Make change easier by getting better at change

How organisations can improve their success rates when implementing change programs

Blue Seed Consulting

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Introduction

Imagine if every time your organisation planned and implemented a major change program, you could be confident your people had the cultural mindset, consistent delivery methods, governance processes and leadership capability to implement, adopt and embed any change with ease.

To remain relevant in today's rapidly advancing business landscape organisations must continually evolve themselves. Understanding and developing how you change your business can move the odds in your favour when it comes to successfully delivering value from your transformation programs.

Often organisations appreciate they are not great at change, but they do not know what to do about it, and even if they know what the issues are and what to do, they may not have the capacity or capability to make the necessary improvements. It's hard to fix the plane while you're flying it, to use the old analogy. Helping growing organisations understand their current levels of change capability, developing actionable plans to get them where they want to be with the right support to deliver to those plans is where we do our best work.

Workplaces that are better at change function better, making work life more enjoyable and fulfilling for their people and achieving better outcomes for the organisation.

How can executives and organisations improve their success-rate when it comes to implementing change programs?

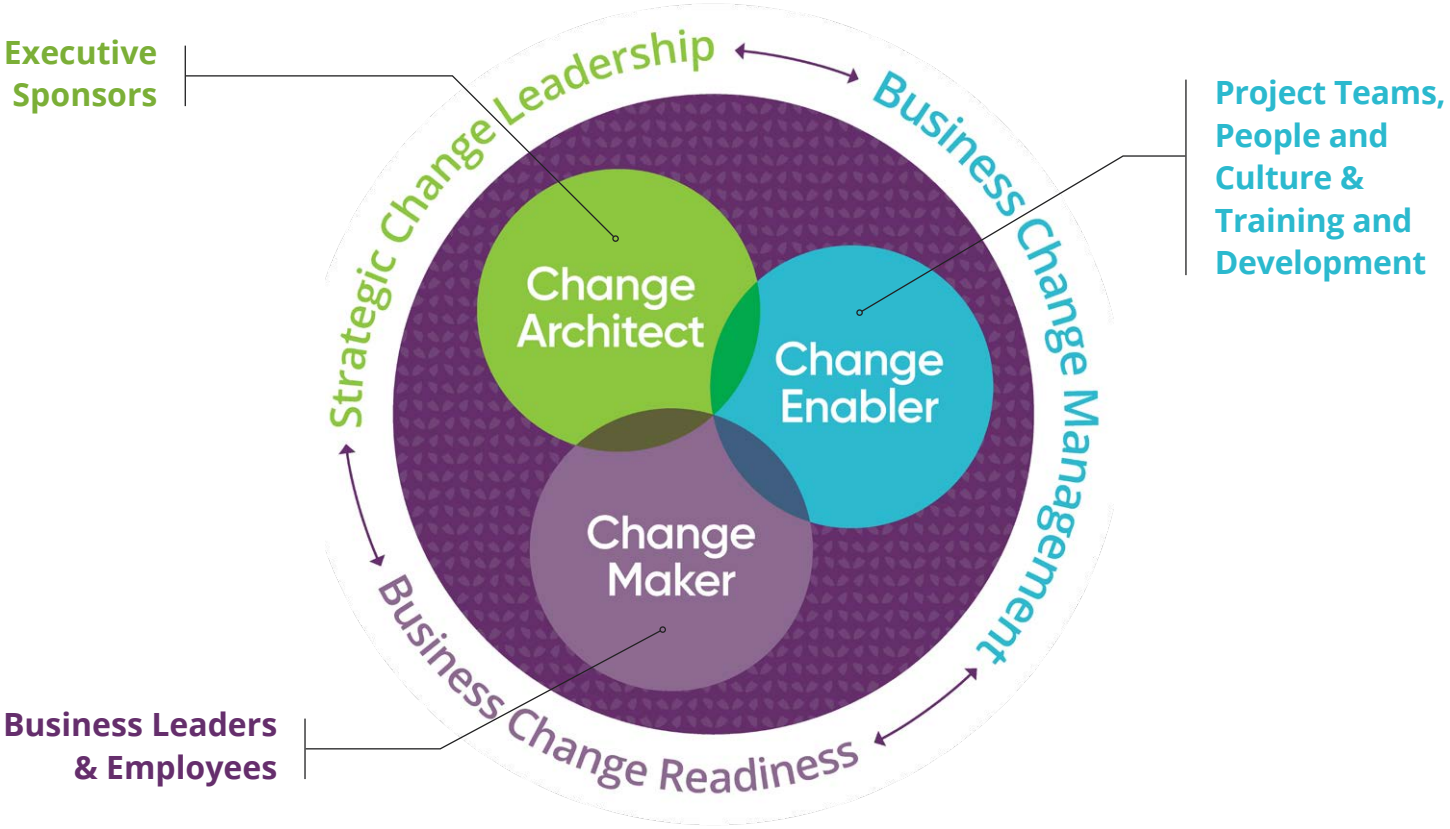
Large organisations routinely invest many millions of dollars in transformation programs that are not successfully adopted by their workforces and therefore yield little-to-no return for the business, or its stakeholders.

