



Change
Management
Institute



FUTURES *OF* CHANGE

Change Management Institute's new research
on the emerging futures of change towards 2035



CONTENTS

3 WELCOME FROM THE CEO

5 SNAPSHOT: A FUTURES VIEW OF CHANGE

7 OUR APPROACH:
HOW FUTURES THINKING EXPANDS OUR CHANGE TOOLKIT

13 WHY IT MATTERS NOW:
FORCES RESHAPING WORK AND CHANGE BY 2035

14 THE FINDINGS: INSIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE

17 THE FINDINGS: INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

24 IMAGINING FOUR FUTURES

28 PREPARING FOR FUTURES

41 THE FUTURE STARTS TODAY:
FINAL REFLECTIONS

42 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WELCOME FROM THE CEO

This report is the first of its kind for the Change Management Institute. It invites us all to expand the lens through which we currently view change, and to open our minds to the alternatives and possibilities presented by the research.

WHY WE COMMISSIONED THE *FUTURES OF CHANGE* REPORT

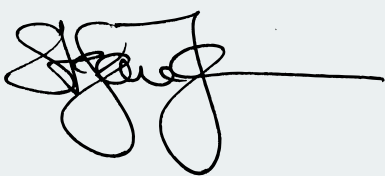
We're living in fascinating times, with a convergence of forces reshaping the way organisations, people, and change itself operate. Technology, geopolitics, shifting work models, and the climate agenda are intersecting in ways we've never seen before.

For change professionals, this is an incredible opportunity. The pace and complexity of transformation mean our skills are more relevant than ever. Yet they also call for fresh thinking, new ways of leading, connecting, and helping organisations adapt with confidence and humanity.

That's why the Change Management Institute commissioned the Futures of Change research. To step back and explore how our profession might evolve and what the future of change could look like.

A heartfelt thank you to Dr Elissa Farrow for leading the research, and to the nearly 700 practitioners worldwide who shared their insights and experiences.

We hope this report inspires reflection, sparks new ideas, and encourages us all to play an active role in shaping the future of our profession.



Stefanie Jackson
CEO



Paul West
President



SNAPSHOT: A FUTURES VIEW OF CHANGE

The Summary

“I like to think of change as a centre of gravity... it gently draws in more and more thinking about how we act as whole human beings.”

– Deborah Feakins

We live in a world where the pace, scale, and interdependence of change is accelerating, yet many of our approaches, assumptions and systems haven't evolved at the same speed. This report invites you into a different kind of conversation. It's not a forecast, a best-practice guide, or a roadmap for certainty. It's a space for curiosity. A provocation. A shared inquiry into what change could become, and what change professionals, adjacent roles and future leaders might need to navigate what's next.

For our Futures of Change initiative, we commissioned Dr Elissa Farrow to lead the research, exploring how change might be conceived, led, experienced and sustained by 2035.

At its heart, this was a **futures thinking project** – moving beyond a traditional research study into predictions to open up multiple possibilities and test today's assumptions about change. We intentionally stepped outside the frame of 'change management' to look at change as a wider, systemic capability. We set out to identify signals, trends and disruptors shaping the futures of change, and explore future scenarios to challenge our assumptions. Most importantly, we wanted to consider how change practitioners prepare for emerging futures.

We begin in familiar territory – grounding ourselves in patterns from recent literature, but even here, subtle insights suggest that change is already evolving. Our **global futures conversation** engaged nearly 700 participants from across sectors and regions, including insights from change leaders, futurists, scientists and strategists. Using strategic foresight tools – scenarios, horizon scanning and participatory workshops – we explored weak signals and emerging trends to imagine how change could evolve.





WHAT EMERGED: FIVE 'EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES'

Over the past two decades, the core pillars of change have remained steady: planning, leadership and governance, embedding change and realising outcomes. These foundations continue to matter – but how they show up is evolving, shaped by the increasing pace and uncertainty of change. Informed by over 18,000 individual data points, the findings reflect both lived practice and cutting-edge thinking, offering a grounded yet forward-looking view of the futures of change.

The **five Evolving Perspectives** identified in this research capture how our field is adapting, offering both continuity and disruption:



Together, these perspectives reveal a field moving beyond static models toward something more fluid, participatory, ethically grounded and co-created. They challenge us to think not just about what we do, but how we do it. Some progressive organisations are already experimenting with these new ways of thinking, while others are just beginning the journey.

FROM FUTURES TO ACTION

To stretch the edges, we developed four future scenarios. Each explores how change might unfold by 2035 under different conditions – from AI-powered ecosystems to hyper-local crisis response. These are not ideal or dystopian futures, but thought experiments to test our current readiness, expose blind spots and spark creative thinking.

We then circled back to what this means today. What can change professionals, sponsors, impacted people, and the next generation do to prepare? How do we lead change that is more human, ethical, inclusive, and aligned with long-term impact?

Throughout the report, you'll find:

- Thought-provoking perspectives and reflections
- Forward-thinking insights on how roles, tools, and mindsets are evolving
- Practical implications for those shaping organisational change capabilities today

Change will continue to evolve, and it will take thoughtful, future-ready changemakers to navigate what's next.

We invite you to explore the Futures of Change.

OUR **APPROACH:**

How futures thinking expands our change toolkit

Amid rapid disruption and uncertainty, we saw a need for a forward-looking lens that considered not only trends in change, but also the broader societal, technological, political and environmental shifts that will drive change over the next decade.

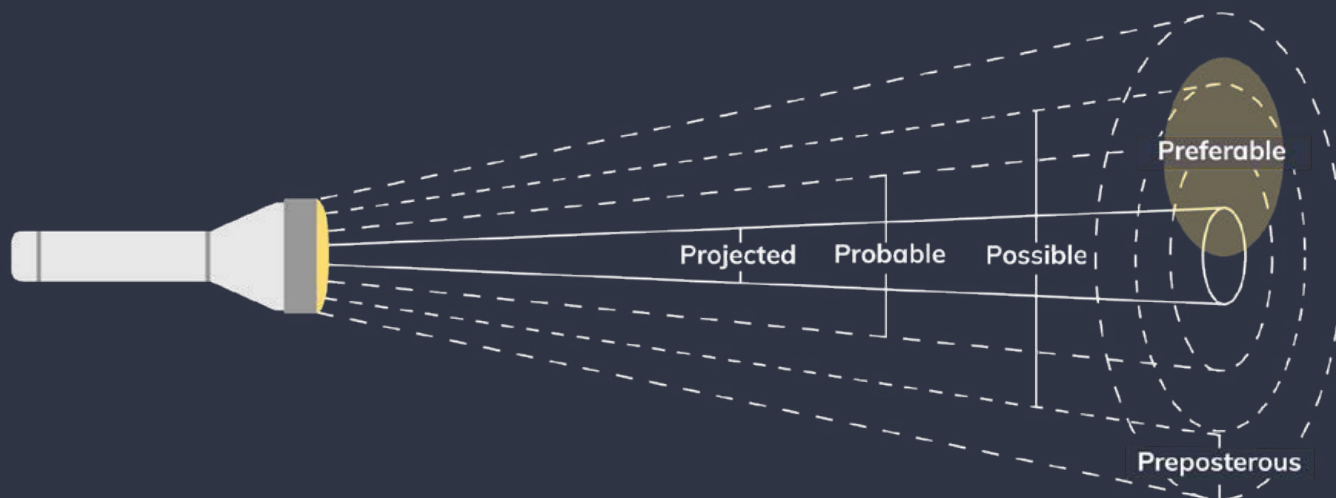
We engaged Dr Elissa Farrow, futurist, strategist and long-time Change Management Institute member, to apply a 'futures approach'. Futures thinking is a creative discipline that challenges linear assumptions, expands mental models and supports organisations to reframe their strategic direction.

Rather than predicting a single definitive future, 'futures thinking' explores multiple futures - including possible, probable, preferred and even preposterous futures – to open thinking and choices.

Guided by Dr Elissa Farrow's unique expertise, the study inspired by Sohail Inayatullah's Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), asked participants to look beyond surface trends (litany) and uncover the deeper structures (social structures), worldviews, and narratives (metaphors) shaping the future of change. By applying futures thinking through a mixed-methods approach (survey and focus groups), the project generated rich insights for the field and demonstrated how change practitioners can expand their toolkit for transformative change.

In this report, we have focused primarily on projected and probable futures, grounded in data and participant insight. These perspectives help us test boundaries, stretch imagination and better anticipate risks and opportunities.

MULTIPLE FUTURES EXIST



(Original Diagram Source: Voros, J. (2003) 'A generic foresight process framework', Foresight, 5(3), pp. 10–21. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/14636680310698379>.)

The Futures of Change research adopted a comprehensive, multi-method design that combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

LITERATURE REVIEW	SURVEY	FOCUS GROUPS	INTERVIEWS
• 100+ sources • High-quality academic and industry sources, published between 2023 and 2025 • Rigorous criteria were applied, including peer-reviewed sources, transparent methodologies and relevant business school cases • Inclusion of cross-cultural perspectives for global relevance	• 630 global respondents including 199 senior leaders including CEOs • Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data • Questions inspired by Inayatullah's Causal Layered Analysis (1999) • Statistical analysis identified trends and correlations	• 40 participants • Four 90-minute sessions • Explored early signals and trends using SEED and STEEPE frameworks • Thematic analysis identified rich qualitative insights	• 23 influential leaders across change, business, neuroscience, behavioural science, and futures thinking • Semi-structured interviews • Thematically analysed for key patterns and novel insights

As a global institute representing people who lead and support change, the futures methods are based on human-centred and participatory approaches. While we were keen to explore viewpoints beyond our traditional membership base, engagement with our members and volunteers remained central to the project - from shaping the research design to testing and refining the insights.

