your status quo is what's holding you back versus that other people are what are holding you back, you have an infinite amount of degrees of freedom to improve your situation that you have left untouched. And that's why this is rich.

0:28:54.8 MH: That goes right back to the TOC pillar of inherent potential.

0:29:00.3 AM: Yes.

0:29:00.9 MH: Oh, and by the way, the way that the Theory of Constraints originator, Dr. Goldratt spoke of it, he didn't call it inherent potential, he called it... Never say I know. So this notion that, of course, we're hired into positions, usually of very senior leadership, if we're super smart and accomplished and all that, to drive big improvements, blah, blah, blah... That, yes, we know a lot. There's no question, like obviously, we had have to know a lot to get here, but this notion of because I know a lot, therefore I have to act as if I have a monopoly on all knowledge. And direct all change as if I had a monopoly on all knowledge rather than engage the agency of others who might know things I don't. Right, and by the way, even if I know more than all of them combined. Which of course, I don't think has ever happened. But let's just imagine for a moment that... Of the 10 people on my team, I know more than all of them combined. The reality is, they're not gonna feel any sense of agency if I just say I'm smarter than you, do what the F I say.

[chuckle]

0:30:13.9 KL: Do it the way I said it.

[laughter]

0:30:15.8 AM: Yeah.

0:30:16.0 MH: The way I said it. But rather than say, Hold back the things that I know and just ask them, Well, if we were to achieve this, what would have to change or what would have to be true in order for this to become our new reality? And then that opens up so many interesting apertures of people's thinking. In fact, they they've proved it creates new synapses like new synapse, firing pathways for people to start thinking differently, so it's not just agency, it's actual engagement of our best thinking and trying to elevate our combined thinking so that even if at the end of all of it, they say exactly what you thought was the right answer two weeks ago, the fact that you've recruited their best thinking and that agency and it only took two weeks, means you're gonna have a heck of a lot more power driving that forward than if you had just directed it, but I wanna hear from April on this.

0:31:17.1 AM: Well, but I think the thing that I was gonna comment on on your scenario is there's this assumption of the leader sparks that thinking instead of setting the environment where that thinking emerges as well. So this is part of the transition from, I tell you, is I ask the good questions. I actually stopped reading all of the articles online about good questions to ask your team. 'Cause they're usually all these contrivances around trying to spark the right answer out of

them, which we're all told if we're teaching, don't ask a question you know the answer to 'cause that's the leading question. Don't ask the question where you want an answer, 'cause you'll end up going...

0:31:53.4 AM: No, that's not right. No, it's really this. Instead, creating the environment where people can share their thinking, share their reasoning and do something on it, and that's one of the big keys, that's actually one of the tactics, the 50th tactic in my second book was this concept of assessing trust is how much do you trust the people that work with you or for you to make decisions independent of you? Because the answer is, is it's different for each person, right. You wouldn't bring a brand new, new hire college graduate in and say, have at my code base.

0:32:22.8 AM: That's not appropriate. Right, but at the same time, you also wouldn't take your senior, most experienced developer and say, run all of your coding ideas by me before you do anything, or you're just constraining value. And yet, if you're not realizing this ability to choose the change, clear the obstacles, create the environment where they can thrive and do that for others, you're artificially constraining your environment, and that's really where I think this TOC and this change piece meet. Is the constraint to your success is right in front of you, and if I can help you see it, you are capable of acting on it and getting a better outcome tomorrow. And where TOC might go after the mechanics of the system and the mechanics of the value flow of the product, I'm trying to get after those assumptions about how I should interact with others, to trigger a positive response in myself, a positive response in the system and help them unlock that positive response in them.

0:33:21.3 KL: I'm struck by this being a 400-year-old sentence from Blaise Pascal, and I was looking for the actual quote. "People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs, not on the basis of proof, but on the basis of what they find attractive." And so you have to dangle that in front of them a little bit. I'll now take one quick spot again on the other aspect of my world that you said right at the beginning, in my sense, from political science, one of the things... One of the sayings that I had picked up was, you said when I got a little bit of power, I did. And then you were surprised. And one of the sayings I remember from my education was power is defined as the ability to get other people to do things without their resorting to reason. So it has positive and negative. Right.