Further waste is found in the form of project team members, business experts and impacted employees spending vast amounts of time delivering these failed projects; an opportunity cost, considering they could be focused on running and growing the business.

Workforce culture also suffers from change fatigue when consecutive change programs fail to bring them on the promised journey and deliver to expectations. This is a large, hidden cost of poorly executed change. A history of change failures has the domino-effect of inevitably eroding culture and employee engagement, with a knock-on effect to output and performance, per employee and as a whole.

At a time when productivity is a priority, this is a serious issue that should be addressed.

The cost of low change capability



Developing organisational change capability requires input and collaboration from executive teams (Change Architects), project delivery leaders (Change Enablers), business managers and frontline employees (Change Makers).

Each has a role to play in the key stages of assessing, planning and developing change maturity. All must help shape development of the new change capabilities and support their integration into the future 'change as usual' state.

For a comprehensive, rapid uplift in change capability, Blue Seed follows the following key steps. Each step ensures that everyone involved not only provides input but also goes through a learning process that develops new attitudes and knowledge to spark immediate improvement.

By traversing this consultative, collaborative, reflective discovery process with our change experts, our clients' capabilities are more likely to be designed appropriately, adopted rapidly and sustained to create new, best-practice change habits.

The key steps are:

Discovery: assess current state of change maturity and generate insights

Plan: prioritise and plan a roadmap of change capability uplift initiatives

Design: design priority Change Capability Assets with input from key stakeholders

Integrate: Implement and embed new Change Capability Assets into the business and project delivery function

Discovery: assess current state of change maturity & generate insights

Many change maturity models attempt to categorise every organisation into one of four or five levels or stages of maturity. In Blue Seed's experience working on 400+ client projects, in dozens of industries, we've found the diverse array of organisations and their attributes too nuanced to categorise in this simplistic manner.

Instead, we have identified a set of **Change Capability Assets**, that when in place and functioning effectively, enable change to be delivered with consistently effective results. We like to call change capabilities 'assets' as it highlights to the commercial mind of an executive leader (whose buy-in is essential to the process), that change capabilities yield a valuable return when invested in.

The Change Capability Assets needed to transform

- \+ Executive sponsorship
- \+ Change leadership capability
- \+ Strategic clarity
- \+ Change capable culture

- \+ Single-view of change
- \+ Change measurement/data analytics systems
- \+ Enterprise portfolio-level change governance
- \+ Change enabling talent management framework

- \+ Specialist change delivery expertise
- \+ Change delivery operating model
- \+ Flexible, capable, delivery methodologies
- \+ Effective formal communication channels

When assessing change capability, we blend the use of our own unique, quantitative assessment tool with our consultants' observations and expert judgement, to form a kind of 'change capability report card'.

While the results may be benchmarked against other clients, the true value is in specifically pinpointing which assets their business needs, to address the immediate change barriers and gain a rapid capability uplift.

Case Study:

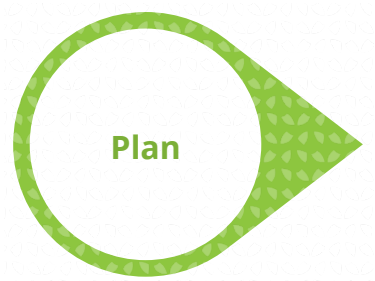
When conducting our Change Maturity Accelerator for a large, listed multi-national, employees reported that the pace and volume of change programs the organisation was executing was simply more than they could handle. During our discovery phase we determined it was less about pace and volume and more about effective prioritisation and sequencing of initiatives. The sequencing issue caused employees to be overloaded with changes one month and spared any the next month. Key decision-makers had no advanced line-of-sight of when programs were impacting across the organisation with projects managed in siloes, rather than by enterprise or business unit portfolios.