- Members represented just over half of the participants in interviews, focus groups, and surveys, ensuring a diverse and representative foundation for the report.
- The project was overseen by a Steering Committee comprising Karla Micallef (former President), Steffi Jackson (CEO), and Bronwyn Hall McLoughlin (Chief Editor and former Board Member).
- A sample of Board Directors participated in one-on-one interviews, and a dedicated 90-minute Board workshop explored the implications of the research for the Institute.
- Country Leads and selected members were consulted at milestones throughout the project to provide regional perspectives and validate the direction of the work, helping ensure the final report resonates across our global community.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

	SURVEY RESPONDENTS	FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS
Total Responses:	630	40
Geographic Distribution:		
Asia Pacific:	48%	43%
Europe:	33%	34%
North America:	15%	15%
Middle East & Africa:	4%	6%
Latin America:	2%	2%
Professional Backgrounds:		
Change Managers:	33%	32%
Head of Change or Strategy Officers:	14%	35%
Project Managers, External Consultants, or Advisors:	13%	20%
Senior Leaders/Executives:	32%	28%
Experience in Change Disciplines:	Vast Majority 6+ Years	Vast Majority 10+ Years
Change Management Institute Members:	53%	43%

INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS

REGION	COUNTRIES INCLUDED	COUNT	% OF TOTAL (N = 23)
Asia-Pacific	Australia (5), Thailand (1), Philippines (1)	7	30.4%
Europe	UK (5), France (2), Denmark (1)	8	34.8%
North America	USA (6), Canada (1)	7	30.4%
Latin America	Argentina	1	4.4%

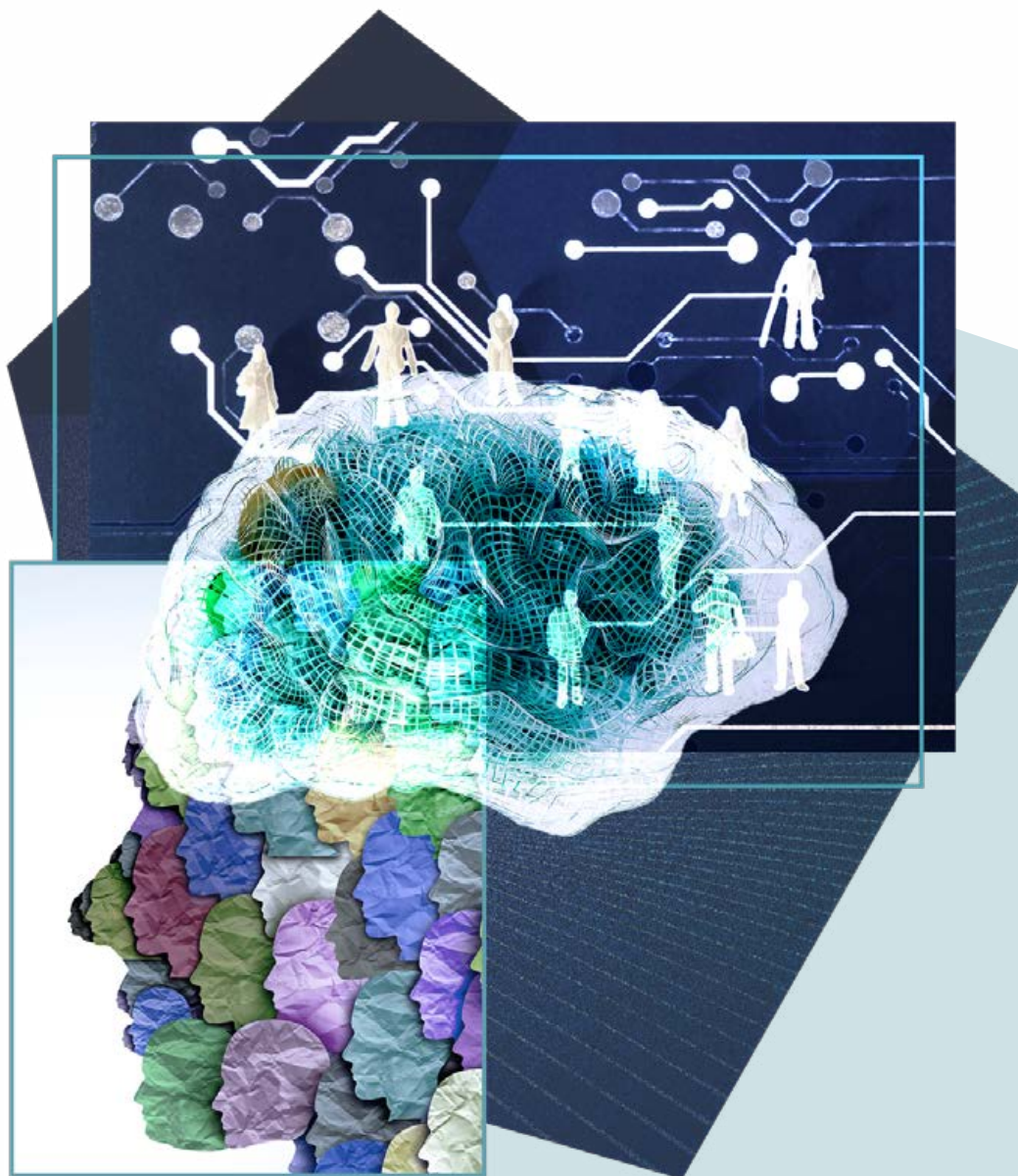
OVERALL PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The majority of the nearly 700 participants that we engaged had been practicing for six or more years, with significant professional experience in change disciplines. 47% of contributors were not current members of the Change Management Institute, broadening the diversity of perspectives.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

When conducting research initiatives, limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and recommendations:

- The participant base, though global, was concentrated in Australia, New Zealand and Europe, with smaller representation from North America (15%), the Middle East and Africa (4%), and Latin America (2%), potentially limiting generalisability.
- Demographic data focused on professional experience rather than attributes, such as gender, ethnicity, or age, reducing possible analytical dimensions.
- The purposive sampling used for interviews ensured diverse expertise across our current key geographies, as well as disciplines such as change management, business, neuroscience, behavioural science, technology, and futures thinking, but introduced potential selection bias.
- Survey branching directed only senior leaders to certain questions, leading to partial responses across the 630 participants and possible non-random gaps in the data.



HOW WE PRESENT THE FINDINGS

Our aim was to meet you where you are today — in the language, realities, and lived experience of current practice — and to guide you toward more speculative perspectives on what lies ahead. This narrative journey culminates in the Four Futures, designed to stretch thinking and explore the edges of possibility, while grounding strategic choices in the present. Together, these insights form the bridge between today's realities and tomorrow's possibilities.

Looking beneath the data, five 'Evolving Perspectives' emerged, showing how the practice of change is building on its traditional foundations while adapting to a more complex, fast-moving and interconnected world. Each invites us to reimagine the mindsets, methods and measures of change. While each perspective reflects a distinct shift, several capabilities echo across the landscape — co-creation, trust-building, systems thinking and ethical stewardship form a common spine of future-ready change practice.

1 CHANGE IDENTITY IS REIMAGINED

Change is no longer a project or a function — it is embedded into the fabric of the organisation. By 2035, sustainable and successful change — from strategy to delivery — becomes a **core capability**. Success will depend on **fluency in the language of business** and a focus on **responsible, ethical change** that balances commercial outcomes with societal and environmental impact. This isn't just a shift in method, but a redefinition of identity: from managing change to becoming strategic enablers of sustainable transformation.

2 HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS THE DIFFERENTIATOR

Experience will become a strategic asset. Change success may be measured not just by outcomes, but by **how people feel along the way**. Human well-being, cultural safety, emotional resonance and **lived experience** will matter as much as delivery timelines. Designing for **diversity**, inclusion and meaning becomes a strategic priority, not an afterthought — drawing on practices such as **indigenous meaning-making** to deepen connection and respect across change journeys.

3 CHANGE LEADERSHIP IS DISTRIBUTED

Leadership is shifting from authority to influence, control to contribution and from hierarchy to networks. By 2035, change will be **co-led by diverse contributors** — from informal influencers and middle managers to digital agents and partner ecosystems. Sensemaking, trust-building, and systems thinking will be essential leadership skills, alongside mastery of social and collaborative digital platforms.

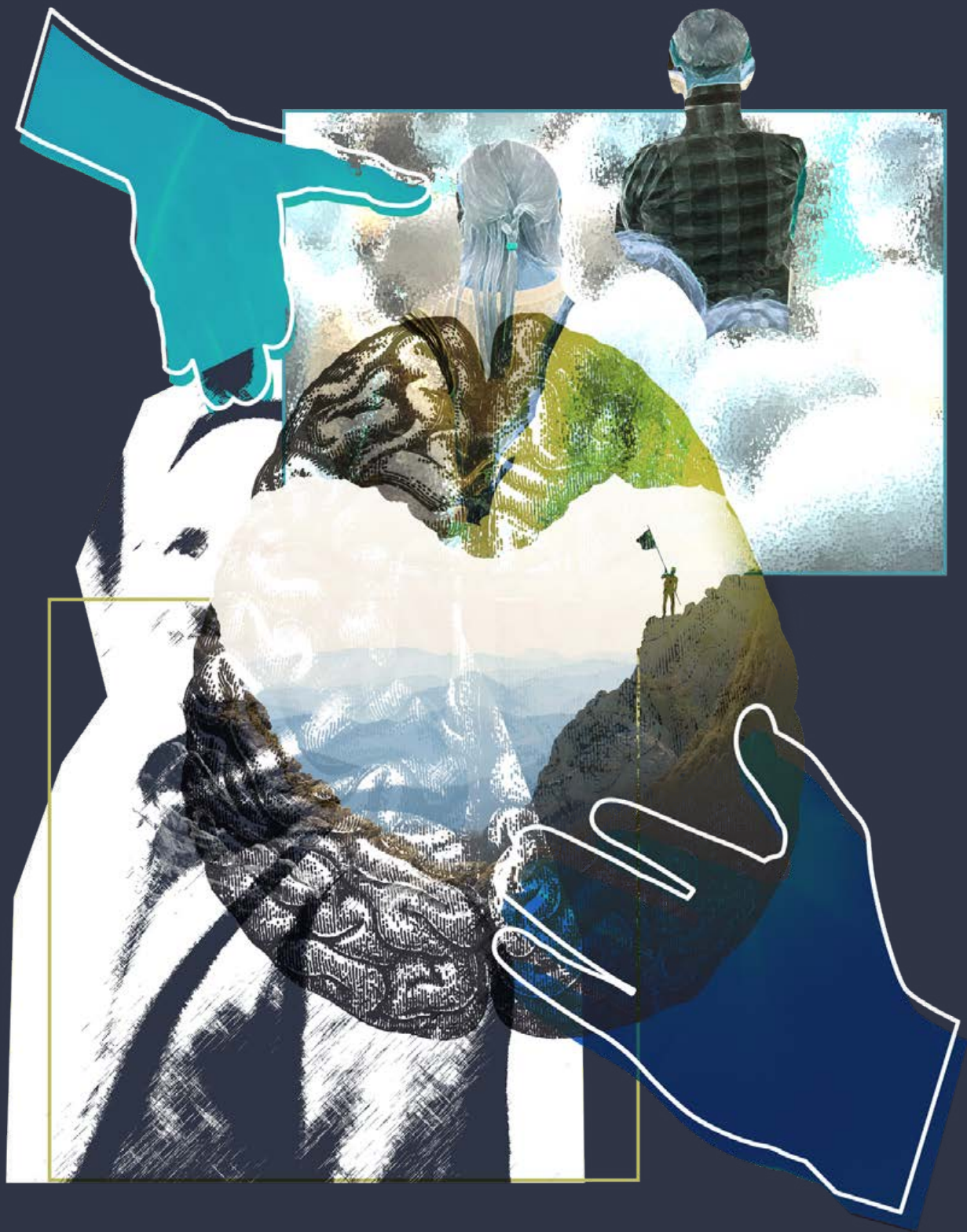
4 CHANGE PRACTICE ADAPTS FOR COMPLEXITY AND CONTEXT

Change practice is evolving **beyond standard models** into a fusion of disciplines. By 2035, professionals will blend systems and portfolio thinking, design, behavioural science and cultural insight — adapting to **organisational context and environmental factors**. Rigid models and templates give way to fit-for-purpose approaches, pattern recognition, creativity and open collaboration.

5 HUMAN-TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIP IS THE NEXT FRONTIER

AI, digital twins, immersive tools and intelligent agents will likely reshape how change is conceived and delivered. By 2035, change professionals may **co-create with machines**, use predictive diagnostics and design adaptive human-tech ecosystems. As **AI becomes a stakeholder** in change, trust, transparency and ethical stewardship will be essential. Building digital empathy and leading alongside intelligent systems will define the next frontier of the profession.

