

The Difference Between “Helping” and “Practicing” Our Craft

High-impact change professionals know that it requires a degree of *courage* and *discipline* to practice the craft at their level.

- Practitioners must have the *courage* to face the implications (problems/opportunities) their approach surfaces.
- They must also have the *discipline* to adhere to their approach’s guidance and principles...particularly when it is politically difficult to do so.



Herein lies the pivotal difference between “practicing one’s craft” and merely providing the “help” clients sometimes request. Providing “help” is what “adequate” practitioners do when they accommodate what their clients ask for or are comfortable with, instead of what is needed for change to succeed. High-impact **ten-percenters** tend to focus more on practicing their craft than ensuring client comfort. Practicing the craft means staying true to what your chosen approach indicates should be done, even if that runs against client’s expectations and predispositions.

It doesn’t matter what the approach to change is; if it is based on creating genuine, lasting benefit instead of political safety for the practitioner, there will be times when what is asked for or expected by the client doesn’t match with what is needed. Similar to physicians relating to their patients, professional change facilitators shouldn’t be constrained by recommending only what their clients are ready for. You wouldn’t want your doctor to withhold the biopsy results of a malignant tumor, just because he thinks you will be upset and unwilling to deal with it. Neither can we fail to be explicit about what our clients are dealing with and what needs to be done in order to realize their change aspirations.

Like some ill patients, change clients may not be fully prepared to act on what is required to reach their stated objectives. Yet, both doctors and change practitioners owe it to the people they serve to provide an honest portrayal of the circumstances at hand, a plan of action to deal with the real issues, and, finally, a prognosis for success.

In order to practice our craft, as professional change agents we must be prepared to state definitively and in a straightforward manner what needs to happen for intended outcomes to be fully realized. When we do what client ask and hedge on giving full and explicit feedback, or pull back from our true recommendations because we believe they “aren’t ready” to embrace what our approach to change suggests...we have opted to “help” them instead of stay true to what we believe is in their best interests.

Practitioners who are viewed as **strategic**, **invaluable** resources don’t think their role is to impose their will on clients. However, they also know they can’t maintain their professional standards if

they quietly assist clients while avoiding or denying what is truly needed to realize their change aspirations. Practicing our craft demands that we be courageous and disciplined. Without these traits, functioning as a professional change facilitator can be a hollow way to make a living.

High-impact practitioners believe it is not their job to argue or engage in power struggles with clients; they are there to do all they can to ensure clients make informed decisions. The best way to do this is to stay true to whatever axioms and guidelines comprise their chosen change execution approaches (whatever they may be).