

Steps to Change Podcast: Episode 1

Host: Hello, and welcome to this episode of Steps to Change. The podcast where we explore learning and development topics, organisational behaviour change and practical ways to inspire people to act differently. Through the lens of our Steps to Change model; See it, Own it, Change it and Live it. On this episode, we're unpacking the Steps to Change model, where it came from, why we use it at Steps and our approach to supporting large scale change and individual change, in ways that you might be able to use the approach to support your development. I am your host, Allen Liedkie and I'm joined this episode by Mark Shillabeer. Mark, how are you?

Interviewee: Good, thank you Allen. How are you?

Host: I am doing very well, thank you. Mark, thanks for joining us on this episode, tell us a little bit about yourself, your history with Steps and why you're joining us today?

Interviewee: Okay, so thank you. I'm one of the Director of Steps. I've been with the business now for 20 years, can't quite believe it but fun and wonderful 20 years across various different roles within the business. I am responsible for a number of client relationships, developing and delivering programmes but I also have a role, fancy title known as the Quality and Innovation Director.

Host: It's probably safe to say Mark that in your 20 some odd years at Steps, you've seen lots of different changes and approaches in the way that we work and get into helping clients and people who participate in our programmes, inspiring them to change and you know, as I was starting to understand our viewpoint on designing learning and development programmes when I was first introduced to Steps and started working with the company. The framework of the Steps to Change model really helped me just kind of quickly get it, right and so you know, I think one thing I'm really excited to hear from you today, is just how the Steps to Change model came about and you know, just kind of talking us through it, what it is and how it's really effective in supporting that change process.

Interviewee: Sure, absolutely. So, in all of the years that I've worked for Steps, which is more than the 20 years that I've been full time with the business. At the heart of what we've been about, is finding a way to hold a mirror up to the behaviours that are manifesting in organisations, both good and and challenging and to find an engaging way of getting people to think about how they can be more effective in the work that they do. And traditionally we've done that by going into an organisation, delivering a learning or change initiative that might be part of a wider programme or initiative within that particular company, do a very good job, you know always got very good feedback for the work we did. Off we went, thank you very much and look forward to seeing you next time but we didn't really have much involvement beyond that 90 minutes, two hours or even you know, supporting another facilitator or learning professional throughout the whole of a day. And that's always been very enjoyable but what we found is that there seemed to be some degree of frustration on our part but even in clients' parts, about why the change that they were looking for wasn't happening. So, we felt that it was important to take a little bit of a step back and think about what ways are there that we can really support our clients, perhaps even push our clients to think about how they make that change happen effectively, beyond that simple learning programme and that's what the four stages of Steps to Change are all about. It is effectively a road map if you like for working with clients to achieve lasting behavioural change, that really is going to endure.

Host: And, as part of that process it's about, we know that achieving organisational change really starts with the individuals right, cause you know, it's the people that make up an organisation and so, if we can inspire the people that are participants in our sessions to kind of really understand this model and give them that road map, I think that's where the shift, the A-ha moments would start to happen for people and then therefore, have that, you know, longer term impact for that organisational change process.

Interviewee: Definitely, and I think as we go through the four stages that will come very clear because there is a requirement actually on individuals to understand their needs to engage with different parts of the four-stage process, if they are actually going to do things differently. And it asks questions of them about whether that's something that they even want to take seriously.

Host: Well, let's get into it, yeah tell us like, breakdown the four steps for us and you know, share with the listeners what it's all about.

Interviewee: Sure, so just before I do that sort of sequence, it might be useful to talk a little bit about what was happening we found in organisations generally. So, an organisation has a particular need, they have a requirement for a learning intervention, or you know, or for change to happen. So, it could be as simple as our leaders are not as effective as we want them to be, in terms of their performance management conversations. Or it could be, you know, we are not as inclusive as we want to be as an organisation and that's causing us problems, we're losing business, we're not able to recruit the right people or whatever it might be. So, what tends to happen is people in the business say we need to do something about this, so we are going to stage an intervention, again whether it's learning intervention or a change intervention and we're going to often invest a lot of time, very often an awful lot of money to bring people in, help us deliver that understanding about what we want to do differently and quite a lot of frustration that, for some reason this wasn't having the effect that they wanted it to have. And that is because in our view there were various things that should happen first, before you do what we call the Change it piece, which is the what skills do I need and what do I need to learn.

