

# **Growing Pains: Leading Your LLI Through Good and Tough Times**

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**Ara Rogers & Sharon Sokoloff  
Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes  
University of South Florida and Brandeis University**

## **Objectives**

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- 1. Describe a model of organizational development that includes stages, transitions, and opportunity for renewal**
- 2. Apply the model to LLIs to better understand what “normal” means in our programs**
- 3. Discuss our shared or unique transitional situations with OLLI colleagues**



## Our Interest in this Topic

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- We're experiencing "teachable moments"
- We wondered: Are there are parallels between adult development & organizational development?
  - Research suggests --- Yes, there are.
- If there are common LLI developmental stages, trigger events and tasks, naming and understanding them might help all of us



## Is your LLI in Transition?

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- Everyone is upset
- Everyone has an opinion
- Things feel "wrong", "uncomfortable"
- There's a sense of being unsettled and/or ambiguity
- Something has changed
- Perhaps you've had a "trigger event" and may or may not recognize it



## Examples of LLI Trigger Events

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- Receiving a Windfall: Osher (or other) Funding
- “Falling off the Cliff” (Endowment = Less Money *but in perpetuity*)
- Growth or Capacity issues
- Space or new building issues (Positive Stress)
- Organizational changes
  - Changes in key LLI or host staff, losing your founder
  - Turnover in key volunteer leaders
- Shifting core programming or delivery methods
- Other? (Please jot down your ideas to share)



## A Theoretical Model: May/Should have practical utility

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*Managing Transitions:*  
*Making the Most of Change*  
William Bridges

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This model has face validity.  
It speaks to us.



## Bridges' Model

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1. Dreaming the Dream
  2. Launching the Venture
  3. Getting Organized
  4. Making It
  5. Becoming an Institution
  6. Closing In
  7. Dying
- Or  
Choosing the Path of Renewal



## Dreaming the Dream

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- Imagining and planning when organization is but an idea
- Articulating the dream and engaging others in it
- Thinking, brainstorming, arguing
- *Some dreams never get beyond this phase*
- By definition, all of us have been here at one time



## Launching the Venture

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- Organization's infancy and childhood
- The Venture is "out there", people are beginning to know the organization and come
- Ventures do what they do by the "seat of their pants"; no formal systems yet
- Brandeis: Infrastructure in year 2000-2001
- Can only go so far "making it up as you go along", i.e., to succeed, need to *Get Organized*



## Getting Organized

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- May feel going backward as bringing order may involve slowing down to be more standardized (Infrastructure)
- May *feel* like creating *bureaucracy*
- Energy of founders not be enough to ensure continued good results
- Need *predictable* activities, processes, more specialized roles, more formal definitions, financial controls, policies
- **Not Easy**. When successful, organizations emerge with structures, processes, practices, systems, agreements, habits needed to be a mature, effective organization



## Making It

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- “Adulthood” begins; Has what it needs to be a significant factor in the market, can expand and grow more complex for a long time in this stage
- Begin to reap rewards of successful early development, e.g., financial success, workforce growth, more programs/courses, increasing reputation
- May face competition, but solid foothold, basis to expand
- Maybe satellites as growth leads to “problems” (space) necessitating change which leads to more growth
- Fundamental nature continues



## Making It

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- Organization’s success seems less appealing (to some) than other intangible “institutional” quality **competitors** have or seem to have. *They* have something “we don’t have”, e.g., importance, more classes. This feeling of “lack” gets attached to something tangible, e.g., bigger building, a satellite, more courses, growth, less staff
- Brandeis: In the shadow of Harvard (23 year difference)
- This is more style than substance -- substance more the focus at earlier stages -- but this no less compelling now
- Feeling: It’s time for organization to take its place as “not just a successful organization but as one of Big Boys”, i.e., *An Institution*



## Becoming an Institution

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- *Organization has its reputation -- not earning it*
- May go for long time with little talk re: further development
- Emphasis moves *from doing to being*, from results organization achieves to impressions it makes (Subtle)
- Challenge to communicate this in a LLI and may be a challenge for the university staff/member collaboration
- If nothing is done to deflect natural course of development, i.e., **renewal effort**, the organization may start to close in on itself and to lose its vital connection to the community
- See Laws of Organizational Development