We begin by exploring the literature to surface common themes and early signals of change, then build on these with insights from participants around the world to reveal the five Evolving Perspectives that shape this report.



WHY IT MATTERS NOW



WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Forces reshaping work and change by 2035

The Institute's Change Practice Framework[^] reminds us that change never happens in isolation - the context always matters. As we look ahead, the drivers of organisational change are not just internal shifts or project-specific initiatives. They are embedded in global, systemic forces that reshape economies, workforces, societies and technologies, making it imperative to reimagine the role and practice of change:

"By 2035, I don't think we'll be talking about change as a project anymore — it will just be how organisations live and breathe."

– Naomi Jones-Black

AI is everywhere, augmenting work and becoming increasingly **embedded** across functions as value creation continues to rise. The human-machine split moves toward parity by 2030 and even further by 2035, leading to rapid churn in clerical work and growth in data, software, security and AI roles. *McKinsey & Company, World Economic Forum*

Skills' half-life shrinks as skills disruption continues at scale. Analytical, creative, and tech literacy rise the fastest, with most workers needing **regular reskilling** and **systems thinking** climbing in importance. *World Economic Forum*

Green transition rewires jobs and value chains as **climate adaptation and mitigation** are among the biggest job creators in 2030 and beyond. This creates sustained hiring advantages for people with **green skills**, and increases linkages between climate-related investments and revenue growth. *PwC, World Economic Forum*

Geopolitical and geoeconomic fragmentation is apparent as leaders navigate more trade frictions, subsidies, and restrictions on talent and tech flows. Consequently, **supply chains diversify** through near-shoring and friend-shoring. *World Economic Forum*

Hybrid, fluid work is driving untethered talent flows and more frequent job changes. Organisations are **prioritising culture, employee experience and human sustainability**. Boards now view **wellbeing, employability and belonging** as key performance levers. Leadership and "boundaryless" HR are maturing to support this shift. *EY, Deloitte*

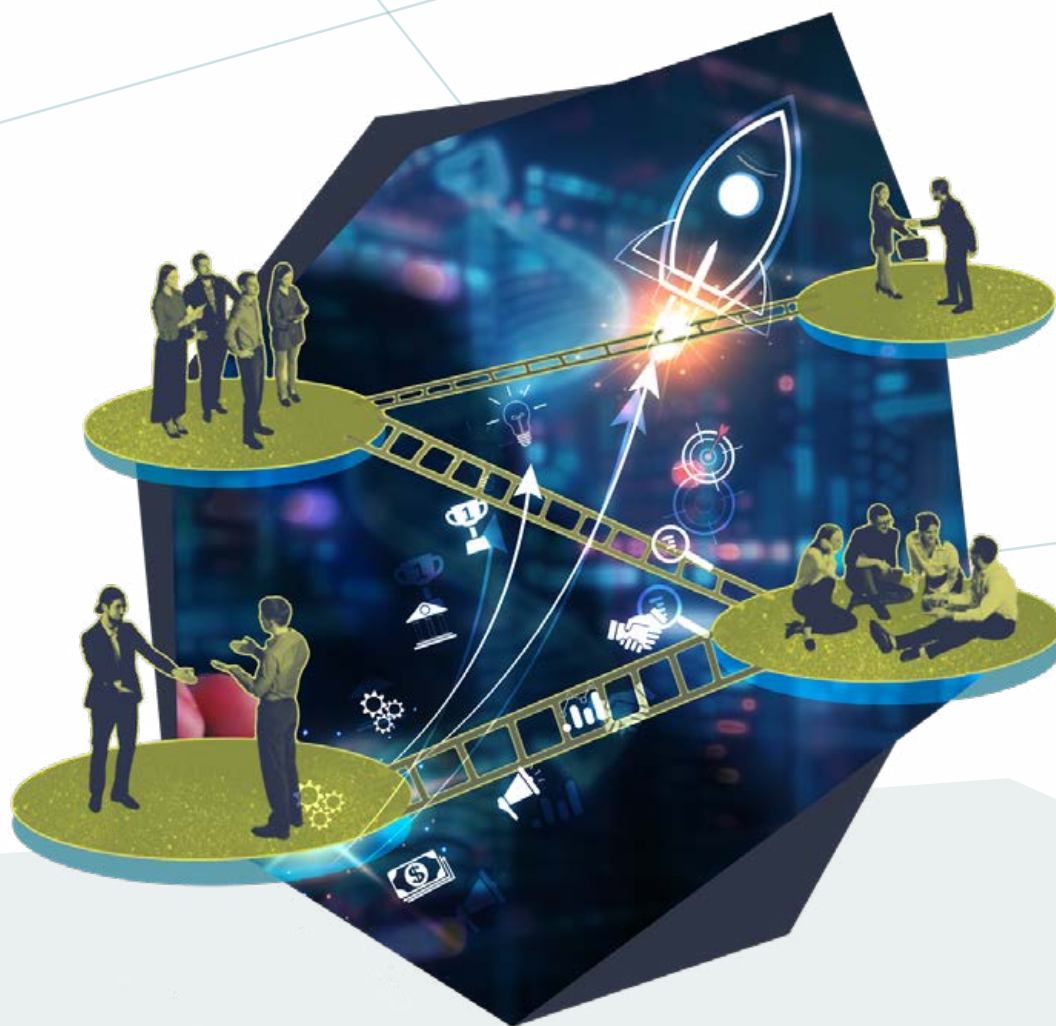
Ageing populations and youth surges - driving demand in health, care and education roles - coupled with **accelerating migration**, create new challenges for integration and intergenerational collaboration, intensify talent shortages and disrupt traditional workforce planning. *World Economic Forum, United Nations, Le Monde.fr*

CEO agendas are reinvented rather than tweaked, as **business model reinvention** becomes increasingly essential. AI is integrated into platforms and core processes, while **climate investments** show positive returns. *PwC*

The **risk landscape hardens** as short-term risks emphasise conflict and misinformation. Long-term risks to 2035 centre on **environmental threats** and **societal polarisation**, requiring stronger trust, governance and resilience. *World Economic Forum*

Industry evolution remains uneven, with sector outlooks for rate-sensitive, regulation-heavy, and trade-exposed industries feeling the most **volatility**. Strategy shifts from rates, regulation, and **global trade dynamics** in 2025 continue into the 2030s. *IBISWorld*

[^]Available at: <https://change-management-institute.com/what-is-change-management/>



THE FINDINGS: INSIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE

What existing research and publications revealed

Our Insights from the Literature were drawn from a structured review of over 100 sources published between 2023 and 2025. Drawing from academic research, change professional public commentary, industry white papers and cross-cultural thought leadership, the review explored how change is evolving across disciplines and geographies.

While deliberately focused on recent publications, we recognise that academic and industry literature often reflects the present state of thinking, or in many cases, a retrospective look at where we have come from.

As such, the review captures not just forward-facing signals, but also the foundational shifts already shaping how change is understood and practised today.

Fourteen thematic insights emerged, collectively pointing to a decisive move away from episodic, top-down models toward more adaptive, people-centred, and evidence-informed approaches.

These shifts embrace complexity, prioritise lived experience and inclusion, and embed change more deeply within organisational identity, technological systems and social purpose.

SUMMARY INSIGHTS FROM THE 14 THEMES



THEME 1: BUILDING CHANGE CAPABILITY: ROLES, LITERACY, AND PROFESSIONALISATION

Change literacy is becoming a universal requirement, not just a specialist skill. It spans across many organisational layers and roles. Change is strategic, has a shared language, and is supported by toolkits, and professional expertise.



THEME 2: PURPOSE-DRIVEN, SUSTAINABLE, AND EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGE

Change is increasingly expected to deliver ethical and societal value. It contributes to ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) goals, backed by behavioural science, and guided by wellbeing and lived experience. Success is tracked by data and evidence and ensures accountability for improvements.



THEME 3: ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY, KNOWLEDGE CREATION AND LEARNING SYSTEMS

Change is becoming core to organisational identity, with leaders stewarding direction. Sustainable change depends on shared learning systems that foster empowerment, knowledge sharing, innovation, and cultural evolution.



THEME 4: OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE AND READINESS IN THE VALUE CHAIN

Change capability is embedded beyond the organisation, it spans the entire delivery system. Global crises show the need for resilient and agile operating models, including supplier relationships, scenario planning and risk-based design.



THEME 5: HUMAN-CENTRED, MINDFUL, INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY CHANGE

Change is designed and led with empathy, inclusion, and psychological safety. Moving beyond logic and process to placing lived human experience, trust, emotional intelligence and wellbeing at the core.



THEME 6: INTERDISCIPLINARY AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Change models are broadening to include insights from neuroscience, behavioural science and non-Western perspectives. Culturally responsive approaches and cross-disciplinary knowledge are expanding the relevance of change practice globally.



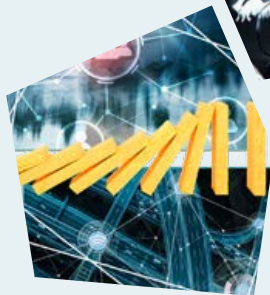
THEME 7: DISTRIBUTED CHANGE ENVIRONMENTS

The rise of hybrid and remote work is reshaping how change is led. Influence now requires new models of engagement, virtual trust-building, and flexible collaboration. Emotional connection, and a sense of belonging are intentionally designed for differing work models.



THEME 8: EXPERIENCE-CENTRED CHANGE: CX, EX, AND SERVICE DESIGN

Experience is fundamental to how change is designed, measured and sustained. Human-centered, inclusive approaches like journey mapping and diverse engagement, support more meaningful, and lasting change.



THEME 9: SYSTEMS THINKING, ADAPTIVE, AND TRANSPARENT CHANGE

Change is viewed as emergent and continuous, embedded with broader organisational systems. Practitioners are designing decentralised, transparent approaches that engage people as co-creators.



THEME 10: MULTI-METHOD, CONTINUOUS, ADAPTIVE, AND AGILE CHANGE

Hybrid methods that blend Agile, Lean, Design Thinking etc, are replacing rigid methods. Meta-practitioners, fluent across multiple disciplines, orchestrate change through collaboration and experimentation.



THEME 11: FOUNDATIONAL CHANGE MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS

Classic widely understood models like ADKAR and Kotter remain relevant yet need reinterpretation to reflect complexity and cultural nuance. Structured methods are now merged with human behaviour and digital tools.



THEME 12: STANDARDS, CERTIFICATION, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

International standards (like ISO), alongside certifications and accreditations are shaping recognised professional credibility. Micro-learning supports continuous development at all levels.



THEME 13: AI, AUTOMATION, AND DATA-DRIVEN CHANGE

AI and data systems are reshaping change through automation and predictive insight. Change professionals must navigate ethics, transparency and inclusion, treating AI as a tool, partner and a stakeholder in the process.



THEME 14: CHANGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS) MARKET LANDSCAPE

Digital platforms for change are evolving fast. New CMS tools offer data, workflows and personalisation, but adoption lags. The future is integrating tools with core business systems (e.g. HR and IT) supporting strategic, scalable, portfolio change.

MOVING BEYOND THE LITERATURE: BRIDGING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

The literature review provided a solid grounding for the next phases of research. It informed the design of the global survey, interview protocols and focus group discussions, helping us test, expand and challenge existing narratives. Where gaps in the literature were identified – particularly around emergent practice, technologies beyond AI, alternative knowledge systems, and future capabilities – we used participant engagement to explore those frontiers. Together, this blend of literature and lived experience offers a richer and more future-conscious perspective on what's next for those working with change.