So, let me take you through the four stages; See it, Own it, Change it, Live it; Steps to Change. Works very well of course, because we are Steps, but it also implies that there are a number of steps that you need to go through if you're going to be successful and the first of those is, See it. So, See it is the stage of really recognising and seeing the behaviours, as they are now. OK, so it requires two elements to be achieved, it needs people to see their own current behaviour. So that's understanding the situation as it is now or as we often call it, seeing ourselves as others see us. So, that's holding a mirror up to those behaviours and it also requires people to understand that there, to see that there is a different and potentially better way of doing things. Now, there are lots of different ways that you can hold that mirror up, you can provide facts, figures, data to people, which is obviously very useful for certain learning styles. A really effective technique that we use through our research is to talk to people and gain quotes and understanding about how they see the world in their own words, and we play that out in what we call a Vox Pop. So, there's a visual representation of those words and we get our own actors to voice it. Just by holding that mirror up and letting people see and hear what my colleagues are saying, is a really powerful way of seeing the behaviours, as they are now.

Beyond that, we believe the most powerful way of seeing it is through the use drama and storytelling. So, in our live workshops, which were always traditionally face to face but now also virtual and I'm going to say straight away it's been a real surprise to me over the last couple of years how effective drama can be over a virtual platform but by doing that and also through the use of media, so a really key part of our storytelling is filmed media production. By holding that mirror up in that way, you are challenging people to see things in terms of their own behaviours and those of people around them and then it brings about, you know, I can honestly tell you after having done this for 20 - 25 years, it brings about a visceral reaction in people. They

say, I have seen that behaviour happening, I've seen that happen or I've done it myself and you know for us that is a really important and very powerful starting point on that journey.

Host: So, help me out here a little bit. I think from the drama that you're talking about, is this you know, we'll paint a little bit of a picture for what this drama might look like in a scenario but equally you know that visceral connection and how it goes about supporting that, cause I'm a big fan of Nick Shackleton Jones' book on *How People Learn* and one of the key tenants of, of what he talks about in his book, is the fact that we need to have an emotional connection, an emotional driver for a reason to learn, that's what something that will drive us to learn a new skill or develop an ability. So just kind of break that down for us a little bit, in terms of how that drama works, might work in a session and kind of the impact it has for the people who are participating.

Interviewee: Sure, so the first and most important part of it, is the research element that we undertake to understand what that, story is going to tell. So, we work very closely with our clients to speak to people to understand the status quo, as it is now and obviously an important part of that is to speak to the commissioning client, the person that's asking us to do the work but very often they think that they know how things are and perhaps don't have the finger on the pulse, in quite the way that they initially thought. So, we speak to what we call a diagonal slice across the business. We speak to people at every level, across all sorts of different roles. I always think that behaviours are universal, so you can go to pretty much any organisation that you want to, and you will find that when it comes to something like, I don't know, having a difficult conversation. They will either avoid the conversation because behaviourally they're too frightened of facing it or they will go in far too heavy, you know, stomp all over it and get it horribly wrong because they're, you know again, equal fear, dealing with it in a different way. So, behaviours are quite universal but actually organisations are very individual and it's really important that our mirror represents the things that are important to that organisation, the cultural norms, the words that they say. So, that research piece is really key, we don't ever take anything off the shelf.

From that we'll start to craft a series of stories, that inform the starting point for an exploration and a journey with each group that we work with. Very typically it can play out in a quite a short situation, so let's say you and I were in a, that you know I'm your manager we are having a management conversation, we might start by playing out a little interaction between me and you that immediately people will recognise because it's the words, it's the things I'm doing, the things that they do and they will, they will have a reaction to it and we used that as a starting point of saying to people, 'so do you recognise this?' 'Do you believe it?' 'Is it your experience?' We often heighten it a little bit, we want it to be engaging, we want it to be fun and you know, what that heightening does is it tends to bring people out to go "Well, that doesn't happen anymore" or "that's ridiculous" but it will also enable someone else to go "yes, it does happen, as I said know, it happened to me last week". You know that can play, playing out that story in that way, is a starting point for an exploration of, if this is true, what does it mean? And as we go onto the other stages of the four stages of Steps to Change, what do we do as a result of this?

