

Coaching through Complex Change

Part 1: An Overview of the Knoster Model



“Change is constant.”

You have likely heard that phrase numerous times, even to the point of cliché.

But, it is worth a pause and a moment of reflection.

Let's consider just a few examples of the constancy of change as we briefly reflect.

- The speed at which information is disseminated in this day and age
- The medical advances that have provided adaptations for so many individuals
- The advances in transportation over many centuries
- The evolution of fly fishing rods over time, making them more effective in “loading”
 - *(High-five to my fly fishing friends out there who are grinning now and can fully relate to that last one.)*

It is highly possible that you can list many additional “concepts of change” in a very brief reflection.

“Change is constant.”

Consequently, we can likely come to an agreement that there is constant and continual change here on this earth in processes and systems.

With that realization, it is time to embrace proven coaching techniques that allow us as executive coaches to intentionally and successfully guide clients through leading complex change. If organizations are going to thrive in an ever-changing world, leaders must embrace thinking that allows them to adapt to new challenges, maintain competitiveness, meet accelerating expected outcomes, and stay ahead of the curve. That need opens doors for executive coaches to develop, inspire, and draw out the desired thinking for leading complex change.

The **Knoster Model**, developed in the early 1990s by Hendrik Knoster, a consultant and change management expert, is a five-stage model that provides a structured approach to managing change, offering a systematic way to deal with the challenges associated with change.¹ Through the use of this model, leaders are able to learn about the forces that drive complex change, surface effective methods for navigating change, and put successful tactics into practice.

The **Knoster Model** identifies five components required for effective change: vision, skills, motivation, resources, and an action plan. A detailed look at each of these components provides the rationale for their inclusion in the model.



The basis of the model builds on the foundation that complex change involves multiple stakeholders, high uncertainty, and a need for coordinated action.² When one of the five components of the model is missing or lacking, the desired transformation may falter or be unrealized, as noted in the matrix below.

The Knoster Model Complex Change Matrix



A quick glance at this matrix reinforces the understanding that organizations consist of intricate contexts, including people, systems, processes, and expectations. It is no surprise that complex change in complex systems often fails to achieve the desired vision of a leader.

As we continue to explore this model, we will outline coaching questions and support to guide the thinking of leaders through the use of this model, further highlighting the challenges that surface as one component is missing or lacking. By incorporating the model's structured approach to leading change and achieving desired outcomes into our "coaching toolbox," we can significantly **elevate our impact** as executive coaches.

*"Growth is painful. Change is painful.
But nothing is as painful as staying stuck somewhere
you don't belong."*

-Unknown

Citations:

1. <https://agilityportal.io/blog/knoster-model-for-change>
2. <https://www.walkme.com/blog/managing-complex-change/>