0:34:09.6 AM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

0:34:10.5 KL: And so in your world, as the two of you are describing the equilibrium of pain, that is the status quo or negativity that can happen, the forces of good and evil locked forever embedded in the organizational aspects of a firm of an organization is the very aspect... If in fact, that was a good definition, anyone who perceives they have power is literally thinking, I have the ability now to have somebody do something, whether they like it or agree to it or not. The very basis of that discussion is antithetical to what you guys were are talking about and what you saw both in how you felt about change and as you see in the Theory of Constraints. Discuss amongst yourselves.

0:34:51.0 AM: Yeah, well, I want to key off of that because I started my career, my professional career at the US Navy as a civilian nuclear engineer, and there's a lot of myths that people think if they haven't been in a military organization that it must be lovely because you issue an order and everyone obeys and anybody who's been in there just laughs hysterically, right. Because yes, there is an expectation of that chain of command and the expectation of compliance. But great units run on the fact that I want to follow whatever this person says because I trust them to have my best interest at heart, I trust them to understand what we need and I have chosen to submit to their

leadership, whether that was through signing up and volunteering, or being a part of their team or whatever that is.

0:35:38.1 AM: And this is really the key that confuses people is when you see great leadership from the outside, you think it's the orders which are driving it. The relationship is what conveys the power, not the edicts. The edicts are the superficial aspect of watching the dance, a bit like a marching band person will follow the conductor. They've chosen to say, I wanna be part of this band, and I want them to guide me to my best performance, but it's a dance between them, an agreement between them, not a coercion. A coerced marching band would be the most dysfunctional hopeless group, if they were only marching out of the fear of failing.

0:36:16.8 AM: And you can see that difference in performance when you actually see some organizations that have those types of systems of the coordination in its stiffness and its rigidity, in its ease of failure. And so what we've got is an opportunity to really change that over and bring the mechanism under great leadership to light, and name it, and I'm choosing to call it driving change, because what you find in great leaders and organizations is there are people who've said, I'm going to do what I'm asking of you, and I'm gonna work harder than you and first. And I'm gonna plow into the space first with you, trusting that you'll go with me. This is why Admiral Rickover, who was the founder of the Nuclear Navy, used to go on board the submarines the first time they went out to test depth. He was willing to risk himself with them in service to the fact that this is my program, I'm not willing to put you in harm's way if I'm not willing to go too.

0:37:13.6 AM: And it's those sorts of epic examples, right. Lewis and Clark leading the Corps of Discovery, walking every step the Corps of Discovery walked all the way from St. Louis to the Pacific and back, suffering as their men suffered, that we remember. And yet in organizations, we think, Well, I got a new director title, so who should I go tell to do something today? It's so silly. By comparison.

0:37:40.0 KL: You opened so many conversations there, with that particular one there, and you remind me, and Mike I'll let it go to you, but you just... You hit another one coming from a completely different angle as a former or returned Peace Corps volunteer, one of the first tenets they teach you before they pretty much drop you on an island, and that's what happened to me on a beach, is relationship before task, which I feel rightly. I'm a miserable person. But aspirationally, I knew that was the right answer. And they were saying it in a cross-cultural, but what you're suggesting is this is actually universally true, and that we may... With that putting the two together, we may be training... We may naturally tend to train a lot of our folks away from that idea and perhaps we should remember it. But their whole thing is relationship before task. You don't get to go in and say, I will do or you will do or here's what we should do, even. You have to have the relationship first when you have no currency and don't speak the language, right? So that's the first thing.

0:38:34.2 AM: Yup. Well... And in my first book, one of the executive tactics I give towards the end is act, do something before you ask. And the example I give people to just model this in the simplest form is, if you want your team to read something, send the email which says, "I've read this. Here are a few things I got out of it, but I'm eager to hear your thoughts." Your team will read that. But if you send the email which says, "I'm distributing this to you, read it by Friday," no one will read it by Friday. You will show up on Friday and no one will have read it.

0:39:07.4 MH: Or worse, the people who do are only the ones that care about compliance and scoring points with the boss and not actually contributing to the improvement.

[chuckle]

0:39:15.5 AM: Right. And so, those are simple things. So, to your point, people have said this in a lot of different areas in their own way. I wanted to give it a common name so we could talk across from Peace Corps volunteer to change person in organizations to consultant over here or somebody in community development and somebody in government, wherever else the core of it is driving change.

