The labyrinth of dissatisfaction

Why do change proposals fail to change anything?

As we navigate 2025, a palpable sense of unease permeates societies worldwide, a continuation and evolution of stressors that significantly intensified in the early 2020s. Beyond localized tremors of economic shifts and political realignments, a deeper, more systemic challenge confronts leaders across all sectors: the intertwined phenomena of **Disappointment, Hopelessness**, and **Desperation.**

Disappointment manifests as a widespread erosion of faith, not only in traditional institutions but crucially for the corporate environment, in established business structures and long-held societal promises. It is fueled by a perception of systemic inefficiency and an increasingly evident disconnect between proclaimed values and lived realities. For leadership, this translates into the fundamental challenge of rebuilding trust, demanding radical transparency, unwavering consistency between discourse and action, and the palpable demonstration that the organization operates with integrity and a purpose transcending mere profit.

This disappointment often breeds **hopelessness**, a generalized difficulty in envisioning a positive or prosperous future. Driven by persistent economic anxieties, the unsettling pace of workplace transformation (including the impact of AI and automation), profound insecurities about job stability and skill relevance, and the shadow of ongoing global uncertainties, individuals and communities struggle to anchor their aspirations. The challenge for leaders here is to inspire a credible and achievable vision, foster individual and collective resilience, and create clear, tangible pathways for personal development and progress within the organization, counteracting the sense of stagnation or precarity.

Finally, the confluence of disillusionment and hopelessness can crystallize into **desperation**. This state does not always manifest as an overt crisis but can be observed in a spectrum of responses: from impulsive decision-making and increased susceptibility to polarizing or simplistic narratives, to a marked withdrawal from civic or organizational engagement. In the corporate sphere, this can mean fragmented teams, cynicism, low morale, and passive or active resistance to change. Leadership then faces the challenge of fostering open and constructive dialogue, promoting inclusion and a sense of belonging, and empowering employees by offering them agency and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully, thereby countering apathy and feelings of powerlessness.

Understanding this intricate emotional landscape is no longer a peripheral concern but a critical imperative for leaders, as it profoundly shapes employee morale, consumer behavior, and the stability of organizations' environments.

This document delves into the complexities of this modern discontent, exploring its multifaceted roots and, most importantly, how leaders can begin to navigate this challenging terrain to foster genuine change and renewed engagement.

Hidden Patterns Of Visible Inertia

The acute phase of the pandemic, marked by profound concern, sadness, and uncertainty, has given way to a transformed emotional landscape as societies have emerged from widespread lockdowns. By 2025, these initial emotions will often have morphed into a complex state characterized by anger, indifference, and widespread inertia.

This new state profoundly influences current social decisions regarding participation, engagement, and motivation for change. The following pages present four interrelated dimensions that represent recurring patterns of behavior related to people's disbelief and disengagement, the virtualization of everyday life, individualism and polarization, and the search for effortless change and superficial transformational recipes.

1

Widespread Hopelessness

This refers to a pervasive pessimism about the future that critically shapes present actions. The spread of hopelessness involves a perception that meaningful change in personal living conditions is impossible, a feeling that often extends to one's community or society at large.

As we see in 2025, this discouragement stems from the emotional pain of an absent or lost promising horizon. Its expression can manifest in three primary reactions:

a) **Helplessness/Resignation**: An attitude of defeat that extinguishes any attempt at change. The individual feels that "no matter what I do, nothing will change." This can lead to disengagement and a reluctance to invest effort in new initiatives.

b) **Frustration/Disillusionment**: A feeling of powerlessness arising from the loss of projects, dreams, or illusions placed in something or someone that ultimately fails to materialize. This can breed cynicism and skepticism towards future promises.

c) **Resentment/Despair**: This entails a more active, often retaliatory, expression of pain stemming from a perceived betrayal. The sentiment becomes: "Since all is lost, any punitive decision is valid." This can fuel destructive behaviors or support for disruptive, rather than constructive, actions.
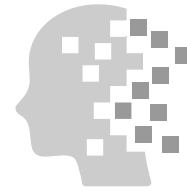
2

Virtual History

This represents the contemporary narrative modality where current and past events are shaped through self-referential content that is then massively extrapolated, often via digital platforms.

By 2025, the sophistication and pervasiveness of these platforms have only intensified this phenomenon. These biased "postcards of reality" have three significant characteristics:

a) **Emotional Facts**: Events are transformed into compulsive discharges of public mood, resonating and amplifying exponentially across social networks and digital media. The emotional tone of content often overrides factual accuracy.

b) **Fragmented Sequence**: The understanding of events is built on isolated sources, often influenced by the ease with which digital tools can edit, compile, and process fragments of information, leading to decontextualized and incomplete narratives.

c) **Emergent Authorship**: Responsibility for statements becomes diluted in a continuous flow of massive contributions replicating and remixing fragmented content (images, phrases, audio, video). This makes tracing origins and verifying information difficult, fostering an environment where misinformation can thrive.

