

NOAA Environmental Leadership Seminar Series

Embracing the Chaos: Lessons Learned from Organizational Change in NESDIS



**National Environmental
Satellite, Data, and Information
Service**

May 11, 2021

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Change Quotes

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has
-Margaret Mead-

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change
-Charles Darwin-

Be the change that you wish to see in the world
-Mahatma Gandhi-

Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself
-Rumi-

**Things
Change**
-Paul White-

CHANGE WILL NOT COME IF WE WAIT FOR SOME OTHER PERSON OR SOME OTHER TIME. WE ARE THE ONES WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR. WE ARE THE CHANGE THAT WE SEEK

-BARACK OBAMA-

If you do not change direction, you might end up where you are heading
-Lao Tzu-

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself
-Leo Tolstoy-

Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like
-Lao Tzu-

Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change
-Mary Shelley-



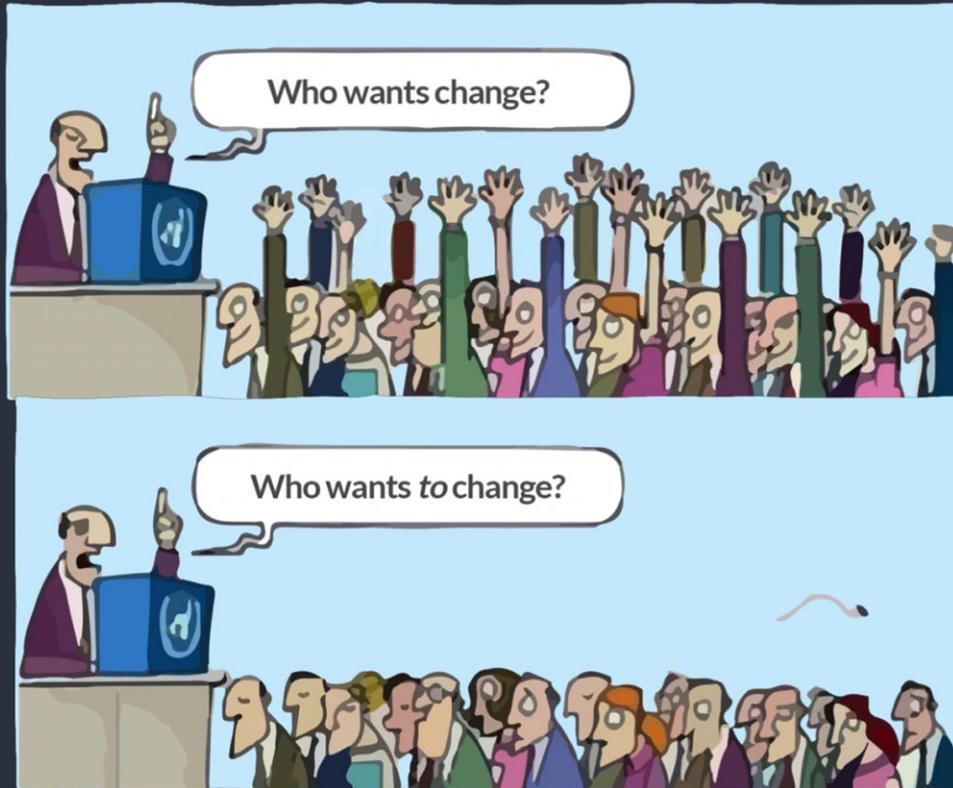
