Managers of all types in the healthcare arena face the challenge of introducing significant informatics changes into their organizations. It is impossible to introduce such a system into an organization without the people in that organization feeling the impact of change. The word *information* itself implies change since data become information only after the data are processed, i.e., altered, in ways that make the data useful for decision making. Inevitably, those enhanced decision-making capabilities are going to affect the organization. People in the organization will often perceive the following effects:

- the pressure to develop new skills,
- the danger of looking stupid or incompetent in these new skill areas,
- the loss of professional status,
- the pressure of higher performance expectations,
- the pressure of higher accountability through better measurements, and
- the danger of losing one’s job to increasing automation.

Given these sorts of perceptions—real or imagined—it is understandable that people may react quite adversely to the new system. If we are going to achieve successful implementations, we must have a solid understanding of change and change management processes.

**What Is Change Management?**

There are many definitions of change management:

- the methodology that integrates change and the ability to adapt into the organization;
- an organized, systematic application of the knowledge, tools, and resources of change that provides organizations with a key process to achieve their basic business strategy;
• the planning, initiation, and control process for implementing a new idea or process into an organization from the idea stage to a stabilized organization with the change implemented.

Agreeing on a definition of change management within the organization helps facilitate the change process.

Change is the continuous adoption of strategies and structures to changing external conditions. Today, change is not the exception but a steady ongoing process. In contrast, “business as usual” becomes the exception from phases of turbulence. Change management comprises both revolutionary one-off projects and evolutionary transformations.

There are three types of changes:

1. Organizational development is a gradual and evolutionary approach to change. It is based on the assumption that it is possible to align goals throughout the organization.
2. Reengineering is known as corporate transformation or business transformation. It is the more radical form of change management, since it challenges all elements of processes or structures that have evolved over time.
3. Redesign is a change process that is a cross between organizational development and reengineering, that is, it is usually focused on a concerted area and it combines strategies from each.

Change Management Psychology

The increased pace of change that many of us have encountered over the past several years has been dramatic. Competition has heated up across the board. To succeed, the organization of the future must serve customers better, create new advantages, and survive in bitterly contested markets. To stay competitive, companies must do away with work and processes that don’t add value.

Peter Vaill\(^1\) has captured the essence of the problem of a continuously changing context in a compelling image—“permanent white water.” In the past, many of us believed that by using the means that were under our control we could generally accomplish anything we set out to do. Vaill explains that in today’s environment we never get out of the rapids. As soon as we digest one change, another one comes along. Usually there are many changes occurring simultaneously. We have limited control over the environment, but to navigate the rapids we must exercise skill. The “permanent white water” image has a strong visual appeal, conveying as it does a sense of energy and providing a visual sense of navigating on an unpredictable wild river.

Vision and leadership drive successful change. As the change agent, first you must create a vision of the future that is capable of focusing the group’s