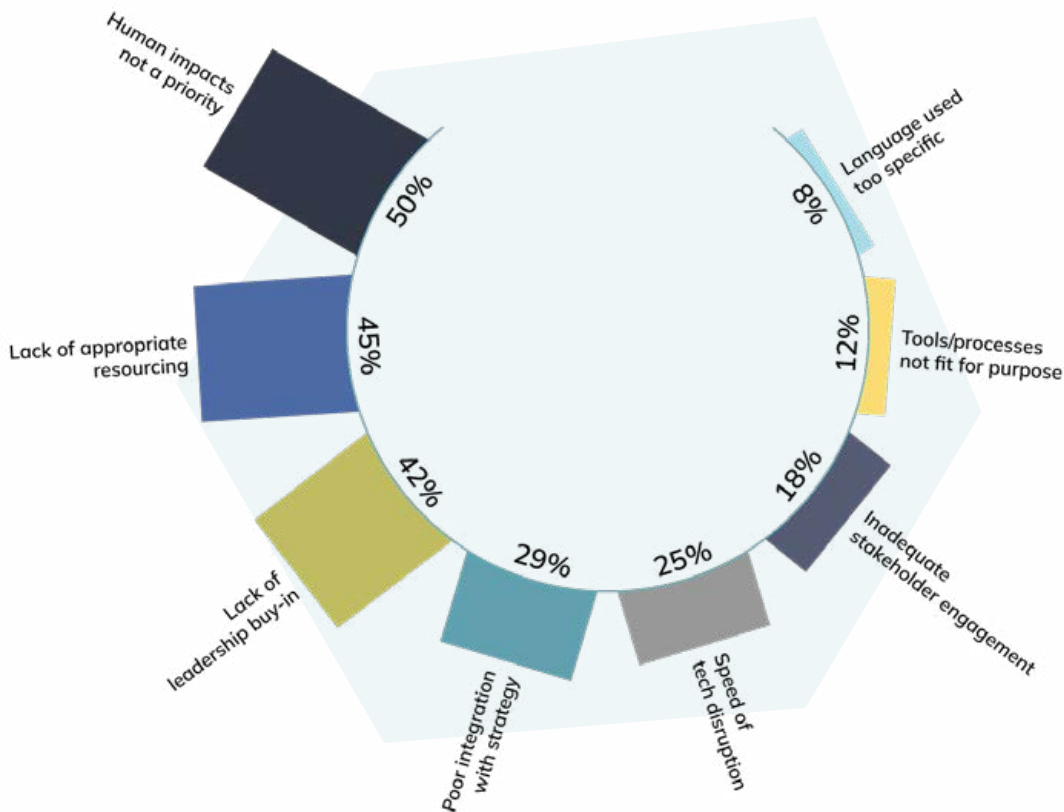
THE FINDINGS: INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

What we heard from professionals and thought leaders

To complement the literature review, we gathered real-world insights from those shaping change every day. A global survey of 630 practitioners captured voices across regions, sectors, and seniority levels, including 199 executives and senior decision-makers - providing a view of change from the boardroom to the front line.

We then convened focus groups and in-depth interviews with thought leaders, exploring their hopes, challenges, and visions for the future of change. These conversations revealed both shared patterns and powerful provocations - how change is understood, practised, and imagined across contexts.

THE KEY CHALLENGES IN MANAGING CHANGE TODAY



While leaders and non-leaders were broadly aligned across these themes, the data highlights a few key differences. Senior leaders are slightly less likely to perceive 'leadership buy-in' (-8%) or 'resourcing' (-7%) as problems than the full respondent group. However, they are more likely to highlight 'strategy misalignment' (+5%) and 'inadequate systems/tools' (+6%) as key challenges than non-leaders.

USED FUTURES: LOOKING IN THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

'Used futures' are legacy beliefs, structures, mental models or assumptions that once guided change but have now become barriers to progress. We asked participants to identify the change practices and assumptions they believe are outdated or no longer fit for purpose. **The following legacy assumptions received the lowest levels of agreement:**



believed change is a **linear process**, managed through static, sequential models.

**What it means for the future:
Linear structured Models must adapt**



believed change is a **separate event** bolted on after strategy or delivery.

**What it means for the future:
Change Must Be Embedded**



believed change is owned by a **central function** (PMO, Change Office).

**What it means for the future:
Shared Ownership of Change**



believed command-and-control leaders **drive change top-down**.

**What it means for the future:
Command-and-Control is Obsolete**

While a **small number (3%)** suggested that change might disappear entirely, these results point to a positive outlook for those working in change — with greater relevance, broader impact, and deeper integration across the business.

Our findings highlight how deeply connected 'personal' and 'systemic' change are, making it clear that they should be addressed in tandem for meaningful, future-focused transformation.

EMERGING TRENDS AND SIGNALS

The trends (established patterns) and signals (early signs) explored throughout this section emerged from the focus groups and open-ended survey responses. They reflect today’s narratives – emotional, social, and strategic – that are shaping how people are experiencing and anticipating change both within organisations and personal lives. They reveal underlying tensions, emerging expectations and growing misalignments between traditional change approaches and what is required for relevance and impact.

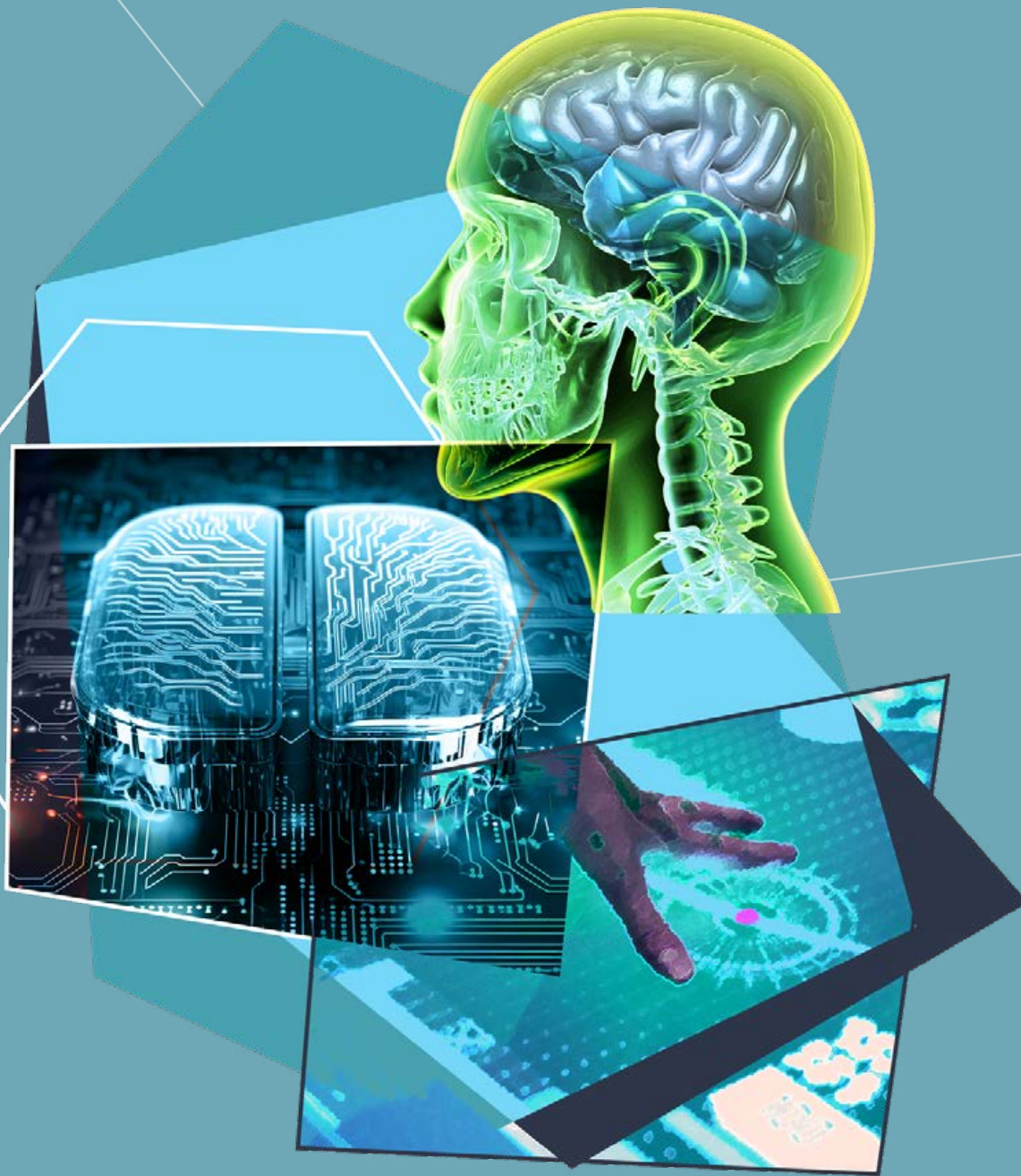
We found that change is being influenced and shaped by a diverse set of drivers that operate at two interconnected levels:

- How organisations change:** shaped by systemic, structural and strategic factors through the STEEPE lens (Social, Technological, Ecological, Economic, Political, and Ethical).
- How individuals personally change:** shaped by behavioural, emotional and social-psychological factors through the SEED lens (Social, Economic, Environmental/Ethical and Diverse).

Research participants indicated the following factors were driving change and change responses:

SHARED THEME	ORGANISATIONAL IMPACT (STEEPE)	INDIVIDUAL IMPACT (SEED)
AI & Automation	Structural redesign, headcount reduction, governance transformation, collusion with human expectations	Job insecurity, fear of replacement, ethical concern about empathy loss
Mental Health & Fatigue	Need for human-centred design, emotional engagement, and flexible practices	Burnout, resistance to change, blurred personal-professional boundaries
Sustainability	ESG reporting, climate accountability, ecological design embedded in project frameworks	Ethical lifestyle shifts, purpose-driven career decisions, climate anxiety
DEI & Generational Shifts	Inclusive design expectations, shifting values, workforce evolution across five generations	Demand for representation, respect for neurodiversity and generational inclusion
Economic Precarity	Greater demand for ROI from change, resource cuts, shifting investor priorities, cost-of-living pressures	Gig work, values-based work shifts, reduced loyalty, survival-first mindset
Political/Regulatory Uncertainty	Reactive strategy formation, short-term thinking, regulatory overload	Distrust in institutions, desire for personal autonomy

Table 1 – Critical SEED and STEEPE themes



HOW MIGHT WE FRAME CHANGE IN 2035?

Respondents were offered a moment to step back and reflect on not just what change looks like now, but how it will be understood, owned and valued over time – revealing subtle but significant shifts in language, mindset and leadership expectations.