Things Change



“Things Change”
-Paul White-

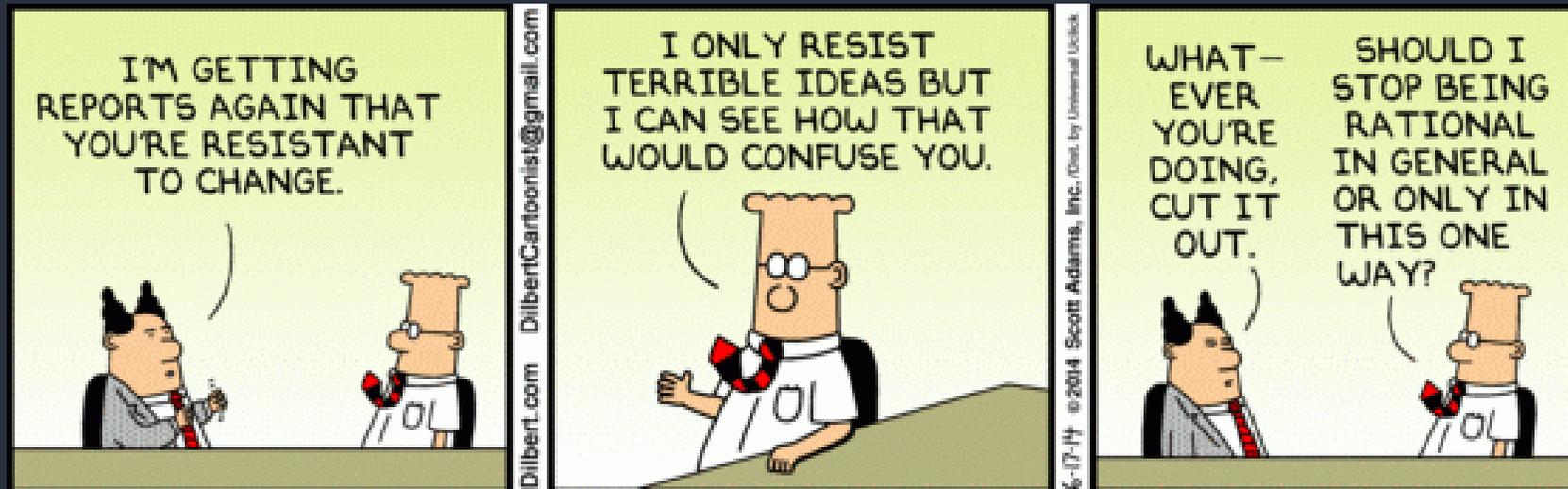


Adaptability



- Homeostasis - *any self-regulating process by which biological systems tend to maintain stability while adjusting to conditions that are optimal for survival - Britannica*

Case 1 - Office of Satellite and Product Operations



Context

- 2011 - Office of Satellite Operations (OSO) and Office of Satellite Data Processing and Distribution (OSDPD) merged
- Combined office of more than 300 civil servants and 250 contract staff flying more than 17 satellites
- Two Program, Project and Activities (PPA) appropriations
- Different cultures - external vs. internal; stability and control vs. flexible; hierarchical vs. distributed
- Two reorganization plans that evolved over time



Lessons Learned



- Must have a champion for organizational change
- Promote transparency - no surprises
- Don't marginalize staff
- Focus on process - not tools

Lessons Learned

Change Management

Change Management initiatives are focused on process improvements or implementation of a new tool. Its focus is centered on tools and skills.

