

Sustaining change

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Sustainability

Often change decays and hard won gains evaporate.

Sustaining change involves refreezing behaviour at a new level for as long as it is beneficial to do so.

Not all change should be sustained

It may not be beneficial to sustain change when:

- changes in the wider environment render recently implemented working practices and outcomes obsolete
- maintaining recently implemented practices impede further and more significant developments

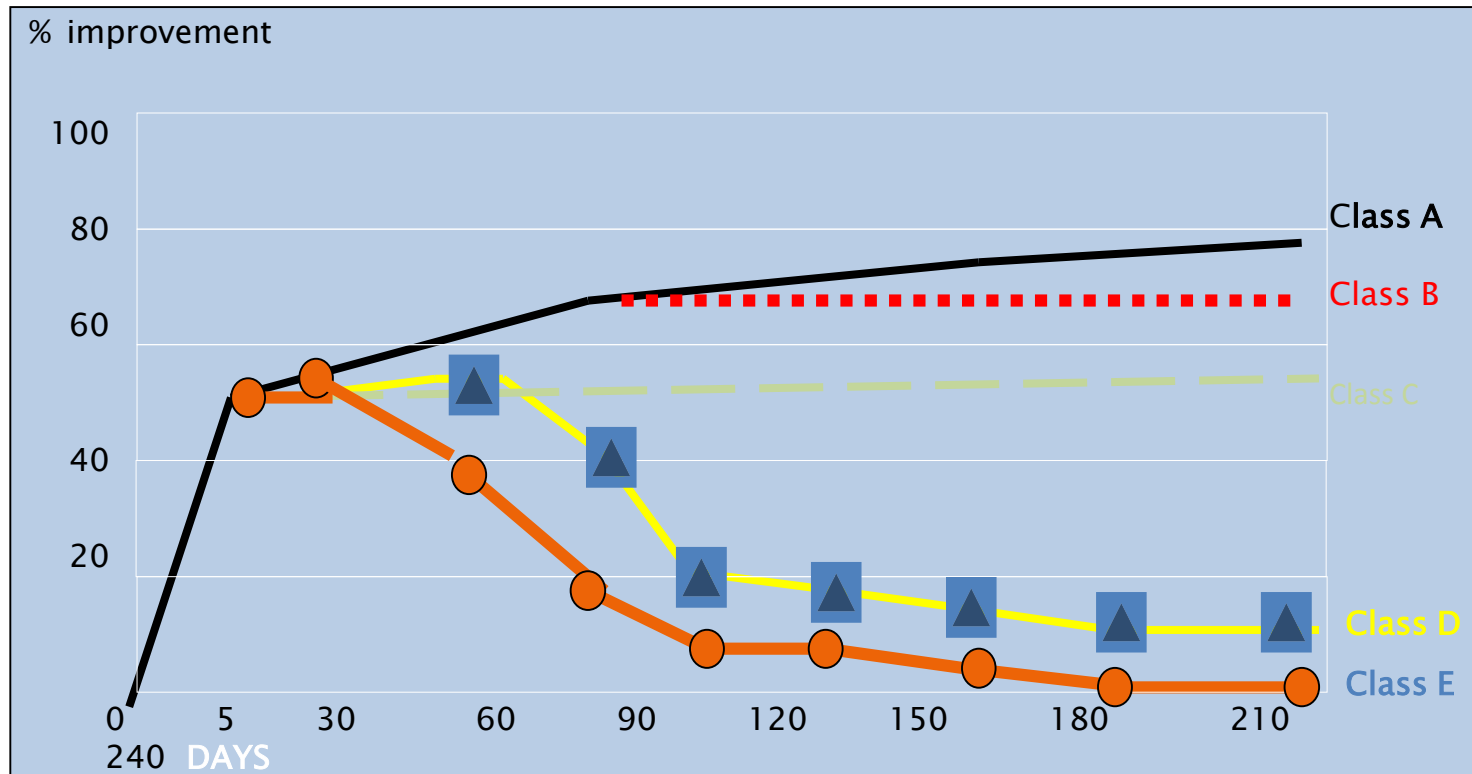
Two aspects of sustainability

- “**stickability**” – the extent to which gains achieved in a particular part of the organization are held and built upon.
- “**spreadability**” – the extent to which the new methods and processes which led to these gains are applied elsewhere.