## Closing In

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- Occurs *imperceptibly* out of self-satisfaction (that may mark institutional stage)
- Some cultures, e.g., medicine, education, may implicitly include built-in justifications to Close In
- If don't need to succeed in marketplace, e.g., government body, likely to become increasingly unresponsive bureaucracy. In competitive marketplace, this phase is difficult to sustain.
- Staff overlook customers' importance and focus may seem perverse, e.g., rules or status, while organization is collapsing
- Loss of vital tension between organization and environment leading to *Dying*



## Dying

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- Unlike people – a dying organization less obvious
- Not results orientation, no inclination to change, no teamwork – only systems, rules, procedures, forms
- Emphasis is on “put it in writing”
- Connections to the outside world are narrow



## Organizational Renewal

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- ....is the alternative to Closing In and Dying
- Renewal wired into organizational life cycle (e.g., new cells in human body)
- Renewal does not occur by changing specific practices or values. Rather, it occurs by taking the organization back to the start of its life cycle.
- **The organization has to choose – not Closing In – but Renewal instead**
- Far from simple as the organization’s “immune system” is set up to reject the results of making such a choice  
**CHANGE and TRANSITION are HARD**



## Organizational Renewal

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Failing to understand the developmental course of organizational life not only confuses issues like the mature organization's resistance to innovation

but also

Mistakenly suggests these issues are "problems" to fix rather than normal organizational behavior, i.e., a stage in the life of the organization



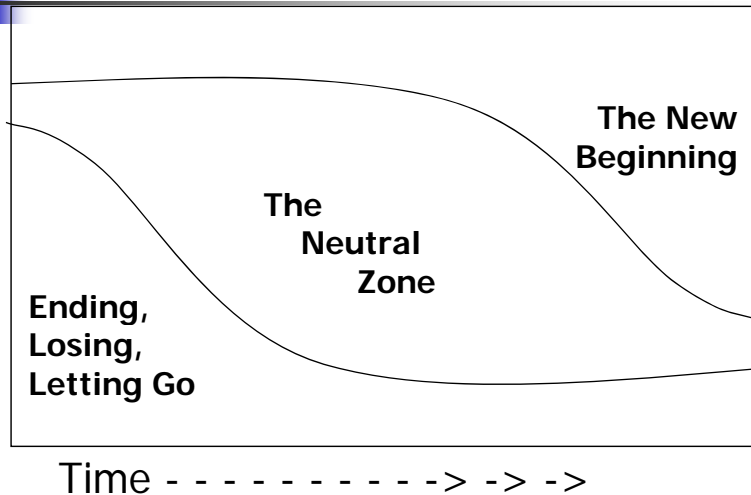
## "The Human Side of Change"

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### Transition

- Is a *process* people go through. It is not an event.
- Is the *experience* people have when an organization is moving from one stage to the next.
- Enables people to orient themselves to doing things in a new way.
- Requires time.

## What Transitions Look Like



## Tools for Managing Transitions: *Recognize, Name and Manage Loss*

- Name the loss
- Accept the reality and importance of the subjective losses
- Acknowledge losses openly and sympathetically
- Expect, accept the signs of grieving
- Don't be surprised at overreaction
- Compensate for the losses



## Tools for Managing Transitions: *Communicate, Communicate*

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- Give people information . . . again and again
- Define what's over – and what isn't
- Mark the endings
- Treat the past with respect
- Talk to individuals and see what problems they have with the proposed changes
- Talk about the transition process



## Tools for Managing Transitions: *Neutral zone as Opportunity*

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- Design temporary systems to bridge old-new
- Use this interim period to improve service delivery and design new services
- Normalize and redefine the neutral zone
- Strengthen *intragroup* connections
- Enlist trusted 'eyes and ears' to keep you tuned in to the organization's zeitgeist



## Bridges' Five Laws of Org Development: Normalizing Transitions

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1. Those most at home with necessary activities and arrangements of one phase are the ones most likely to experience the subsequent phase as a setback.
2. The successful outcome of any phase of organizational development triggers its demise by creating challenges it is not equipped to handle.
3. In any significant transition, the thing that the organization needs to let go of is the very thing that got it this far.



## Bridges' Five Laws of Org Development: Normalizing Transitions

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4. Whenever there is a painful, troubled time in the organization, a developmental transition is going on.

*AND*

5. Failure to undergo a transition when the time is ripe for one to occur will cause a developmental “retardation” in the organization.



## Thanks

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“...Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves...

Don't search for the answers...because you would not be able to live them...

Live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”

*Rainer Maria Rilke*