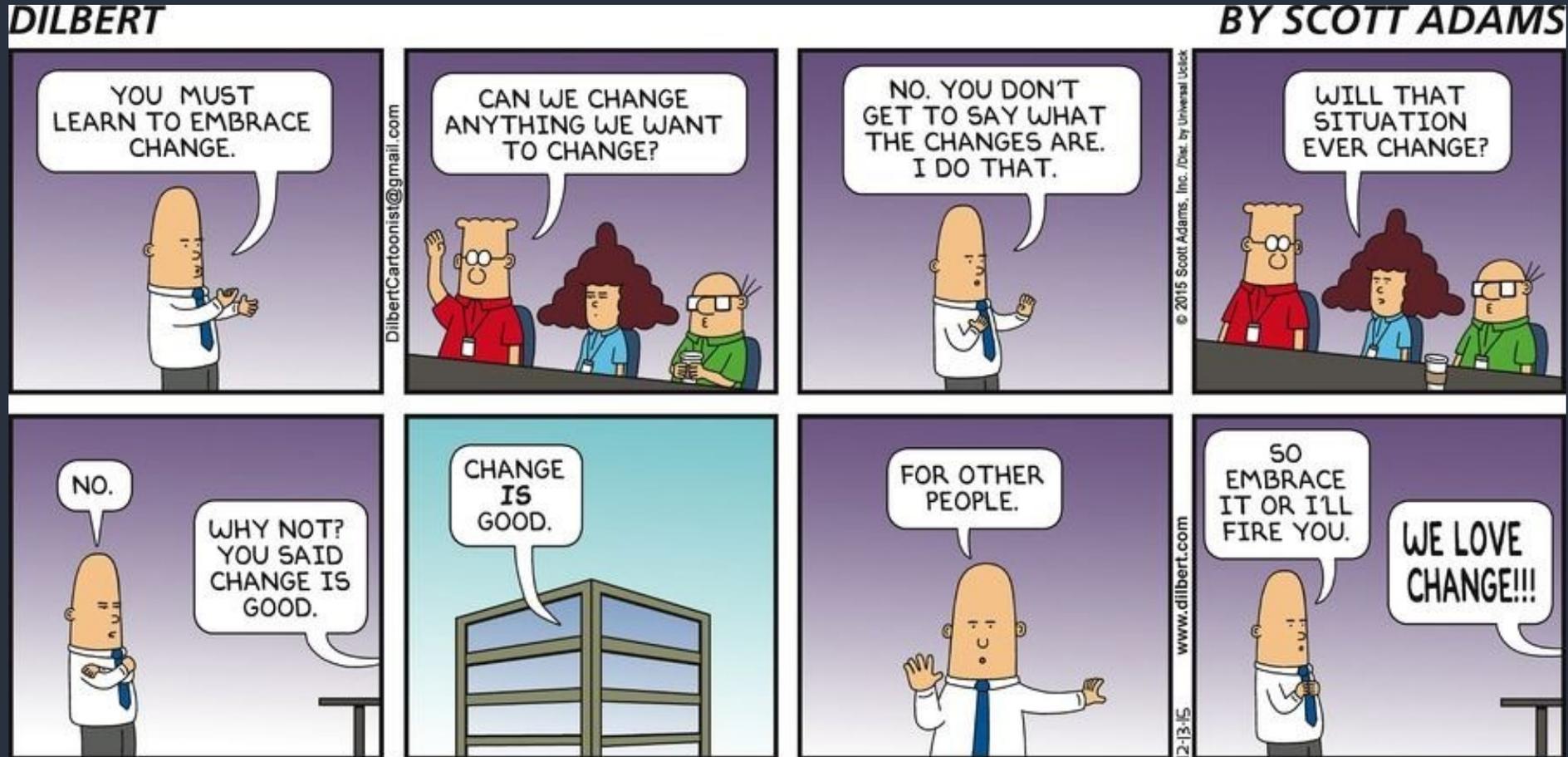
VS.

Transformational Change

Transformation focuses tools, skills and mindset. Its emphasis is designed to focus on a portfolio of interdependent and closely coupled projects.



Case 2 - Joint Polar Satellite System



Context

- President's 2011 Budget terminated the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) program and established the Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS)
- NOAA's budget for its polar-orbiting satellite program grew to more than \$1 billion
- Required the program to be jointly implemented with NASA, and support DoD requirements
- Complex program management structure
- Cultures differences between NOAA and NASA



Context

NOAA

NASA

> 125 Individual Mandates	NASA Authorization Act
Science / Applications	Science / Exploration / Research
Operations	Development
Trustee / Partnerships	PI / Own Customer
Business / Political Leadership	Technical Leadership
Hierarchical	Matrixed
Program	Project



Lessons Learned

- Prepare in advance for the reorganization
- Promote fairness throughout the process
- Sometimes you have to adapt to another culture to be successful
- Leverage others' processes and policies to the extent possible until new ones mature



Case 3 - NESDIS Budget Restructure and Realignment



Context

- Future observing system will rely on observations from many different sources (e.g., partners, commercial, in-situ)
- Existing budget structure was too slow to respond to emerging opportunities
- Required a budget restructure and organizational realignment
- New Program, Project and Activity (PPA) structure released as part of the President's 2020 Budget Request
- Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 approved two elements of the budget restructure but rejected most



Lessons Learned

- Congress - like you and me - is resistant to change; have to give it time
- Clear and concise communication is critical
- Incremental, or partial implementation is a double-edged sword
- Document roles and responsibilities