Shared Loneliness

This dimension expresses a weakened sense of belonging to a community identity and the precariousness of shared values and principles that traditionally order and frame coexistence.

Despite unprecedented levels of digital connectivity in 2025, a profound sense of isolation can prevail. This fragility impacts trust in relationships and participation in collective projects, generated by three factors:

a) **Overacted Leadership**: Leaders (in all spheres) may resort to stereotyped responses, depersonalized dialogues, and a communication style disconnected from their people's concrete realities and nuanced concerns. This creates distance rather than connection.

b) **Vulnerable Identity**: Individuals may feel dissociated from groups or communities due to an absence of clear, guiding principles for coexistence or a profound disappointment with previously shared values that now seem hollow or betrayed.

c) **Ideological Helplessness**: Frustration arises from the perceived absence of viable answers or frameworks in traditional political and philosophical ideologies, which often seem distant from or incapable of addressing everyday challenges and existential anxieties.

Existential Shortcuts

This signifies a narrowing of personal processes in a quest for immediate answers or readily accessible solutions, often geared towards basic survival or alleviating immediate discomfort.

These shortcuts often involve attempts to escape the present, mitigate challenging living conditions, or simply "get through" life quickly, without deeper engagement. The pursuit of these outcomes in 2025 manifests on three levels:

a) **Digital recipes & AI Oracles**: An increasing reliance on information found "in the cloud" (the Internet and sophisticated AI models) for resolving complex issues through keywords, anonymous advice, algorithmic recommendations, or virtual dialogues. While offering access, this can also lead to superficial understanding and a lack of critical engagement.

b) **Survival Chemistry**: The use of various placebos or opiates—legal, illicit, or behavioral (e.g., excessive digital consumption)—deemed necessary to sustain personal interaction with daily dynamics and cope with underlying stress or dissatisfaction.

c) **Civic Apathy**: A deterioration of social and organizational responsibility as individual survival or comfort becomes the primary focus. This can range from disengagement in community or workplace initiatives to idleness, and in extreme cases, a disregard for ethical or legal norms.

Questions Without Leadership

The characteristics of these four dimensions—**Widespread Hopelessness, Virtual History, Shared Loneliness, and Existential Shortcuts**—represent cross-cutting, often subtle, and frequently ignored or underestimated conditions within diverse situations and social and organizational structures. Metaphorically, they reveal the emotional bruises and pain points that hinder positive movement, sour relationships, and lead to failed attempts at meaningful change. They map the labyrinth that any new initiative, any call for transformation, must navigate within a person's life, a team's dynamic, or an organization's culture.

Proposals for change often fail because they do not empathize with these pain points. They either don't tune into this labyrinth of conditioning factors, or they ignore or underestimate their power. Leaders often fail because they speak without a deep understanding of the historical and emotional context of their audience, creating superficial and idealized narratives about the implications and demands of change.

To deal effectively with this maze of constraints, leaders in 2025 must confront four key questions. Each of these demands clear and resonant answers that enable people to connect emotionally and commit to any meaningful change:

What is the proposal? This question seeks a clear, compelling vision—a horizon of reference that allows people to believe that something new and better is genuinely possible. The answer must provide transcendent inspiration capable of stirring movement away from widespread hopelessness. It requires an invitation to emerge from the state of immobility and suspicion that taints new initiatives. This is about articulating a purpose that resonates beyond immediate gains.

Why should I try this? This question seeks a robust narrative that underpins the reasons and arguments for attempting something new or different. Why is this effort worthwhile for me? The answer must create a web of meaning, allowing individuals to find personal motivational anchors. People will not move from their present state of inertia or skepticism unless they perceive something genuinely worth risking for the future.

Why should I trust you? This question directly probes the credibility of the changemakers—the leaders and the organization. Past frustrations and broken promises loom large. The answer must actively dispel mistrust born from previous negative experiences. People can build trust if they perceive credible differences in approach and experience genuine consideration and empathy for their needs and concerns.

What is the cost? This question is central because it determines whether the process is perceived as worthwhile and ultimately defines the decision to commit and sustain engagement. "Cost" here encompasses not just financial or material resources, but also time, effort, emotional energy, and potential risks. The answer must offer clear, perceived benefits that outweigh the dedicated effort. If individuals do not find or anticipate these expected benefits, they will avoid participation, withhold full commitment, or fail to sustain the changes over time.

inspiration + support

Achieve daily benefits anchored in a purpose of meaningful change.

arguments + presence

Share content in a variety of channels, taking care of the arguments.

consistency + performance

Respond with reliable and efficient processes to solve specific needs.

transparency + participation

Explain situations honestly, and be sensitive to listening and correcting.