Host: Just to be clear, in our work for the most part, we are not getting the participants to do any acting themselves right, it's all professional actors and facilitators who are just simply playing out stuff that's pulled from that research, honest kind of interactions and daily conversations and by doing it fairly and honestly and you know, not kind of pulling our punches, if you will, the people in the room really go, you know what, this really is us and they get that objective point to really enter into the learning and I think it's by doing it through that objective way that allows them to have their own emotional connection to it and then be more willing to move onto those next steps, I think in terms of the Steps to Change process.

Interviewee: Yeah absolutely, we'll come onto the fact that, you alluded to the fact that they don't have to do anything and that's right, we never ask anyone to act or be anything other than themselves but there are, as I said before, See it is about seeing that there's a different way of doing things, as well and we will come onto the fact that there's an important part of trying things out and experimenting and practicing, which is part of the skills acquisition that comes in the Change it piece later but you're right. So, what happens is that you get that connection, you get that recognition of how things currently are and then, I was about to say probably the most important stage, they're all the most important stage in a strange way, as you'll see but things will not change unless people own the need to want to change and understand that it has to change.

So, the Own it stage is about feeling accountable, feeling empowered to be part of the shift. So, Own it requires two key elements to have that be achieved. People need to personally commit to making the change happen, they need to want things to be different and then they also need to understand the barriers to the change and believe that they can be overcome. They need to believe it's in their interests to do things differently and this is really important because I don't believe that anyone goes to work with the desire to do bad, or be evil, or you know, to not to want to do the best by themselves or others but actually we all of us sit in quite a comfortable place, where anything that challenges us, is something that we will want to avoid if we can possibly get away with it. You know, people want to develop, they want to move up in an organisation but when it comes to doing things that are actually difficult, they will avoid it if they can get away with it, is probably the best way to describe it. Now of course if everyone sits there and says I really, you know, I recognise that's bad, I don't think we want to be like this as a business, I don't think, you know, that's acceptable, we need to collectively agree to change but actually, hopefully I don't have to be the one. If everyone sits there and does that, then no one's owning it, and nothing will be done differently. So, the Own it piece is really about challenging people. So, you've seen this, you've bought into it, you've seen, you know, sometimes some quite hard behaviours played out in front of you, where people are saying that I need my business to support me or my manager to support me, I'm being bullied, I'm being racially abused, or you know or not something as dramatic as that, I'm just not being given the opportunities that I want. If we don't kind of make the commitment to own that change then, well I would say to clients, you're really wasting your money, doing the bit about skill giving because people will listen, they'll nod, they will enjoy themselves, but they go away go back to the desk and do exactly the same as they always did.

Host: And I think that's what's interesting for me in the Own it part and as a practitioner of the work that we do, I'm always like *brie* understanding and growing in my knowledge of this model, right. I used to think it was this linear model, you do See it, you do Own it, you do Change it, you do Live it and then you kind of move on but actually I'm seeing it more of like a cyclical model that you keep coming back to things right, as you develop but one of the things that has really stood out for me over the last few years is, in the Own it piece is about really, not only where do, where am I at individually with some of these behaviours but actually recognising when we look at organisational culture, it really needs leadership to Own it, you know what are the behaviours, what are the standards that they're going to be committing to, what are they going to be held accountable for because once they are all on *the*, leadership is in alignment, that's going to naturally filter down to those management, to the individual contributors and so forth. So, you know, if working within the programme or in the design with clients to really understand, what is it that people are owning? Rather than a bunch of collective individual ownership, which is important, we need to have a shared ownership of Own it and I think it starts with that, that leadership team.