FRAMING OF CHANGE	CURRENT FRAMING (2025) %		FUTURE FRAMING (2035) %
A process to manage projects and transitions	72	Gap: -52	20
A business function that supports strategic initiatives	46	Gap: -7	39
Essential for the delivery of the outcome or objective	30	Gap: +12	42
A cultural shift requiring mindset change	29	Gap: +21	50
A leadership competency	17	Gap: +41	58
An enterprise-wide competency	12	Gap: +26	38
Irrelevant	12	Gap: -9	3
A personal journey	7	Gap: +3	10
A job for AI agents	-	Gap: +16	16

There were some key changes in how respondents believed change would be framed in 2035:

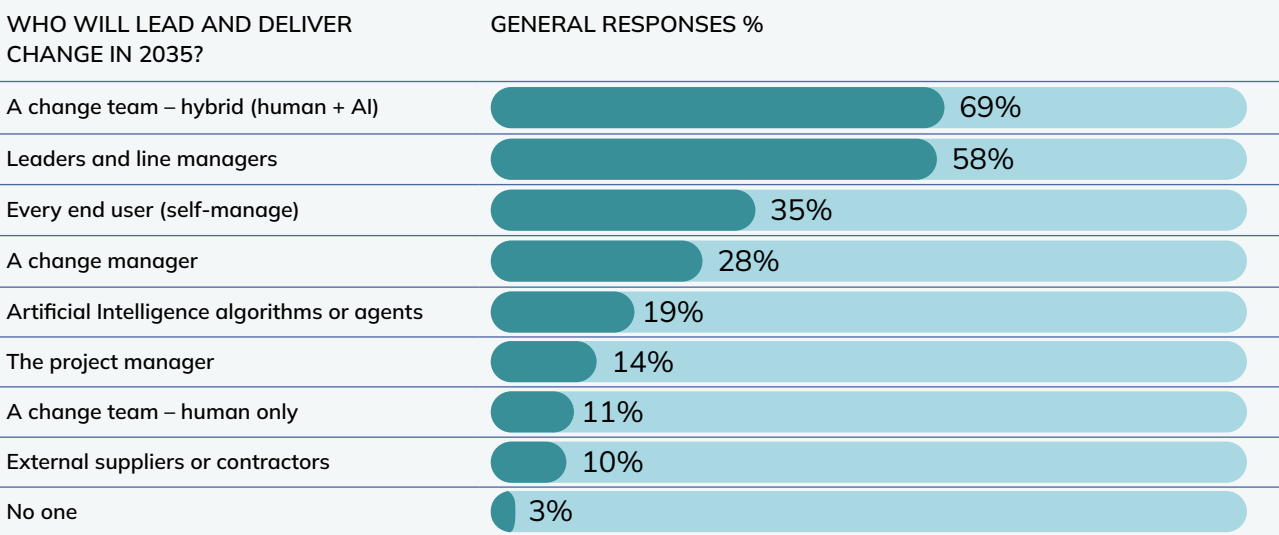
- Anticipation that change will be **strategic, human-centred, outcome-driven and ‘culturally embedded’**.
- Nearly 40% of respondents believe enterprise change capability will become a **core organisational function** – trebling the 2025 view from **12% to 38%** in 2035
- There’s a visible drop in expectations around ‘projects and transitions’, or sole reliance on AI or specialists, signaling a **de-emphasis on mechanistic or outsourced models**.
- The **role of leaders in change is expected to rise significantly**, indicating a shift toward change becoming central to leadership identity and responsibility.

“The frameworks we use now will need to evolve. Change will be more complex, because it’s not just about implementing tools, but about managing continuous transformation.”

– Isaac Shaibu

WHO WILL LEAD AND DELIVER CHANGE IN 2035?

Survey respondents were asked to consider who will lead and deliver change in 2035. While hybrid, tech-enabled, human-centric models are the projected norm, there's a measured belief in AI's growing role being complementary as opposed to a full displacement. Change becomes embedded in line leadership and organisational systems, rather than being outsourced or driven solely by specialists.



Leaders showed broadly similar perspectives to the general respondent group, with only slight variation (+/- 4%) across categories. However, two notable differences emerged. Leaders were more open to the idea of AI algorithms or digital agents playing a leading role in future change efforts – perhaps reflecting growing confidence in data-driven decision-making at the executive level.

Conversely, they were less supportive of suppliers or contractors leading change, indicating a preference for keeping ownership and strategic direction of change within internal teams or trusted networks. This suggests leaders may favour tech-enabled in-house capability over outsourced models in the years ahead.

BEYOND THE AI HYPE: TECH BLIND SPOTS IN CHANGE PRACTICE

Digital transformation has always been part of the change journey - from ERP rollouts to agile delivery and remote work pivots. But as we look ahead to 2035 and the 5th industrial revolution, the nature of digital change is shifting. While AI dominates literature, headlines and strategy decks today, other equally transformative technologies are flying under the radar: sensors, robotics, digital twins, quantum computing, blockchain, AR/VR, and gamification – suggesting a potential 'blind spot' for change professionals.

Many change professionals may be **underexposed to emerging tech trends**, either due to early-stage adoption, lack of access to R&D environments or a narrow focus on today's AI tools. But by overlooking these technologies, we risk falling behind the curve – missing opportunities to co-design the change capabilities, operating models and behaviours these tools will demand.

By 2030–2035, these technologies are likely to play a profound role in how change is imagined, designed, and delivered. **Digital twins and sensors** could allow for real-time simulation of organisational change scenarios. **Robotics and automation** may require rethinking employee experience and roles in human-machine teams. **Quantum computing** could radically accelerate scenario modelling, risk analysis and behavioural prediction. **Blockchain** might enable decentralised participation and trust systems across organisations. **AR/VR** could make immersive change onboarding a norm. And **gamification** may shift how we engage and sustain behaviour change at scale.

Staying ahead means widening our lens – not just to adopt new tools, but to reframe what counts as a change capability in a radically reshaped digital era.



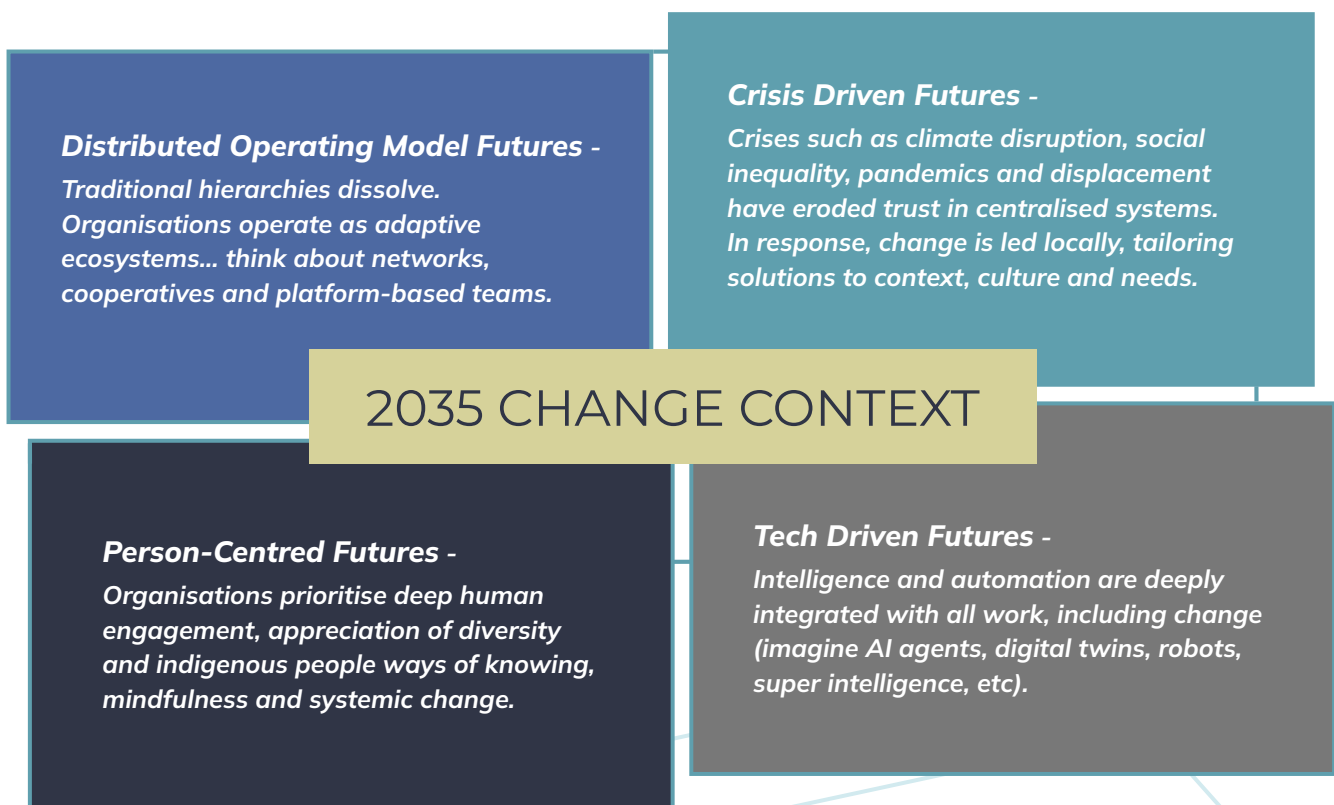
IMAGINING **FOUR** FUTURES

This section of the report explores four scenarios – four futures – for change practice in the year 2035, synthesising insights from the focus groups. Common across futures thinking approaches, scenarios are used to explore and imagine possible futures when the context is uncertain.

It is important in futures thinking processes to be able to set current state bias aside and imagine a range of futures and possibilities without being limited by today.

The four scenarios used in the focus groups offer distinct yet overlapping perspectives on how change could unfold in 2035, driven by technology, human values, system disruption, and decentralised operating structures.

The scenarios and definitions provided to each focus group were:



With participants working in small groups to interpret each of the possible futures from their own experience, they were asked to specifically consider five questions for each of the four future scenarios in 2035 – who drives and sponsors change, what is a day in the life of a change professional like, what tools or approaches might be used, what does change success look like, and how might change fail. The discussions provided rich qualitative data that allowed for the creation of a robust scenario change narrative for each of the four futures.

TECH-DRIVEN FUTURES	PERSON-CENTRED FUTURES
“In 2035, change is driven by a coalition of human and artificial intelligences. Human leaders, particularly visionary business owners and Chief AI Officers, act as the ethical stewards and strategic navigators of transformation.”	“In 2035, change is fundamentally a shared and distributed responsibility, emerging from the collective voices of employees, communities, and purpose-driven networks.”
CHANGE DRIVERS AND SPONSORS:	CHANGE DRIVERS AND SPONSORS:
Change is driven by a coalition of human and artificial intelligences, with virtual sponsors such as digital twins of executives routinely accessing readiness and impact of change efforts in real-time.	- Everyone is a potential sponsor and driver of change – it is fundamentally a shared and distributed responsibility, emerging from the collective voices of employees, communities, and purpose-driven networks. - Organisations foster decentralised ownership where individuals and teams initiate and guide transformations
CHANGE PROFESSIONAL DAILY NORMS:	CHANGE PROFESSIONAL DAILY NORMS:
- Operating as fluid, borderless contributors, often working across multiple organisations, projects, and time zones. - AI agents handle routine analytics, content creation, and stakeholder sentiment tracking, freeing professionals to focus on strategic storytelling, cultural sensing, and meaning-making.	- Embedded facilitators of human experience, seamlessly moving between roles as coaches, listeners, and community designers. - A typical day involves deep listening, co-designing change pathways, and facilitating inclusive dialogue across diverse employee voices and identities.
STANDARD TOOLS AND APPROACHES:	STANDARD TOOLS AND APPROACHES:
- Change is managed through intelligent, fully integrated platforms that blend AI, automation, and human-centred design. - Standardisation, real-time adaptability, and hyper-personalisation are foundational principles underpinning every tool.	- Tools that exemplify the human voice and emotions insight become the norm, including AI platforms that personalise support while ensuring integrity, privacy, and contextual empathy. - Data analytics have evolved to include emotional, cultural, and experiential metrics, offering leaders real-time signals of psychological safety and inclusion.
SUCCESS OF CHANGE:	SUCCESS OF CHANGE:
Feedback loops powered by continuous sentiment analysis enable a near-symbiotic relationship between humans and machines, ensuring people feel heard, respected, and valued. Successful change feels intuitive, with minimal disruption and maximum relevance.	Success is reflected in collective coherence, where no one feels left behind, and where change becomes a natural rhythm of the organisation.
FAILURE OF CHANGE:	FAILURE OF CHANGE:
Failure manifests as disconnection between people, data, and purpose. When organisations rely too heavily on AI without lifting digital and emotional literacy, humans may disengage or experience burnout.	Failure is experienced as disconnection and loss of human meaning. People lose trust when their voices aren’t heard or when change overlooks context, culture, and care.