Case 4 - Office of Satellite Ground Services

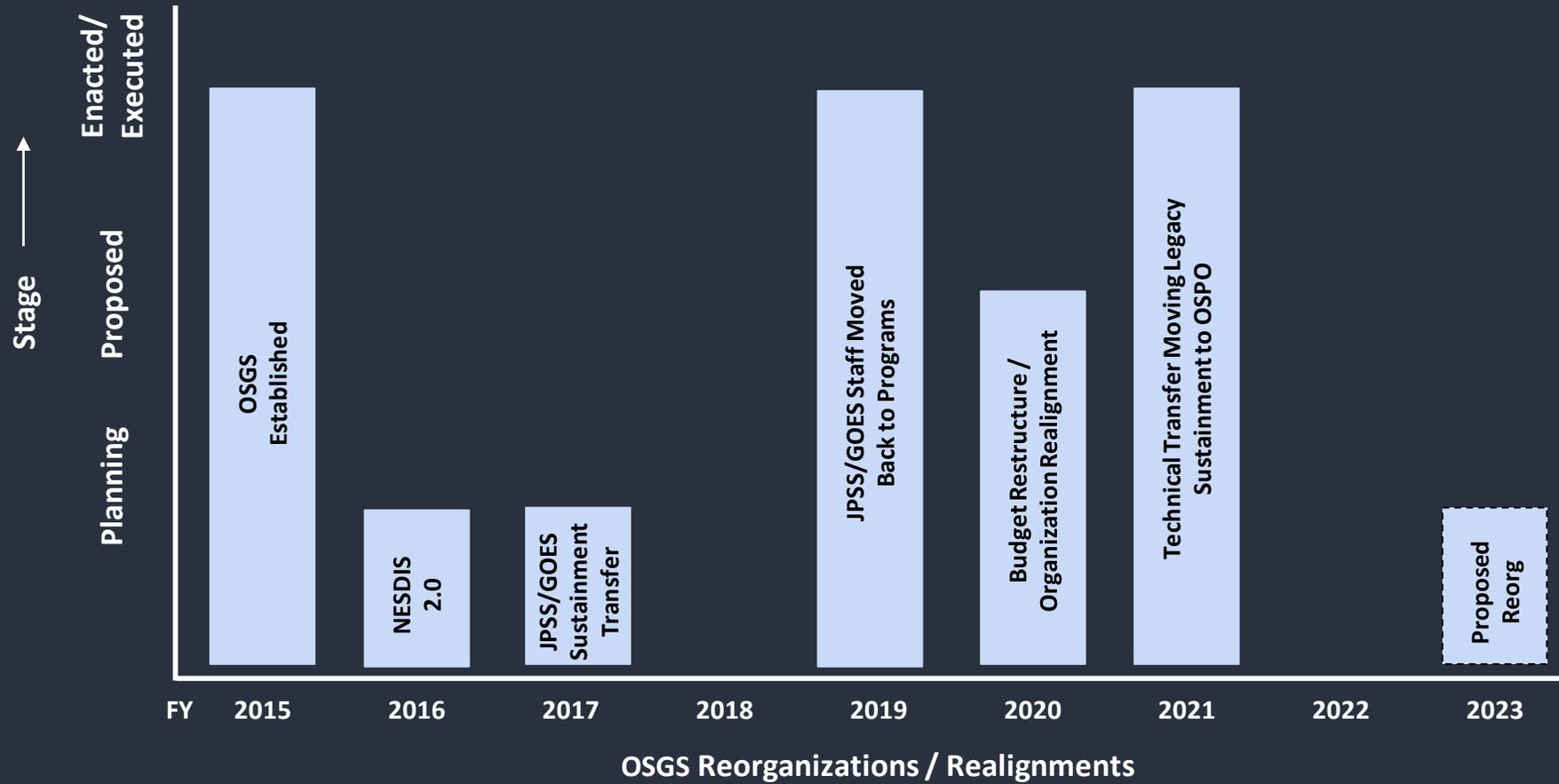


Context

- Office of Satellite Ground Services' mission evolving from *Sustain - Enable - Create*
- Multiple drivers to evaluate, and migrate capabilities to the Cloud
- Implementing Product Portfolio Management for environmental products
- Transfer of legacy systems' *Sustain* mission to another office
- New mission scope operating under old organizational structure



Context



Lessons Learned

- Be aware of change fatigue
- Broader shift in government away from traditional project management approaches to broader, agile, integrated teams
- Communicate directly with all staff on vision and strategy and how it links to their day-to-day job
- Seeks ways to allow staff to “save face”



Summary

- Change is hard and it's natural to resist
- Core mission rarely changes in the government
- Early and frequent communication is a must
- Invest the time to prepare for the change
- Be cognizant of change fatigue



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“What’s that, girl? Melting ice are shifting water systems causing fish to change habitats, threatening coastal communities with rising sea levels, and causing permafrost in the Arctic to release more greenhouse gas?”

SEARCH ID: BA500438

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