Our assessment also identified a deficiency of the assets we call 'Enterprise-Wide Portfolio Change Governance' and 'Single-View-of-Change' (SVOC). With endorsement from the executive team, we compiled an SVOC data capture tool, process and reporting approach, along with a framework for planning and decision-making to be actioned / carried out at the CEO and executive level, to ensure projects were planned with workforce capacity front-of-mind.

By standing up a framework for projects to report change impacts and timing for each business unit and role across the business, executives had an enterprise-view of what was impacting and when. They could also re-arrange existing projects and make more informed decisions about when to start and implement new initiatives. Essentially, they could now match change volume with workforce capacity, to increase the odds of success and minimise change fatigue.

Plan: prioritise and plan change capability uplift initiatives

Each organisation has its own unique challenges. The change capabilities your organisation needs now may differ to another in the same or different sector.



In determining what new change capabilities are required, some of the key questions to ask are:

1. What change management risks for in-flight projects need urgent mitigation? How might those mitigations be applied across all projects and business units?
2. Which Change Capability Asset, if immediately developed and integrated into the organisation, would deliver the easiest, quickest win?
3. Which Change Capability Asset would deliver the greatest value (in terms of driving change adoption and business benefits)?
4. What is the single biggest issue limiting the success of change projects?
5. Which issue might take longer to bring to fruition? Developing more change-capable leadership and culture, for example, tends to take the longest time but you may need to start sooner rather than later.

Case Study:

When working with a large Government agency, we discovered the most pressing change capability needs stemmed from the 150 strategic initiatives they had planned over the three years ahead. This was a greater volume of change than they had experienced in the past.

Adding to the challenge was a stretched workforce, amid an increase in operational requirements, along with a regional -based organisational structure that meant change approaches were often inconsistent and patchy in their success.

While the agency had recently made significant improvements in the change delivery function, they wished to engage Blue Seed to fast-track further change capability development. Our initial change maturity assessment highlighted the need to further centralise the change delivery function.

To avoid projects and districts managing changes in siloes, a centralised change management team was designed to create greater focus on the regions and workforce they served. The centralised design meant that change teams were aligned to portfolios, collaborating for consistency and combining a project-focus with a helicopter view of all change projects impacting any given part of the organisation.

Also equipped with a new single-view-of-change insights reporting process and enterprise change governance framework, the new change delivery function design would be better able to govern and manage the large volume of changes on the horizon.

"Blue Seed Consulting provided the industrial strength capability and experience required for our workforce to truly understand the impacts, opportunities, risks and investment needed to manage the large scale and complexity of the change ahead.

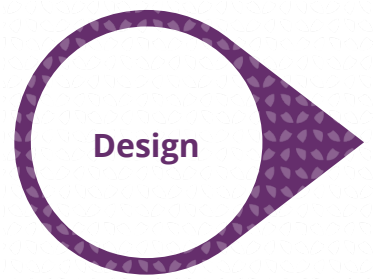
This work came off the back of Blue Seed Consulting's assessment of our change capability which resonated with the Executive team and our leadership. Blue Seed's roadmap, recommendations and continued expertise are helping us build a capability that will enable us to deliver a period of transformational change for our organisation."

Executive Director, Strategy & Transformation

Design: design priority Change Capability Assets with input from key stakeholders

Once priority capabilities have been identified it is important to carry out the design of the Change Capability Assets, in a consultative way, that ensures they are tailored to the organisation's needs and that all key stakeholders understand how they will work.

The cookie-cutter approach does not work. For example, a change management methodology used in one organisation probably won't work in another organisation (though will appear to have some likeness). The unique industry, size, culture, leadership preferences and type of changes planned all influence how any Change Capability Asset should be designed and how it will work in practice.



Case Study:

Recently Blue Seed was engaged by a not-for-profit (NFP) that is a global centre of expertise for medical research, advocacy, intervention, and assistive technology innovation and provides services to thousands of people with particular disabilities and their families. Through our conversations, it became clear that beyond any single change project, the NFP was eager to implement a range of organisational changes. However, lately, the organisation had found delivering change difficult, following a period of rapid growth which brought greater scale and complexity.