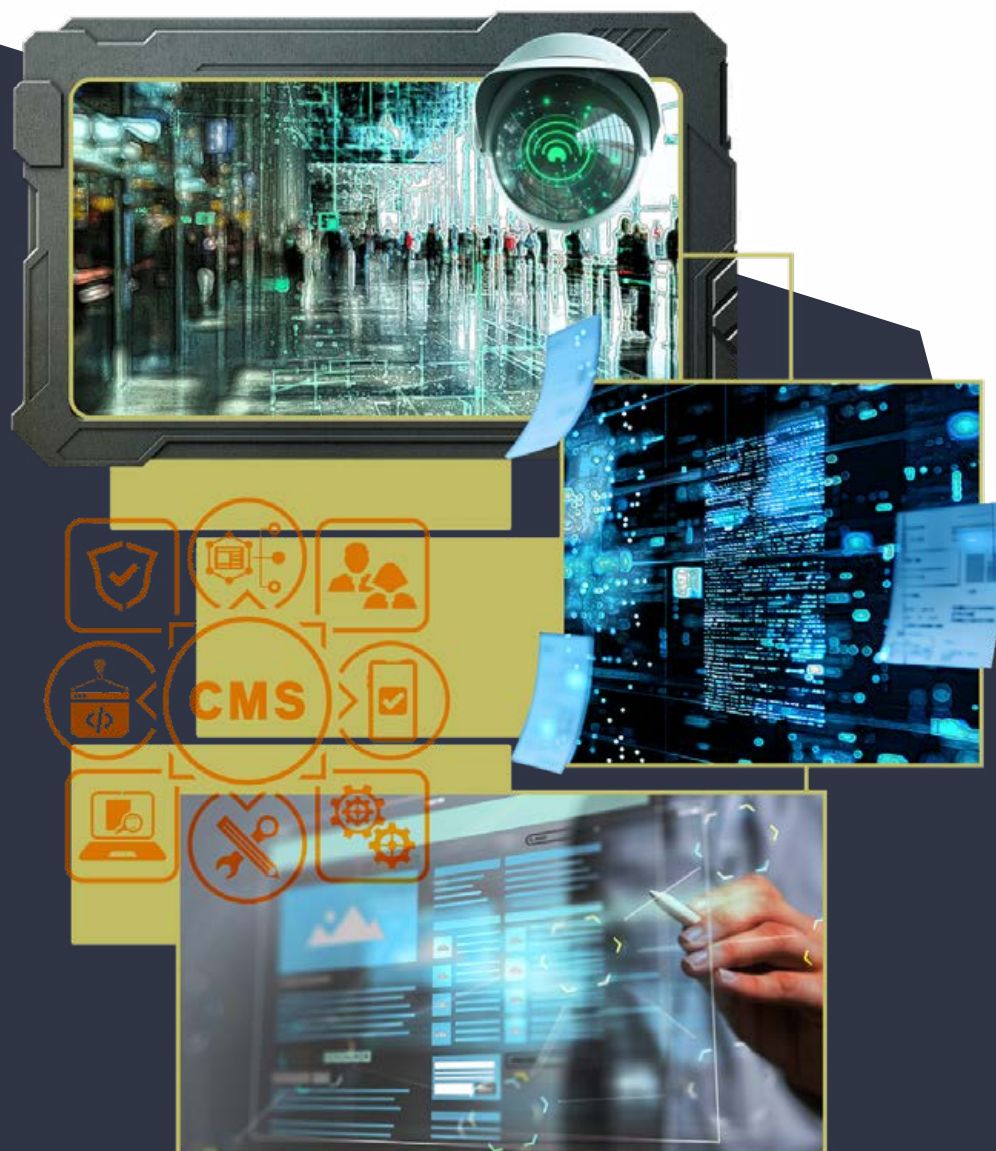


CRISIS-DRIVEN FUTURES	DISTRIBUTED OPERATING MODEL FUTURES
“In 2035, change sponsors are not appointed, but emerge from the collective will of their communities, often representing distinct belief groups or interest-based coalitions.”	“In 2035, leadership functions as facilitation – not control – with sponsors acting as connectors, not commanders.”
CHANGE DRIVERS AND SPONSORS:	CHANGE DRIVERS AND SPONSORS:
Change is driven by necessity and sponsored by proximity. Trust has shifted away from centralised institutions and toward community leaders, social justice advocates, and specialised experts such as health professionals or climate scientists.	- Change is community-powered and influence-driven. - There are no fixed sponsors; anyone with a compelling idea can spark transformation, amplified by community uptake, social validation, or platform consensus.
CHANGE PROFESSIONAL DAILY NORMS:	CHANGE PROFESSIONAL DAILY NORMS:
- Professionals work in a complex, highly fragmented landscape, often navigating crises in real time. - Days are focused on hyper-local engagement, balancing immediate needs with longer-term recovery.	- Embedded facilitators of human experience, seamlessly. If the change professional still exists, they operate as enablers, digital coaches, and systems navigators, supporting people across functions to build adaptive capacity. - Days are spent guiding rapid cycles of transformation, harnessing AI for diagnostics and design, and coaching teams through self-directed change.
STANDARD TOOLS AND APPROACHES:	STANDARD TOOLS AND APPROACHES:
- Tools are radically situational, tailored for the local context and immediate need. Printed media, visual facilitation, and word-of-mouth networks, which ensure communication persists during disruptions. - AI-enhanced platforms support sentiment analysis, real-time diagnostics, and adaptive planning. Human-Centred Design (HCD) is a guiding methodology, with conversations, storytelling, and visual sketch noting central to engagement.	- Standard tools are highly self-service, socially integrated, and AI-enhanced. - Change impact tools are now oriented toward economic, social, and political indicators, enabling transparent assessments of risks and returns.
SUCCESS OF CHANGE:	SUCCESS OF CHANGE:
- Success doesn't look polished; it looks resilient, built through local collaboration and adaptability. It is defined by visible local improvements, clean water, functioning clinics, safe meeting spaces and psychological safety. - It is small-scale, tangible, and community-validated.	- Success is defined by speed, relevance, and connectivity. It's measured in rapid adoption cycles, alignment to purpose, and network-wide engagement rather than formal milestones. - Change feels normal, expected, and continuous, enabling employees to move confidently and autonomously.
FAILURE OF CHANGE:	FAILURE OF CHANGE:
Failure arises when change efforts feel imposed, irrelevant, or extractive. It occurs when stakeholders withdraw trust, participation, or resources because they see no benefit, or worse, harm in the change.	- Failure is experienced as loss of relevance, stalled adoption, or even job displacement. - In a high-velocity world, there's little time to reflect, and failed change may lead to fragmentation, burnout, or misalignment between pods or platform/functional units.

Across all four futures, a clear set of signals emerged about how the field of change may need to evolve. Implications point to major shifts in practice – from distributed leadership and human–AI collaboration, to deeper emotional literacy, contextual design, and continuous change ecosystems. These patterns suggest that change professionals will need to navigate increasing complexity with adaptability, ethical clarity, and relational skill. Together, they form a strategic lens through which we can assess our current readiness and prepare for what lies ahead.

While we've presented four distinct futures, it's unlikely that any one scenario will unfold in isolation. Instead, we may experience a blend of these futures, or swing rapidly between them depending on global events, much like we saw during the pandemic.

The purpose of these futures is not to predict what's next, but to help us test the preparedness of our current capabilities, explore what might emerge, and identify priority pathways to strengthen how we lead and support change in an increasingly complex world.





PREPARING FOR FUTURES

Implications and opportunities

This final section of the report connects foresight with action; considering the practical implications and opportunities of our findings. Drawing from the literature, quantitative and qualitative insights, we distil the actions that change professionals can take to prepare for potential futures. Grounded in both lived experience and emerging theory, the recommendations are designed to offer not just visionary stretch, but practical relevance across all roles, levels and contexts.

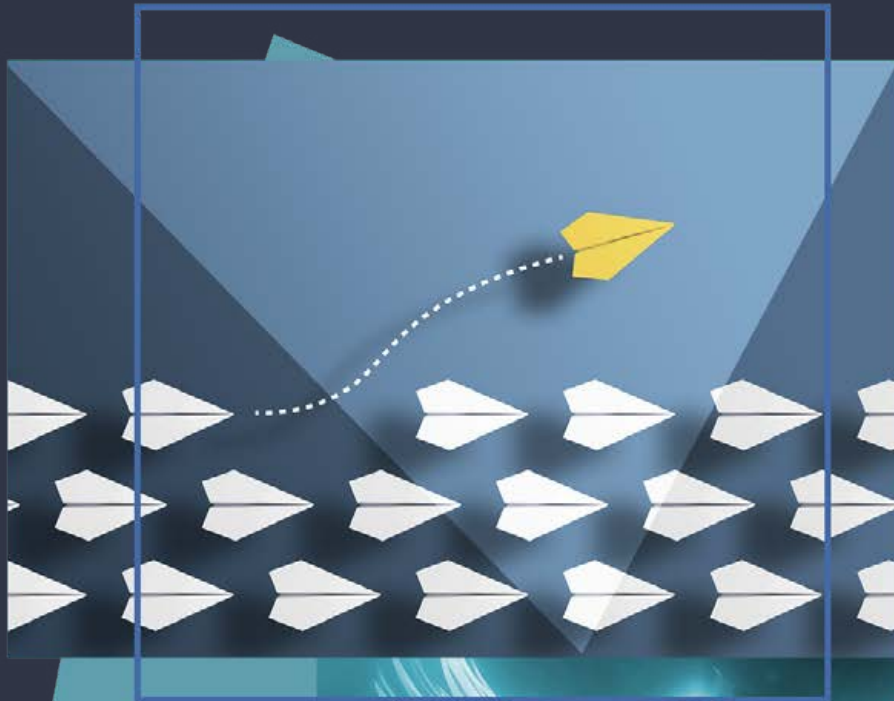
The actions are presented through two lenses:

1. **Evolving Perspectives** – the directional changes shaping the future of our field, and the skills and opportunities this presents for change.
2. **Personas** – practical considerations tailored to different actors within the change ecosystem. Using personas allowed us to humanise the strategy and move beyond abstract future thinking. The focus groups played a key role in shaping these reflections, helping us test thinking against lived experience.