0:39:40.1 KL: Let me turn this a little bit for a second then. I wanna put this back in the idea of flow. What are the barriers? If we look at change, one unit one of change, you are suggesting that the person it starts... I mean, it's almost confusion in this sense, right? It starts with I have to change me first before I can change the things around me, in a sense, right?

0:39:57.0 AM: Yup.

0:39:58.1 KL: I have agency is how you opened with that. Am I tracking? Okay.

0:40:01.4 AM: Yup. Yeah.

0:40:02.1 KL: So now we've got Eastern tied to Rickover in a nuclear submarine, and it just doesn't get any better folks.

0:40:07.7 AM: Yeah. It's holistic.

0:40:08.9 KL: So, what are the barriers to change? Think through the idea of the agenda that is said, or the agenda that is felt, but let's take it to this constraint theory for a bit. There seems to be places where there's a bottleneck of change, I guess, I'm imagining. How do we see that and how does thinking of it as a constraint in that modeling system, how does that help us get through this?

0:40:30.4 AM: Right, a lot of times in systems is that there are so many changes going on, because rather than me understanding how to partner with you, I drive my own program, and I can't get my program done the way I've designed it, 'cause my program is all tasks for you to do. And then your program is all tasks for me to do, and then we have coordination means upon coordination means where I agree to your task maybe, you agree to my task maybe, or you agree in the meeting and ignore it afterwards. And we do this dance of I'll trade you a task and there's trading of time and things, instead of focusing on what are the things that are within my control? I talk about the change agent's motto. "I will do what I can with what I have where I am."

0:41:12.9 KL: Say that again, say that again.

0:41:14.9 AM: "I will do what I can with what I have where I am." So, if I organize my change around that, and then I say, but what... Don't I have that I need, now I come and I partner with you. And rather than saying, Mike here's the five tasks for you, I go, Hey, I'm trying to get here, and it seems like if you were to help me with this, we could go faster. What would you need? And maybe he goes, you know, I can't focus on that right now, 'cause I'm off doing this.

0:41:40.3 MH: Little history lesson. There are many, many tribes among the Iroquois, right? Back before the Europeans showed up on the North American continent, and yet they all had this identity as Iroquois, and in part it wasn't just lineage or you know, genetic traits or whatever. It was, we are independent communities who choose when we want to collaborate with the others to achieve larger goals. And when we choose to do that, we codify that into a treaty. And so, now we think of treaties is like, these big hard things to negotiate that prevent World War III or whatever. But for them, it was just like, whenever we have a shared larger interest, we agree to sacrifice some of what we might otherwise have done in pursuit of that shared larger interest, and we codify it and honor it and act on it. And I think there's so much self-governance, self-management, agency, all the things [chuckle] we talked about in this that are really a natural part of the human condition, if we allow it to be.

0:42:54.8 AM: Right.

0:42:54.8 KL: Are we suggesting then that the biggest problem in causing change is that, as individuals, we're not willing to? I mean, if I'm trying to think of elevating the constraint, trying to identify the problem, where's the bottleneck?

0:43:04.5 AM: Yes. It's each of us who decides that rather than me changing my tactics, my job is to change you.

0:43:11.5 KL: Okay.

0:43:12.1 AM: And so that's what the whole concept of change tactics is, not only is it a book of tactics, it's also a call to action to change your tactics, if you want a different outcome. Because I've seen people who've spent years trying to win executives to things, trying to win people to their things, and they haven't made any progress themselves. They just sat their spinning, pushing, pushing, pushing, pushing in quick...

0:43:38.0 MH: And then complaining.

0:43:40.3 AM: And then complaining [chuckle] and then pushing again. Instead of saying, What can I do with what I have, where I am, and going after that? And this is, I think, you know, an eternal opportunity that's hiding in plain sight.

0:43:53.1 KL: Let's dig in here a little... Let me dig in here a little bit, 'cause I realize that your book is broken into four sections, the content part is broken into four sections, and the readers may find this interesting, and I will suggest at the end that you let us know how we can get to that, but change tactics for you, is it how it actually opens, it's what you have to do about you, then it's change tactics for them. Change tactics for them...

0:44:15.2 AM: Yeah.

0:44:15.4 KL: Change tactics for action and change tactics for assessment. So there seems to be a system in there. Talk to me a little bit about change tactics for them, and I wanna hear how Mike and his... How could we get to resolve how you lay out some tactics for how I need to give them change tactics?