Interviewee: Yeah, I agree and of course ownership is about committing to do everything you can to support people to get it right and that is, that it's the same point about thinking that a learning intervention should solve everything, when of course and again will come on to see this particular at the last stage which we call the Live it stage, which is about how you make things continue to happen beyond any programme in itself, is

that it requires commitment, it requires me as a leader to Live it on a day-to-day basis not just expect it of others, to have patience, to invest time and energy. So, ownership is quite a broad thing, it's very much about the individual but it's very much about collective organisation as well.

Host: And again, it's a constant awareness right, you just kind of keep needing to remind yourself, where am I at? What am I doing? How am I developing here? Am I making progress? So, you continually own where you're currently at, on this whatever journey it might be, whatever skills you're developing, whatever it maybe in the subject areas that we work in, so. Right, so, we've got, so, we've got people they've seen it, they've had that mirror held up, they are now collectively *own individually*, owning it in terms of where they're at with, you know, contributing to these behaviours or what have you. What's next on that journey?

Interviewee: So, the next bit is in many ways the traditional bit that people recognise. So, Change it, as we call it, is the stage of acquiring a new way of doing things, a new way of behaving and I think the thing about this is, it's very important to understand that it can be a simple instantaneous thing. So, you know, I will make a commitment to, now that you've given me the skills to ask open questions and listen, I will make a commitment to incorporating those skills the next time I have a conversation. So, it could be quite a simple thing but actually it can be quite long term and protracted as well, so I'm developing my skills as a coach and I've learnt the model that you've given me, we've explored it, I need to now practise it, I need to go away and do it in real time, I need to learn from my experiences, the things that went well, the things that didn't go so well and I need to keep reiterating that learning over a period of time so it can be a long term thing. But it is effectively the exploration of how we go about doing things differently, its knowledge giving and the exploration of how to do things differently, so.

Host: Well you might come onto this point but if you were going to say this, please stop me and go down that route but I think one of the, not only as someone who delivers the work, it gets me really excited when we're in the room and we're hearing, when we move onto the Change it part of a programme, a lot of the time, we're turning it over to the participants to say what can we do differently? How are we going to do that differently? People have that wisdom for the most part, it's just when you give them time as a group, to kind of, think about, well, what is it that we can do right now? What is it that we are already doing that we need to amplify? So, it doesn't have to be this arduous process, right. It's actually just giving people a moment to make the, connect the dots from what they've seen, what they've owned and just really think about, well, I'm probably doing some of this stuff, how do I do it a little bit more? And let's share that wisdom amongst the crowd, in the room.

Interviewee: This is, as you've alluded to is the bit that we all enjoy most because it's the experimental, exploration stage. So, it's information giving, its knowledge giving and then, it's like so how do we use that in our behavioural interactions moving forward. So, the way that we do that is we use drama, so we'll pick up on some of those stories, scenarios that we've already introduced, and we'll say so now let's look at it again and let's work together to explore how, you know. For example, this manager can be more effective in his conversations and its experimental, its improvised, its exploratory and people find that very engaging, it's very different for them and it's a lot of fun but it's also really important because you know someone might give me as a manager a piece of what, of advice, give me the words, tell me what I need to do, to say to Allen, to help Allen be more effective and I can play that out, it might be successful, it might not but someone else sitting there might be going, well you know I could see that was successful but I would never do it that way I would want to do it this way. So, we can play that out and explore, it might be successful, it might not and the whole point of that, is that we work collectively to explore what good practice can look like and from that I can take good practice that's valid for me, but I can also discard things that are not going to work for me.

Host: Well, in that space, I think there is a really interesting shift in mindset that can happen because as you said before that sort of challenge and change piece, we like to be comfortable in our place, you know, we've developed those skills that make us successful in our roles. So, anything that, somebody comes in and says you need to change, you start to go 'ooh, but I've been doing really well, why do I need to get any different?' So, as human beings we have a natural aversion to change, until we understand the benefits it has for us and you know and how it's going to make me either more successful in my role or kind of help me reach my goals but it's not just a change in necessarily behaviours or skills, it's also exploring mindsets here, cause you know, one of the really exciting parts of change is when you can start to play a little bit of devils advocate. So, you'll get people saying things like "oh we need to just really make sure we are diversifying our teams" or "giving opportunities to more diverse candidates" and then you kind of say well how are you doing that? And how willing are you to do that, on a scale of 1 to 10? Where are you at? And people then start to go "ooh wait but that not me, other people can do that, right. So, you kind of have to really help, you know, make them be comfortable with uncomfortable concept.