Recent change programs struggled to gain the support and adoption needed to realise their full benefits. Hence to give the upcoming suite of changes a strong likelihood of success, the immediate job to be done was to help the organisation get better at change.

Following an expert assessment of its organisational change maturity and development of a change capability uplift roadmap, Blue Seed worked closely with the organisation's executive team, project delivery function, managers and frontline team members to consultatively develop:

+ A new change delivery model to remove project siloes and enable consistency, including the change management organisation and job design and supporting recruitment of several new specialist roles.
+ An enterprise change governance framework, anchored by a Single-View-Of-Change tool, executive insight reporting, and portfolio planning process to oversee and appropriately sequence all change projects for workforce digestibility.
+ A bespoke change management framework and methodology, to enable consistent, quality execution of change management planning, implementation, and embedding. This included more thorough change impact analysis, readiness and adoption metric setting and measurement.
+ A strategic change communications framework, narrative, and collateral to support the NFP's updated strategy, built around a fundamental theme it also used in their external brand. '
+ Enhanced change governance principles and techniques: our team provided advice and mentoring to executives and program steering committee members to improve the effectiveness of steering committee meetings and decision-making, supported by the provision of a 'change governance tool'.

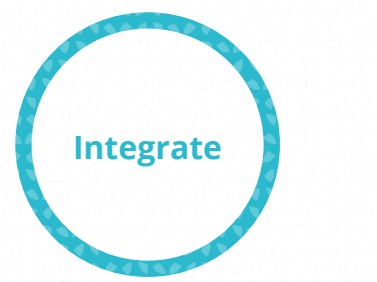
Along with Blue Seed's expert advice throughout, these assets were developed and integrated into the change delivery function, executive governance forums and culture, to immediately benefit all current and future projects for years to come.

"The impact on projects has been considerable, with impacted cohorts being identified, engaged, and supported to adopt change much more effectively. Two years on from the engagement with Blue Seed, the changes they worked with us to implement have been fully sustained. Not only that, it also provided an excellent foundation to continue to independently improve and build our change capability, which enables us to more effectively support people with disabilities to achieve their outcomes."

General Manager, Strategy, Quality & Risk

Integrate: implement & embed new Change Capability Assets into the business and project delivery function

As with all organisational changes, the process of solidifying the change capability solutions into the new normal, can be tricky. The key to sustaining the capabilities is consistent application. New change management habits are formed much like our personal habits: through constant repetition.



It is important that the new capability assets are applied immediately, across all major change programs, involving all executives, business unit leaders and project delivery teams. Ensuring everyone in the organisation starts moving in a new direction, all at once, increases the chance of creating and sustaining the new change management, leadership and governance approaches.

Blue Seed teamed up with a Government Owned Statutory Authority to develop a fit-for-purpose change management centre-of-excellence (complete with frameworks, tools, methods, governance structures) in readiness to support a once in a generation transformation. To further embed the change management into the culture, Blue Seed also delivered our **CQ Leader** change leadership program across the business, to instil the 'change mindset' in key influencers and decision-makers, as well as provide the tools, skills and sense of responsibility for the carriage of change.

Additionally, our executive advisory consultants provided ongoing advice to the senior team for several months, while our expert change management consultants were embedded in project teams, to guide implementation success and demonstrate effective change management in the process.

Testimonial:

"Blue Seed has exceeded any expectations that we ever had. Not only are they experts in their domain knowledge areas such as communications and change skills and they have empathy, they make it real – not just advising us - but bringing us there and making the change real with us."

Senior Executive

Conclusion

The complexity of leading a portfolio of many large-scale change initiatives makes it difficult to sequence, plan, design and deliver programs to meet the needs of the business and its limited capacity. However, with the right Change Capability Assets in place, it becomes a lot easier, with far greater likelihood of success.

Change management is a sophisticated discipline, intersecting the process-driven action of project management with the psychological thinking required to understand leadership, culture and what drives human behaviour. Mostly we believe it only comes with extensive, hands-on experience. It is a hard capability to come by and a hard one to develop as an organisation unless you're guided by experts.

With the millions of dollars you are likely investing in change programs and the even greater benefits at stake, implementing more change, faster than ever poses a serious risk to your business, make change easier by getting better at change.