0:44:31.0 AM: Well, it's really in helping them realize that they have as much agency that you're demonstrating, right? So it's helping them find clarity in the working together, it's helping them realize their power and potency. There's one about study the hometown prophets. What's always hilarious is when you come into an organization, say you're from an external consultancy and you're there to try and create some change, let's call it create instead of drive people or drive change, you're there to create some change. The entering assumption usually is nobody [has] thought of this or they would have done it already. And what do you find instead? There's countless people in the organization, but trying to say this is the right thing to do, if only someone would listen to me, give me skills, partner with me, you know. And you meet the people standing at the gates going, I've tried that before, it'll never work and poking you in the side in effect with their frustrations.

0:45:28.5 AM: And so there's countless opportunities as we're going into organizations and using these tactics is to actually help clean up to your point that we've talked a lot about pain, to clean up that scar tissue that the status quo has produced and help people regain their agency, lean into their core strengths, realize they had the right idea, but they didn't have the tactics to implement it in the past, partner with them to help it happen. And I find people not only restored, but rejuvenated and unleashing an explosive amount of energy for their organizations or for their careers with a subtle change in tactics, and Mike's...

0:46:06.9 MH: So, I just gotta pile on there. So I had a client recently, it was earlier this year, or I guess, last year, sorry. And it was a major airline, that's starting... All the major airlines are recovering from the worst parts of the pandemic, and it's been almost a year now, really, since airline demand has started to pick back up. And so all of the pilots that they asked to retire early and had buy-outs for... And all the other sort of excess capacity that they had at the time was shed, but maybe a bit too hastily because the moment demand picked up, which was much faster than a lot of people predicted, now what do we do? You can't just hire a bunch of pilots and hire a bunch of airplane mechanics and all this stuff, so they had asked me to come in and say, like we need to kind of organize things better so that we can use the limited constraints of the staff we have to turn these airplanes around faster in the mechanics, and I don't know anything about airplane mechanics, so I'm not an expert there. But I do know about how to drive better flow of work within harsh constraints.

0:47:22.9 MH: So I said, yeah, sure, that sounds right up my alley. I'm happy to do that, and I started giving the training and which has a lot of experiential learning and gamified simulations and all that sort of stuff, and every single thing I did, every single one of these wrench-turners looked at me like, duh, obviously, the management hired you to come in and teach us? How about we tell you to teach them because we all buy into this, we get it, it makes obvious intuitive sense to us, it's not... Maybe some of it's new, but frankly not much, and we're game and I even went to one guy and I said, Hey... In the next simulation, I'd like you to play the manager. And he goes, Well, why do you want me to play the manager? I said, I don't know, because you seem to have pretty strong opinions on how bad the management is around here, and he's like, Well, I do have strong opinions on how bad the management is around here, and I was like, Okay, so then you could be the manager. He's like, But I'm gonna be a very bad manager because I've only had bad models.

0:48:31.2 MH: I thought wow. Okay, so act as if you don't have the bad models, if that's possible. Act as if you think you have the best interest of the whole organization at heart and drive it, and the manager that hired me came over to me later and said, Hey, I saw you talking to that guy. What

were you talking about? I said, Well I was talking about having him lead the next segment as the manager, he's like, Why the heck would you want that? Like that guy is like the most anti-manager person around. I was like, yeah, that's what he told me. He admitted it, he was like, well again, then why would you want him... I was like, just go through it. I think you're gonna learn a lot. And it was mind-blowing, just how much was learned for everybody, and it was so much what April talks about with the... Again, let's lead by example. Let's choose to change for ourselves. Let's embrace the knowledge others have, especially those closest to the work, which is all these guys. There's a couple of ladies in there too, but all of them said, okay, now that we know that that's what this is about that, we actually can talk about what really needs to change around here to rise to this occasion, which is frankly unprecedented.

0:49:45.2 MH: Well, how much time we got? Then we actually devoted a half a day and got all of that input out and three or four concrete ideas implemented, then I'm not at liberty to say what airline it was. Let's just say they've met the demand better than most as a result...