Interviewee: Exactly, so that's, that's part of that sort of iterative process that we talked about before it's about challenging the ownership because actually one of the challenges that we are constantly facing at this stage within our sessions, is to make sure that people don't just kind of throw things out there for the easy path but to really stop and say, okay so you've said that, we've explored that but is that really what you are going to do? Is it what you can do? And to really think again about that ownership piece because to take them down that little bit of an uncomfortable path is important so that they then buy into it and actually feel comfortable enough to do that when they when they go back and have that conversation for real and that's you know it's part of the fun but it's also part of the challenge for us as facilitators. You know we want to make it really challenging for them, so they get the most kind of experience from the exercise.

Host: And I think linking that change to things that are directly relevant for the participants is really important right. So, with all of our programmes that we design on this Steps to Change model, we tend to work backwards right and so what's the end result that you're looking for, anchor those key learning objectives, that are super clear for participants and then kind of allow it to kind of see where it goes but always drawing them back to okay well, how is this helping you achieve that objective? So, that you know it's a real manageable shift, that doesn't feel so kind of big and nebulous and out of scope for their kind of day-to-day lives. So, ok so, we've got people they've seen it, they're owning it, they've been exploring Change it, not only terms of possible new skills or behaviours but also mind sets. Live it, tell us more about Live it, what's happening in that piece, Mark?

Interviewee: So, Live it is the 4th most important of all the stages, they're all the most important as I said before. This is a really interesting one because this is the bit that I think, we you know, since we brought the whole Steps To Change concept forward, I think this is the bit that we've always found most difficult to bring about and to achieve, and the reason for that is that with the best will in the world, by the time you've developed and delivered this learning intervention and we've talked quite a lot about something that sounds a little bit like a, in a few hours together but let's not forget this can be a number of different things. Change it can be a whole series of activities over a period of time, it could be videos that you watch, and it can be acquiring skills and practising and going into,

Host: nudges.

Interviewee: Yeah exactly, going into coaching sets, practising role-playing, all that kind of stuff. By the time you've done that and the clients, sort of rolled that out to their 3000 people whatever and you say to them, so of course but let's not forget that we need to find a way to make sure this lives beyond that intervention.

The problem is they've already moved on and they're already thinking about their next, the next initiative, the next objective that they've got to achieve but we passionately believe that you're never going to achieve everything by one set of interventions, one intervention or a set of interventions. You have to find a way to embed those new behaviours, so that they become business as usual, over time, really critical and it will require a significant period of time and investment, investment in time and to some degree in money, for the business to support those individuals to keep learning, make mistakes, seek advice, keep working at it and make it something that they become more skilled at overtime and so, you know, ultimately to do something differently, as a result. It can involve Steps and we, there's lots of things that we can do, we can talk about some of those in a minute to help support a client make that happen but really and this is the difficult thing that I think a lot of clients grapple with, is it requires their investments, collectively both as organisers and planners but also participants in those programmes. You have to keep at it, and you have to keep doing it.

So, what we've done we've spent quite a lot of time working at ways in which we can support clients to do that, so, there's you mentioned this like nudges, it's follow up, coaching sets, its about just in time videos that people can watch, just before they go into that performance meeting or you know, or whatever it might be, all sorts of resources for them. In fact, we're having some really exciting conversations with a number of partners, potential partners at the moment, about platforms ultimately that can do things like use AI, as a way of connecting with each individual separately based on their own individual behavioural ways of working and their own individual needs to give them the things that they need, at the right time to, to both challenge but also support them in that. So, often the way that we work with clients is that we'll do the first three stages and we'll counsel them and talk to them about how they, how they should do things to get that Live it but where we're really passionate is to be able to work with them fully on that full journey and you know try and challenge them to make it happen.