Blue Seed has helped hundreds of organisations improve their organisational change capability.

Whether through our Change Maturity Accelerator, as part of our complex change consulting service or everyday through our advisory partnerships with clients, we share expert advice from hundreds of engagements, across many industries to evaluate and drive change maturity.

Contact us for more advice on change capability.

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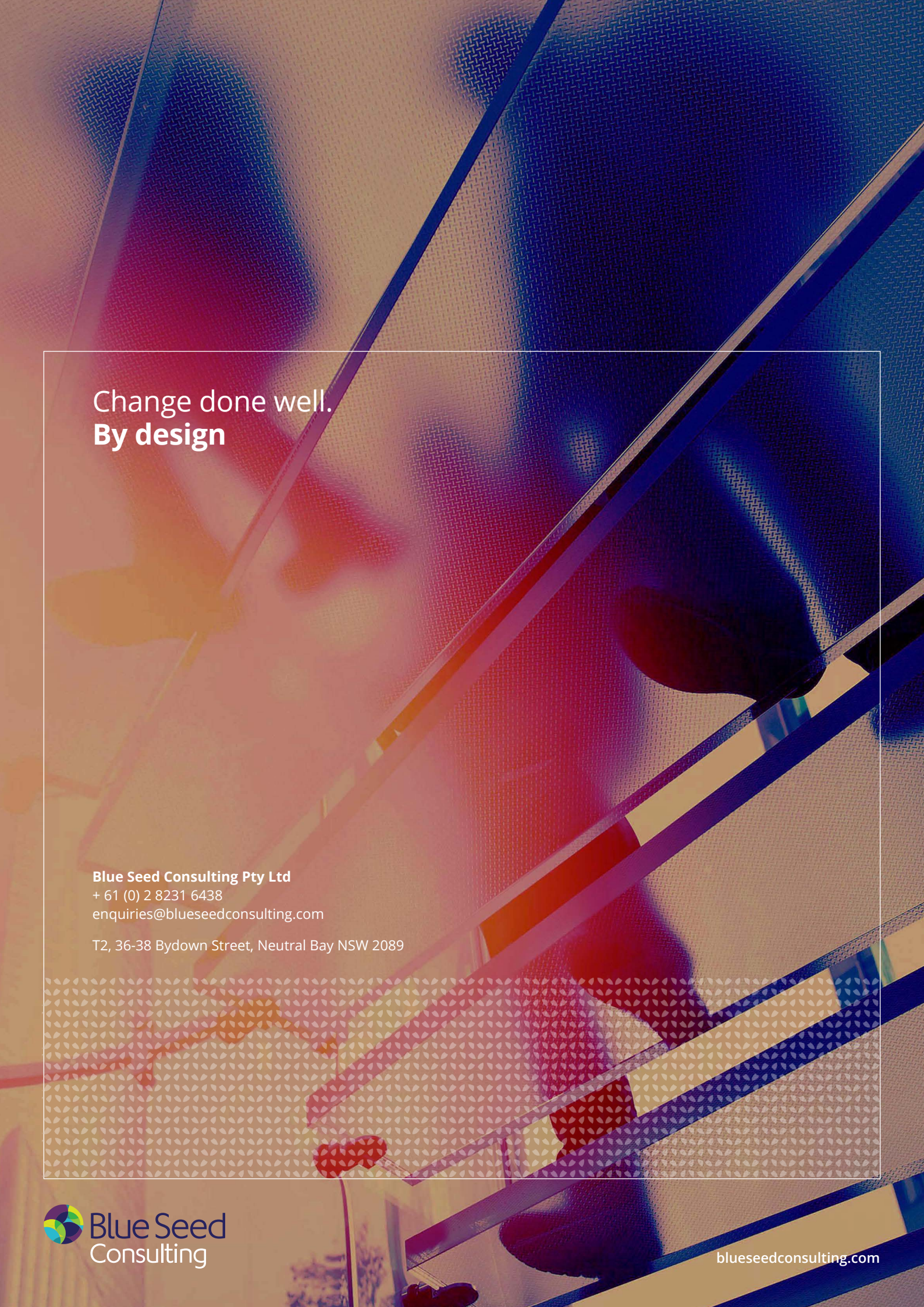

Change done well.
By design

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