0:50:01.1 KL: Oh, that's fantastic. And that's a real outcome. I wanna speak to something that we've talked about before, that you just walked us up to there... Both of you did. Seems to me a question about how we would be leaders in change pops up. What I'm hearing from you in your last comment there, April, was more about not so much that someone leads change, but if I'm the one who's enlightened - I've read the book, read the first book, read the second book. So I've got tactics, I've got things I can do that I can learn and play with, so that led me to think like, well, what does that mean for us not who just have to do change or to be part of change or to help others with it, but is there in fact a role for people who are leading it? Which takes me to why your book, 1995, Kotter, nailed it down. "Leading Change," Why, I'm done. Everybody goes back to that. That's the whole processing... Aren't I done? Aren't I cooked?

0:50:51.9 AM: Yeah, we... And I love the fact that you made the bridge to Kotter, 'cause that's actually where I started trying to create change. So I got that little bit of power I talked about, and I read "Leading Change," and I went and I in effect, almost hit people with the book to enforce that eight-step model, and it didn't work.

0:51:12.9 KL: You didn't institutionalize it? You didn't get to eight?

0:51:16.4 AM: Because... And if I could tell the long story here, so you've gotta give me a few steps to explain it.

0:51:22.9 KL: You don't have a long story, but give us the points.

0:51:25.2 AM: Yes, so what that model was based on was you were the executive and you had the power to enforce the eight steps on your organization. What I found as a 20-something woman engineer in a Naval Shipyard was that was not the power I had nor could that model work. So the key that I've found actually in all of my work, is that the tactics that are given to most people, assuming you're the change manager, the change leader, not only don't they work for change agents, but the inverse of these change agency tactics that I found and catalogued and created and described in the hands of somebody with executive authority are actually forced amplifiers. That's why we remember the names of people who did them. We remember Rickover. We remember Lewis and Clark. I mentioned I'm at Intel, we remember Andy Grove who was hard on everybody who worked with him, but he was harder on himself.

0:52:28.0 AM: And it's that example of it's not about being sweet and nice, it's about... If it's gonna be tough, I'm right in there. It's the patents. It's all of the military leaders. The great leaders. We remember, that's the key. So what I found was really powerful is when I partner driving change with Kotter's methods and made it about a get-to, it had amazing results. And if you look at Kotter's eight steps now, it doesn't say the old language about like creating this coalition by declaring. It says create a volunteer army, and he got that from the work that I was doing with the Naval ship yard.

0:53:04.8 KL: Sweet. Sweet. So you made some changes that way... Well, you also said something interesting, and what you were reflecting there was that the... I'm not sure that someone's ever given the title, you're the change leader, the examples you immediately give are no. Leadership as someone who does change there's like I, don't know, is there a title I can go apply to? And if there is, should I be wary if someone's been nominated the official change leader? How is this not the function of leadership, period?

0:53:34.2 AM: So I talk about that too, which is, there are certain things with change you can outsource, certain things that you shouldn't outsource, and certain things that you can't. And you cannot outsource learning or sit-ups because if I learn it or I do the sit-ups, you don't get the abs or the information and education, and the same is true with change. So with change... You can outsource a lot of change administration, and this is what a lot of people think of with change, like sending the communication, setting up the training modules, developing the slideware. You can outsource that. Nobody says, did you build that slide? Yeah, that's not the question.

0:54:13.9 AM: You should not outsource change leadership, this is where when some senior leader brings you in and you're the consultant and they put you in front of the room instead of themselves as the role model, you're gonna be the one that is actually the avatar for that change and when you leave as a consultant, it's gonna fall down because that leader does not know how to sustain it, and that's what happens with a lot of Theory of Constraints implementations. Is the consultants do the thinking for the leader, and when the consultants leave, the leader can't think their way through the scenarios and it collapses, they don't have a relationship with the...

0:54:42.9 KL: Wait, don't they have all the tools? Didn't we get all the tools as a leave behind?

0:54:46.2 AM: Because go back up to change agency. You cannot outsource change agency and you cannot outsource that going first, that immersing yourself in it, that it becoming your new normal to anyone else. And you can see countless stories in history and countless stories in organizations where it's a do as I say, not as I do. And that sustains so long as whoever that deputy is that's actually holding that capability, and then they depart and the thing collapses. Because if the goal is we have to all be fit, if I do your sit-ups, you are weaker for it.

0:55:22.6 MH: Can I take that, especially as we've kind of are looking to rap here, Kendall?