Host: It's the kind of problem you're always going to be solving for in Live it, if you will right, cause when you, I know me anytime, let's say I'm going to really commit to exercising more or whatever, right, as a kind of example. You know, I know what I need to do it, I see the reasons why I need to do it, I own the fact that I need to do it, I buy the shoes and the stuff I need to do that but then it's actually getting up, the Live it part, getting up in the morning and actually going out for the run where that's the kind of biggest hurdle to control.

Interviewee: You told me you were doing those runs.

Host: Well, I am, I did go for my run this morning, I did Live it, I feel really proud of myself but you know from a, that concept of human behaviour though is you know and we talk about ourselves being a behaviour change consultancy and you know there is some debate in circles within Steps and I think more broadly within this concept of behaviour change, you know can you actually claim to change someone's behaviour? I'm not, that's a whole another series of podcasts but the point being here is that you know it's gonna take commitment from an organisation to really continue to inspire the individuals within an organisation to learn it, to Live it and to make it simple and to make it directly related to what's expected of them.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think that's right, I don't think you can change someone's behaviour. I think you can put in place the information, support mechanisms and all of that to make, that's the Own it bit, you know, living in itself, isn't it? You can create the environment for people to go on that journey with you, but you can't make them, you can do things to make people stop smoking, whatever, but we're talking about kind of corporate behaviours here, you can't force people to do that. You can create an environment where you'll, well, look you know, if you don't feel this is, that you want to go on this journey, well, are we the right organisation for you? You can put in place rules and regulations to say if you cross that line, then that's not

appropriate and we will do things about that and obviously ultimately there's the law, but when it comes to the kind of work that we are doing, this is all about creating the right environment to understand, you know, morally I need to invest in this, if nothing else because we want this to be the best place for everyone.

Host: And I think what's been sort of the really good news stories for Live it, with clients that I've worked with in the past, is when they create some sort of accountability pieces within that. What are they doing just in their teams? Right, don't try to boil the ocean, just try to work with your teams and encourage each of you, individually to kind of shift something, right. So, if you're helping your buddy out or your colleague out, or whatever it may be, to say how are you doing with this thing? Oh, if you practise this or whatever, then you're really driving that momentum to help people change and shift the needle in whatever the skill set, or the mindset of the behaviours are. So much we could be talking about that you go on for hours and hours about this, Mark but I think it's been a really enjoyable conversation and I think you know the process of using the See it, Own it, Change it, Live it, the Steps to Change model has been helpful for me, as a learner that is somebody who not only designs the work that we do, but also somebody who can learn from it but you know, I think it's really been impactful for our clients in a way to kind of give them that framework to create large sustainable change across organisations of all sizes and provide that sense of, a clear breakdown for how we can really help those individuals, in their organisation achieve the goals that they are looking to achieve.

Interviewee: You know, and it's tough sometimes, they find it hard to have to engage in it, even though they get it conceptually and that in a way is its own Steps to Change within that. So, we've worked with them to understand why we think that's important but yes, I agree with you, I think it's been a really really important mindset shift for us, as a business, that you know, wants passionately to help companies be the the best that they can be. That however small or large that process is, if we fit this framework around it, then ultimately, it's the, you know, the investment is going to achieve its very best, in terms of outcomes and that's what we want, that's what we believe in.

Host: Believe in inspiring people to act differently. Right, that's what it's all about. Well, that's about all the time we have left for this episode, thank you so much Mark for joining us. I've really found this engaging and thoughtful conversation and discussion, so thank you listeners for joining on this episode. If you'd like to know more about Steps and Steps to Change, make sure you visit our website, find us on LinkedIn, sign up to our newsletter, we'll have all those links in the show notes for you or you can find them on our website. If you're interested in how Steps could partner with you or your organisation to support your needs, you can send us an e-mail or fill out one of the forms we have online at www.stepsdrama.com. Is there a subject area you'd like to hear us explore? If so, you can reach out to us via e-mail, on socials, let us know, we'd be happy to take your thoughts and explore one of the many subject areas that we discuss and work with our clients. Really big shout out to our production team, we couldn't do without you. I've been your host, Allen Liedkie and we all look forward to you tuning into the next episode, where we will be exploring, Allyship. What does it mean to be an Active Ally? So, until next time thank you and remember you too can, See it, Own it, Change it and Live it.