A shift in the boundaries of our current profession is apparent. What emerges is a clear invitation to evolve – from a focus on managing discrete projects to enabling dynamic, distributed change capabilities embedded across organisations. This shift will require change professionals, adjacent professionals and leaders alike to rethink how change is initiated, led, supported and sustained.

“We need a portfolio of professional responses to change – from very transactional to deep wisdom-based practitioners prepared for the more complex, continual realities of transformational dynamics.”

– Prof Daryl Conner



THROUGH THE LENS OF THE EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES

To explore what this evolution might look like in practice, we've considered the insights through the lens of the five Evolving Perspectives.

EVOLVING PERSPECTIVE 1: CHANGE IDENTITY IS REIMAGINED

What if change wasn't something to manage, but a permanent state of play?

We already see clear signals today. Agile and product-led structures are replacing traditional project models. Organisations are embedding continuous improvement loops, investing in change-enabling technologies. Hybrid work, digitalisation, climate adaptation, and shifting generational values are all accelerating the need for responsive, always-on transformation.

Futures Snapshot

Change is no longer a project or a function – it is embedded into the fabric of the organisation. By 2035, sustainable and successful change – from strategy to delivery – becomes a core capability. Success will depend on fluency in the language of business and a focus on responsible, ethical change that balances commercial outcomes with societal and environmental impact. This isn't just a shift in method, but a **redefinition of identity: from managing change to becoming strategic enablers of sustainable transformation.**

Organisations will value the ability to build change capability and maturity across roles, levels, and ecosystems. Rather than controlling change, professionals will design the conditions that allow change to emerge. In this future, the focus will shift from change delivery, towards enabling readiness, embedding capability, and cultivating resilient, values-aligned cultures prepared to thrive in constant transformation.

Imagining 2035.....What if change wasn't something you planned for - but something you continuously navigated? What if the most effective organisations were those that treated change as a living system - adapting, listening, and evolving with their people, their markets and the planet?

Opportunities and future-forward skills for change:

- Embed change as a strategic capability.**
Position change not as a cost centre, but as a driver of business transformation, innovation, and long-term resilience by building systems, mindsets, and cultures that can flex, respond, and recover in constant uncertainty. Shift from rigid plans to guiding principles and futures thinking, with change leaders acting as connectors, enablers, and sensemakers shaping the conditions for sustained evolution.
- Strengthen business fluency.** Translate between transformation goals and business strategy. Build influence by speaking the language of commercial impact, risk and opportunity, connecting change efforts to enterprise value, impact and resilience.
- Co-create long-term value.** Align transformation efforts with broader societal and environmental outcomes. Partner across sustainability, risk and innovation to define success beyond delivery - integrating human and planetary wellbeing into how decisions are made.
- Design for continuity and learning.**
Create feedback loops, reflective practice, and embedded learning mechanisms so that change becomes iterative and self-reinforcing.
- Measure readiness, not just delivery.**
Track adaptive capacity, cultural conditions and change fitness as core indicators – not just milestones or task completion.



EVOLVING PERSPECTIVE 2: HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS THE DIFFERENTIATOR

What if the true measure of success was how change feels?

Experience-centred methods like journey mapping, co-design and service design are becoming standard. Emotional intelligence and psychological safety practices are being embedded into leadership and transformation. Employee and customer experience (EX and CX) are increasingly linked to business performance and retention, signaling that how people experience change directly affects business success.

Futures Snapshot

Experience will become a strategic asset. Change success may be measured not just by outcomes, but by how people feel along the way. Human well-being, cultural safety, emotional resonance and lived experience will matter as much as delivery timelines. Designing for diversity, inclusion and meaning becomes a strategic priority, not an afterthought – drawing on practices such as indigenous meaning-making to deepen connection and respect across change journeys.

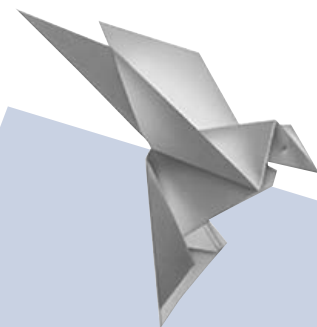
Change outcomes will be judged by both emotional and relational impact as well as business results. Sensemaking will be a critical discipline: helping people interpret disruption, hold space for complexity and co-create shared meaning in uncertain environments at the individual, team and system level will be as important as driving timelines or delivering outputs. Change may also become more plural – guided by culturally diverse, neuro-inclusive and sustainability-conscious models of what wellbeing looks like in different contexts. This shift isn't just about user journeys or satisfaction surveys – it's a redefinition of value.

Imagining 2035..... What if change programmes were evaluated by an independent Wellbeing and Inclusion Index that measured not only current sentiment, but long-term emotional impact, intergenerational wellbeing and even cultural loss or harm? What if every change effort had to pass a 'future generations impact' test before being implemented?

Opportunities and future-forward skills for change:

Design with, not for. Use participatory approaches like appreciative inquiry, journey mapping and inclusive design to shape change grounded in lived experience and cultural meaning. Deep facilitation and co-design capability will be essential.

- **Respond to difference with care.** 'One-size-fits-all change' is no longer viable. Build fluency in neurodiversity, trauma-awareness, indigenous knowledge and culturally-respectful practices, enabling safer, more resonant change journeys. Leaders at all levels should be equipped with tools for digital empathy, deep listening, psychological safety, values-aligned action and cultural sensitivity.
- **Amplify under-represented voices.** Use networks, communities of practice and peer-based insights to surface perspectives often missed – particularly those rooted in lived experience or marginalised identities.
- **Reveal meaning through emotion, culture and story.** Use sensing, storytelling and qualitative feedback to reveal the emotional tone, values and dynamics. Support people to navigate ambiguity through shared language – curate meaning, not just messages.
- **Prioritise human-first ethics.** Centre dignity, accessibility, cultural continuity and intergenerational impact in all aspects of change. Indigenous meaning-making can enrich collective understanding and foster long-term stewardship.
- **Measure what matters to people.** Embed wellbeing, inclusion, trust and psychological safety into success metrics – not just adoption rates or productivity indicators. Use behavioural data, sentiment analytics and real-time feedback to inform and adapt.





EVOLVING PERSPECTIVE 3: CHANGE LEADERSHIP IS DISTRIBUTED

What if leadership wasn't a role – but a network of influence?

We already see early signals today. From hybrid work and agile networks to social movements and decentralised technologies, change is becoming more fluid, participatory and collective. Digital collaboration platforms, organisational network analysis (ONA) and influencer mapping are helping us identify trusted voices, opinion leaders and key nodes of energy and resistance across the system. In parallel, leaders are increasingly being asked to hold space for emotion, uncertainty, cultural identity and psychological safety.

Futures snapshot

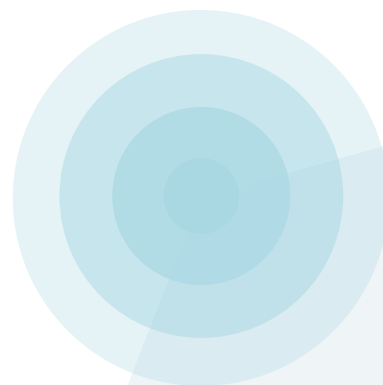
Leadership is shifting from authority to influence, control to contribution and from hierarchy to networks. By 2035, change will be co-led by diverse contributors – from informal influencers and middle managers to digital agents and partner ecosystems. Sensemaking, trust-building, and systems thinking will be essential leadership skills – not just for senior sponsors, as will mastery of advances in social, collaborative digital platforms.

In this future, change leadership will no longer be concentrated in the hands of a single sponsor, team or hierarchical authority. Instead, change will be led through networks of influence – shaped by distributed leadership, peer-to-peer mobilisation and purpose-driven ecosystems that span beyond organisational boundaries. Connection, trust, influence, and co-ownership through stories, relationships, and digital channels take centre-stage. Success will depend on the ability to sense energy, mobilise communities, and translate strategy into shared action.

Imagining 2035... What if leading change was less about managing tasks and more about stewarding movements – where authority flowed through trust networks, and the most impactful change agents weren't on the org chart at all?

Opportunities and future-forward skills for change:

- **Map and mobilise networks of trust and influence.** Use organisational network analysis (ONA), peer recommendations, and informal social dynamics to identify opinion leaders and trust-builders, not just formal leaders. Harness partnerships, professional communities, suppliers and even customers as part of the change ecosystem. Network-oriented leadership skills, and ecosystem thinking will enable more inclusive, adaptive and resilient approaches.
- **Redefine sponsorship.** Expand beyond senior executives to include community voices, digital influencers and ecosystem partners. Enable shared ownership across functions, geographies and even sectors.
- **Design decentralisation change pathways.** Build scalable frameworks and engagement pathways that allow local teams, satellite offices, customer groups and other distributed actors to shape and adapt change in real time.
- **Incentivise participation.** Recognise and reward change co-leadership across roles and layers through feedback loops, gamified contributions and visible storytelling of impact. Sense-and-respond agility will accelerate trust, traction and transformation.
- **Leverage participatory platforms.** Take cues from viral social trends and creator networks to build engaging, distributed change campaigns. Digital engagement and collaboration mastery, enhanced by AI partners, will become essential at all levels.





EVOLVING PERSPECTIVE 4: CHANGE PRACTICE ADAPTS FOR COMPLEXITY AND CONTEXT

What if change was less about following a method, and more about reading the system?

We already see strong signals of this shift. Leading practitioners are increasingly moving beyond linear change models and applying design thinking, regenerative principles and cultural frameworks. Multidisciplinary teams are becoming the norm, as organisations realise that no single perspective can address the systemic, human and planetary complexity they face.