0:55:26.1 KL: Yeah, bring it down.

0:55:28.6 MH: So many of us that are interested in this topic, so many of us that are trying to be the right change agent, so many of us that take everything April said in this session to heart and trying to live it. And I'll count myself among them. Right, we find ourselves in scenarios in which we actually are doing their sit-ups for them. We didn't realize we were... We didn't want... We didn't

set out to do that. We were trying to avoid that. We're trying to follow the good guidance April's given us here tonight. But because we wanna help, when we see an opportunity to help, we jump in and help. And if I'm the best sit-up person around, then that's sometimes how I convince myself to help. And so it's an ongoing challenge for all of us change agents, and I'm gonna admit this with open humility, that I regularly have to kind of reflect upon what I just did that day or that week, to say, did I just help them learn to do their own sit-ups or push-ups or whatever? Did I do some of them for them? And if I did, if I think there's even a slight chance I did some of the exercises for them, and therefore they didn't get stronger...

0:56:40.7 MH: What can I change tomorrow? And that's okay, you don't have to be a master. You just have to kind of challenge yourself to embrace that as your own growth trajectory and see what you can do to coach others on how to do the best sit-ups, rather than do them for them.

0:56:58.4 AM: Well, and it's a player coach, right, 'cause it's not the person who says, you'll be better if you sit down there and do sit-ups, you're down there with them a lot of times, showing them until they go, okay, I got this, and then you move on to showing them the next thing. And that's the wonderful aspect about it, some people have equated it to being that Sherpa, which is, if my goal is to get as many people to the top of the mountain they're climbing as possible, and I'm gonna climb... There's the records for the Sherpas for how many times they've summited Everest, they've summited Everest more than anybody else, and that's the role. It's a servant leader role, it's a behind-the-scenes role, it's an honoring of the others and the things they want to accomplish, and it's to go alongside and go with so that they're stronger and they get the accomplishment and that's what brings me a lot of joy.

0:57:51.5 KL: And I wanna highlight, we said some cool stuff here. Inherent simplicity. We've had before inherent capacity, never say I know, you're already off to the wrong start when you do that. Act before I ask, and I like the big one - honor all the needs and challenge all the assumptions, and that came out of one set of theories that we're using for change here as well. When I looked at your book... Well, both of your books, but one of them, you close with this, "When everyone's a change agent, do what you can with what you have, where you are," you mentioned. "Equipped with the change agent essentials, you may be setting out on your own after we part. But if you use the change agent essentials, you won't be alone for all..." For long, rather, "you won't be alone for long. As you lead, others will follow," and it sounds like that's your model for leading change, as you lead, others will follow... The book's on Amazon, I found out, I went and checked it out. April, how can the listeners get a hold of you, do you blog... Is there place for them to follow you? Do they have a place to reach out to you?

0:58:54.9 AM: Yeah, my website is called engine for change dot com, its engine-for-change.com, that's the website. There's links to contact there. I'm also on Twitter @engineforchange, all one word, engine for change, and on LinkedIn, YouTube, YouTube.com/AprilKMills, if you wanna check out some old keynotes. And happy to announce not only are both books out there in paperback and Kindle, but last week I launched the audiobook of *Everyone Is a Change Agent*, so really excited that that one's out there.

0:59:32.5 KL: Did you read that or is it read by a voice actor?

0:59:35.2 AM: I read it. So if you enjoyed listening to me today, hopefully you'll enjoy the book as well, and my friends are celebrating the fact that I can rattle on about changing their ears now more

often.

0:59:49.8 KL: I'm sure we'll hear your smile and the very voice that we're hearing listening to you on the tape. Mike, any last thoughts as we close out then?

0:59:53.8 MH: We're not worthy, we're not worthy. We're not worthy...

1:00:00.0 KL: Well, PMs, if you've listened to this whole episode, you can register a PDU claim at pmicrs.pmi.org/claim. Scroll to the fourth banner on the left column, online or digital media, podcast is digital media, and manually enter code 4-6-3-4 and select M Powered Strategies. Manually enter the name of this episode, P-M-P-O-V-0095, change management and TOC. Select Strategic and Business Management in the talent triangle. I'm your co-host, Kendall Lott, inviting you to share this episode with that colleague that needs to be thinking how they can help and find that book and in all ways, keep it in scope and get it done.

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