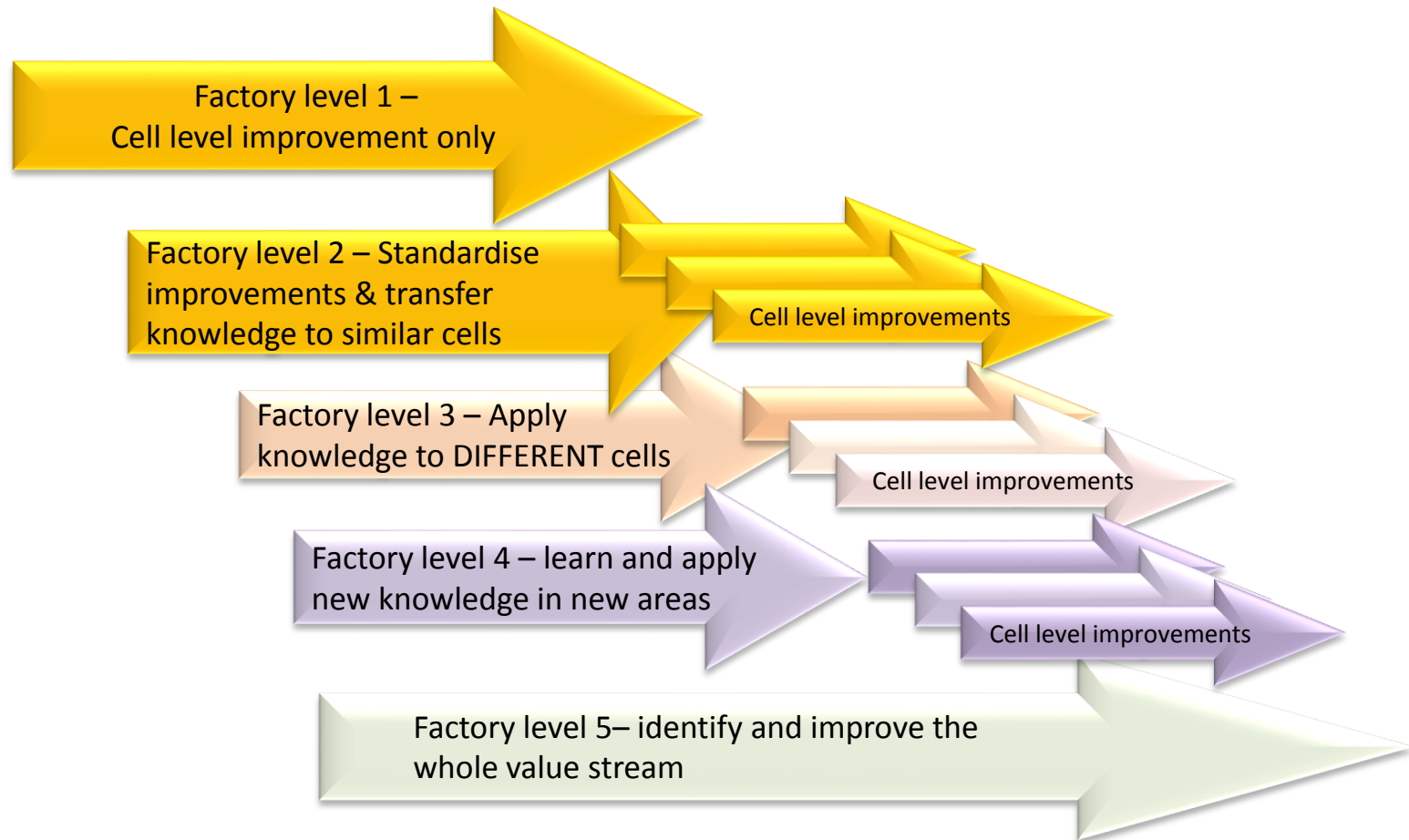
Holding on to gains at cell level (stickability)

Bateman and David (2002: 520) report five levels of sustainability at cell level, ranging from

- realising but failing to hold on to gains (**class E**) to
- maintaining the new way of working and applying the tools and techniques learnt to new problems as they arise (**Class A**)



Spreading change across the factory (spread)



Activity:

Factors which undermine sustainability

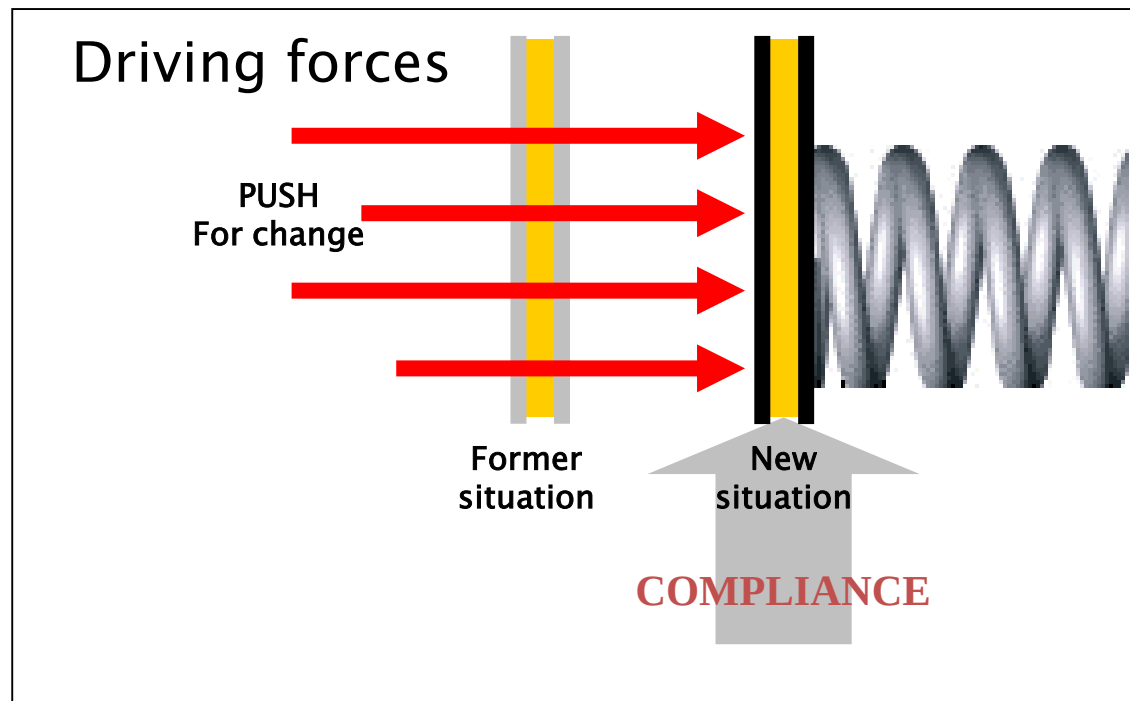
- **Stickability:** Reflect on your experience of change and identify some of the occasions when new ways of working were not maintained. List the factors that you think contributed to change decay.
- **Spread:** Reflect on your experience of successful changes that were not spread to other locations. List the factors that you think undermined spread and fostered containment.

Sustainability can be undermined when:

- Those who initiate the change move on
- Accountability for developments becomes diffused
- Knowledge and experience of new practices is lost through turnover
- Recruits from less dynamic ORGANISATIONS import old habits
- The issues and pressures that triggered the change are no longer visible
- New managers want to drive their own agenda
- Powerful stakeholders are blocking progress
- Pump-priming funds run out
- New priorities divert resources and attention
- Enthusiasm for change falters because of change fatigue

Acting early to promote sustainability

Pushing hard for change may only gain compliance



Reducing restraining forces can promote ownership and win commitment

Promoting sustainability later in the change process

- Avoid declaring victory too soon – remain focused
- Provide feedback that draws peoples' attention to how new ways of doing things are making a difference
- Sell benefits and clarify what's in it for all stakeholders
- Beware the 'bicycle effect' where lack of forward momentum leads to a crash – avoid faltering enthusiasm by relaunching with new focus, themes and goals.

Spreading change

Implementation of innovations in new areas is affected by at least three factors:

1. attributes of the innovation,
2. attributes of the organisation,
3. values of the potential users of the innovation.

Attributes of the innovation

- Advantageous when compared with existing practices.
- Compatible with existing practices.
- Easy to understand.
- Observable in demonstration sites.
- Testable
- Adaptable to fit local needs
(Reinventing the wheel versus 'exact copying')

Rogers (1995)

Attributes of the organisation

(The organisation's climate for implementation)

A 'strong implementation climate' can foster the spread of innovation by

- ensuing employees have the skills to use the innovation
- incentivising them for innovation use and imposing sanctions for innovation avoidance
- removing obstacles that hamper the adoption of new working practices.

The values of potential users (innovation-values fit)

- potential users' perceptions of whether the innovation will foster or inhibit the fulfilment of their values will affect their motivation to adopt the change.

Combined effect of implementation climate and innovation-values fit

	Poor	Neutral	Good
Strong Implementation Climate	1. Employee opposition and resistance	2 Employee indifference	3 Employee enthusiasm
	Compliant innovation use, at best	Adequate innovation use	Committed, consistent and creative innovation use
Weak Implementation Climate	4 Employee relief	5 Employee disregard	6 Employee frustration and disappointment
	Essentially no innovation use	Essentially no innovation use	Sporadic and inadequate innovation use

Action steps to promote sustainability of change

- Think of a current or pending change in your organisation and identify at least 3 things that could be done to help ensure that the change will be embedded and sustained for as long as required.