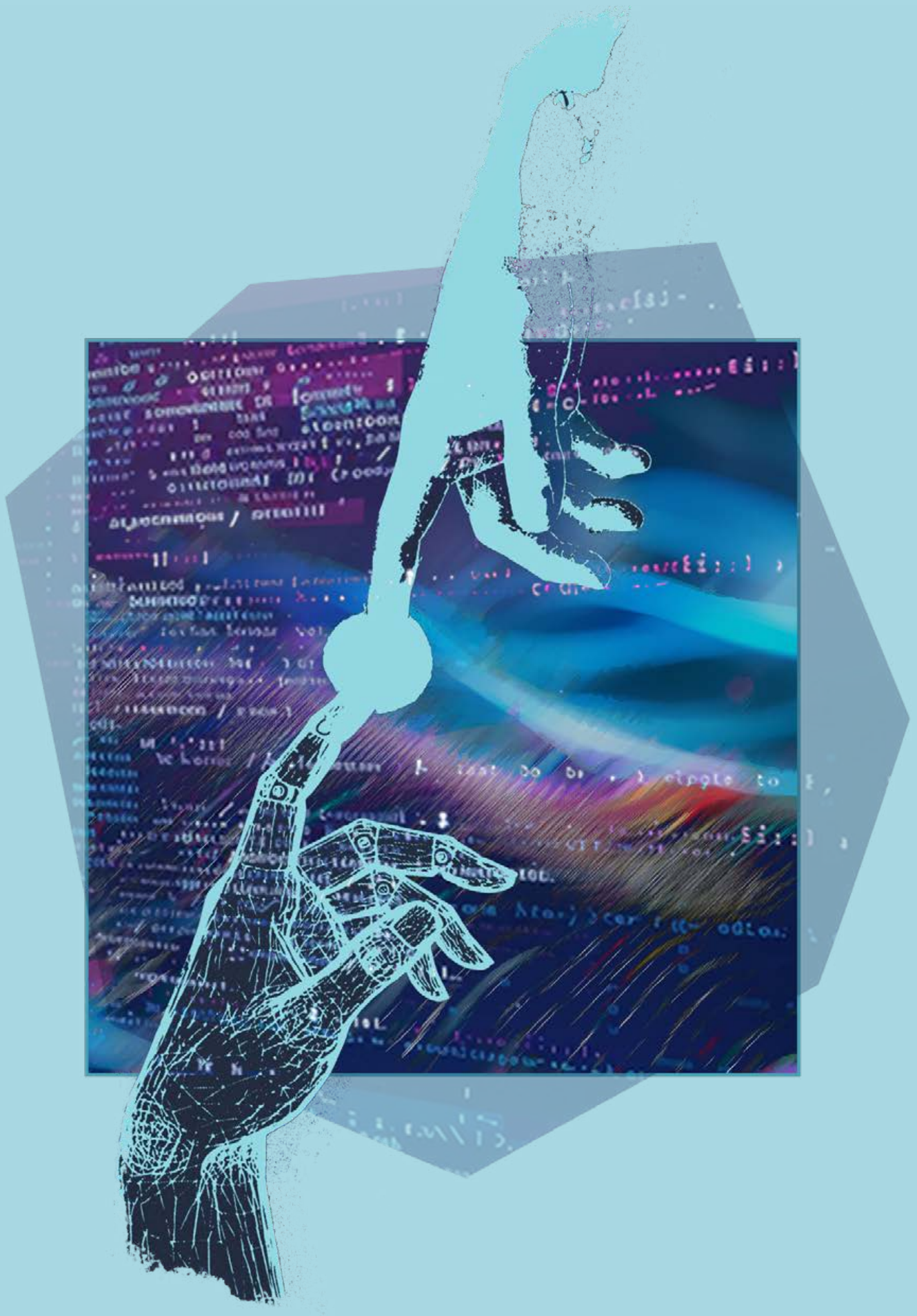
Futures snapshot

Change practice is evolving beyond standard models into a fusion of disciplines. By 2035, professionals will blend systems and portfolio thinking, design, behavioural science and cultural insight – adapting to organisational context and environmental factors. Rigid models and templates give way to fit-for-purpose approaches, pattern recognition, creativity and open collaboration.

In this future, it's likely that change practice will no longer follow a single methodology, toolkit or discipline. Professionals will draw flexibly from the fundamentals of change, behavioural science, systems thinking, cultural insight, co-design and place-based knowledge, deeply attuned to context, and focused on pattern sensing by surfacing systemic tensions, and activating local intelligence. Recognising impacts of different time horizons and place – physical, cultural, digital, ecological – will be key. Methodologies may become modular, customisable, or even AI-augmented, supporting practitioners to design for complexity in real time.

Opportunities and future-forward skills for change:

- **Design for context, place and practice.** Use environmental scanning, local listening, lived systems knowledge, cultural and place-based insight to adapt change to each setting - whether it's a digital ecosystem, geographic community or workplace culture. Recognise how geography, history, language and worldview shape how change is experienced. Partner with local leaders, cultural guides and indigenous knowledge-holders to inform respectful practice.
- **Fuse disciplines with purpose.** Curate from a 'flexible playbook' rather than applying fixed methodologies. Draw on behavioural science, systems thinking, regenerative design and anthropology to respond holistically to complex challenges. Build hybrid approaches that reflect the messiness of real-world change. Work with professionals from adjacent fields – design, data, policy, education, climate – to co-create responses to multidimensional change.
- **Develop systems fluency and pattern recognition.** Build skills in sensing systems – not just managing tasks. Spot early signals, feedback loops, cultural tensions and behavioural cues that reveal what's really shifting. Map power, relationships, feedback and interdependencies. Equip others to see themselves in the system for positive shifts.
- **Embrace emergence and uncertainty.** Learn to act without having all the answers. Support teams in experimenting, reflecting and adapting in iterative cycles.



EVOLVING PERSPECTIVE 5: HUMAN-TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIP IS THE NEXT FRONTIER

What if AI isn't just a tool — but a teammate?

We already see strong signals and trends today, with a rapid rise in AI tools, behaviour-tracking systems, Organisation Network Analysis (ONA) and digital adoption platforms. Yet other powerful technologies - like digital twins, blockchain-based collaboration, quantum-enhanced simulations, social robots and AR/VR environments - remain underexplored in mainstream change practice. Many change professionals are still working with outdated tools and lack exposure to these frontier capabilities.

Futures snapshot

AI, digital twins, immersive tools and intelligent agents will likely reshape how change is conceived and delivered. By 2035, change professionals may co-create with machines, use predictive diagnostics and design adaptive human-tech ecosystems. As AI becomes a partner and stakeholder in change, trust, transparency and ethical stewardship will be essential. Building digital empathy and leading alongside intelligent systems will define the next frontier of the profession.

In this future, it is likely that artificial intelligence, immersive technologies and digital agents will not just support change – they will actively shape and deliver change leading to a redefinition of the change function itself. Digital assistants may shape communication strategies. Quantum insights might replace traditional stakeholder analysis and inform personalised engagements. And immersive, gamified, metaverse environments could become the default for change engagement. Digital twins may soon allow change professionals to simulate outcomes not just for systems, but for people and organisations. Addressing cultural and emotional responses for human-robot interaction might emerge as a specialism. As technology becomes a stakeholder and co-creator, questions of ethics, equity and trust in human-tech collaboration will take centre stage. In this intervening future, those who can ask better questions,

interpret data with empathy and shape ethical use of AI will hold the advantage.

Imagining 2035... What if change professionals routinely partnered with intelligent agents, co-designed initiatives with digital twins, and used quantum-powered simulations to model organisational shifts? What kinds of ethics, capabilities, and co-leadership models would be needed if robots, ambient AI, or neuro-responsive platforms became part of the change delivery team?

Opportunities and future-forward skills for change:

- **Partner with technology, not just implement it.** Shift from deployment to co-design – work alongside AI, robotics and digital teams to shape ethical, human-centred solutions from the outset. Consider how digital twins, AI agents and avatars might become the new members of your change team.
- **Embed AI and digital fluency across the ecosystem.** Build understanding of AI's role and risks – not just in IT, but among leaders, teams and end-users to support more confident adoption.
- **Reimagine engagement, experience and personalisation at scale.** Look to include immersive tools like AR/VR, gamified learning and personalised nudges to deepen emotional connection and inclusivity.
- **Strengthen the digital backbone of change.** Integrate change platforms (CMS) with HR, PMO, IT, CRM and L&D systems to enable more responsive, data-informed change delivery at scale.
- **Expand your influence as translator and integrator.** Bridge disciplines – translating between data science, product development, UX and impacted teams to ensure technology is shaped with people in mind.
- **Champion ethical stewardship and digital empathy.** Understand how digital and AI-driven experiences affect trust, emotion, accessibility and autonomy. Take a leadership role in advocating for transparency, equity, accountability and harm reduction across all tech-enabled change initiatives, from AI to robots, including clear pathways for re-skilling and redeployment.



THROUGH THE LENS OF PERSONAS

Participants were asked to provide insights into how four key personas could begin to prepare for potential futures. These findings were reframed into question-based considerations tailored to the different actors within the change ecosystem. These personas invite us to move beyond an abstract future and help to reflect on the new ways of thinking and working in our current practice. The personas used were:

CHANGE PROFESSIONALS	IMPACTED PEOPLE	DISTRIBUTED CHANGE LEADERS	NEXT GENERATION
Individuals who design, implement and guide change across systems	Anyone directly or indirectly affected by the change	Formal and informal leaders who endorse, fund and advocate for change	Future change-makers preparing to lead
<i>Practitioners, facilitators, coaches, analysts</i>	<i>Employees, citizens, customers, communities</i>	<i>Sponsors, executives, network leaders, and influencers</i>	<i>Emerging leaders, students, future practitioners</i>



CHANGE PROFESSIONALS

- How am I facilitating and stewarding ecosystems of change?
- How do I blend portfolio and systems thinking, behavioral science and cultural insight to suit the context?
- How do I embed cultural, neurodiverse, and accessibility needs in every change?
- How am I moving beyond rigid models toward creativity and collaboration?
- How do I embody ethical principles that support positive outcomes for people and planet?
- How am I growing fluency in the core skills of AI, digital agility, and emotional intelligence?

IMPACTED PEOPLE

- How do I collaborate effectively across cultures, generations, and hybrid settings?
- How am I growing in change literacy and engaging in co-design opportunities?
- How am I building or joining networks that strengthen connection, influence, and shared ownership?
- How do I engage responsibly with technology, data, and AI to uphold ethics and privacy?
- How am I strengthening my agility and adaptability in a fast-changing world?
- How am I fostering psychological safety and trust to enable successful change?





DISTRIBUTED CHANGE LEADERS

- How do I lead with empathy, openness and curiosity to build trust and safety?
- How am I empowering others to lead and remove barriers to change?
- How do I align purpose with action to embed ethical and sustainable outcomes into change decisions?
- How am I investing in learning and digital platforms that enable connection and capability?
- How do I use storytelling and sensemaking to bring clarity and meaning to complexity and diverse perspectives?
- How am I amplifying and influencing inclusion and modelling adaptive, human-centred leadership?

NEXT GENERATION

- How do I build and balance AI and data skills with empathy, ethics, and emotional awareness?
- How am I developing adaptable leadership and practicing critical foresight?
- How do I question existing structures and experiment with sustainable approaches?
- How do I use storytelling and imagination to navigate uncertainty and change?
- How do I act as a steward of social, digital, and natural ecosystems?
- How am I seeking mentors who lead with humility, inclusion, and long-term vision?
- How do I sustain lifelong learning and systems thinking to stay future-ready?



Alongside the four personas, participants also reflected on the role of the Institute itself. The Institute's role as a steward of the profession, an ecosystem connector and insights from this project are already informing our strategic thinking. We are committed to continuing the conversation with members, collaborating with leading voices across adjacent fields, and shaping future-focused offerings that reflect the evolving needs of change professionals. Our work will focus on enabling strategic foresight, advancing professional capability, and building an inclusive, resilient, and future-ready change ecosystem – wherever and however change happens.



THE FUTURE STARTS **TODAY**

Final reflections

This report expands the lens through which we view change, revealing new possibilities for how we lead, learn, and create impact in a world that refuses to stand still. These insights are not predictions, but invitations — to rethink our identity, stretch our practice, and step boldly into what comes next.

The signals are clear: change is becoming distributed, deeply human, technologically intertwined, and endlessly adaptive. We are being called to sense, steward, and co-create transformation that is not only effective, but ethical, inclusive, and sustainable.

You cannot unsee what you have seen. The future is already unfolding — through your choices, your teams, your leadership. Now is the time to turn insight into action, to experiment, to build capability, and to help others do the same.

The future of change belongs to those who lead with empathy, curiosity, and courage. The Change Management Institute stands beside you, championing the next horizon. Together we shape the futures of change, today.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SURVEY

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