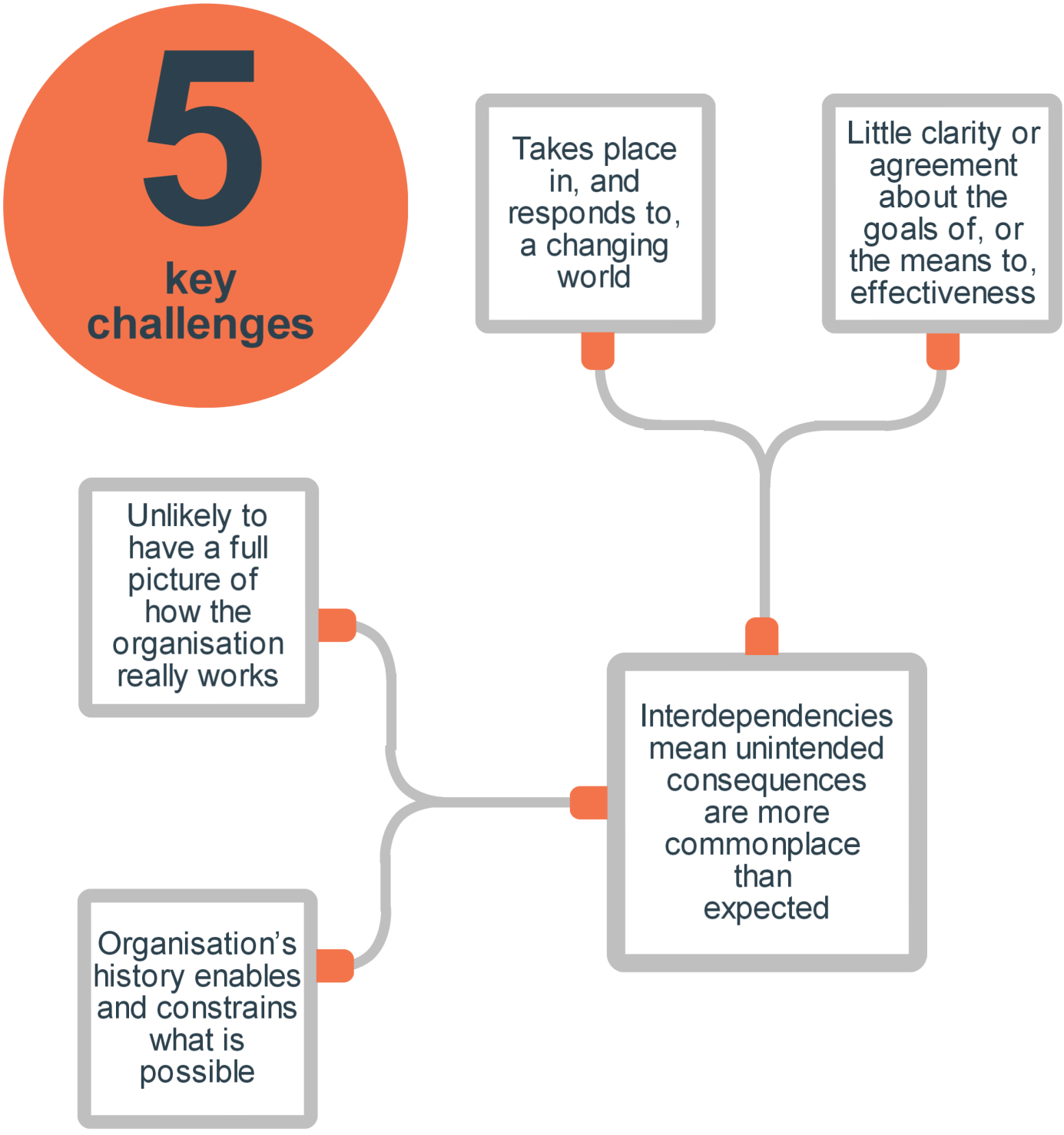
ORGANISATION DESIGN

A FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING ABOUT YOUR OWN APPROACH



10 practical tips

Clarify the goals

Ask lots of questions:

What will it be like to work there?

What are the specific benefits that people are looking for?

What tangible (and not so tangible) outcomes would they like to achieve?

What exactly needs to be different?

Identify conflicting demands

The answers about goals will depend on who you ask; there may be detailed differences which create tensions or dilemmas.

Resolution might consist of choosing one hand over another, or both/and solutions.

Agree evaluation criteria

You will need to evaluate any new design (and also the 'do nothing' option) against some criteria of good organisation structure design.

Whichever model(s) you choose, you may want to tailor the detailed criteria to your organisational context.

Acknowledge cultural enablers and constraints

Find out where you are starting from, what you can build on, and what needs to be preserved, albeit in new ways.

Involve people from the outset

Be clear on the non-negotiable aspects of the design (givens) and where people can bring their creative ideas (freedoms).

Allow challenges around the non-negotiable items in terms of clarity.

Focus attention on the freedoms.

Develop a transition plan alongside the new design

Allow time for both practical and psychological transition.

Think about how people are likely to respond to your plans and what support they might need.

Communicate well

Support the design process with continuous communication, not just up front, or all at the end.

Offer clear, consistent messages, and substantial content.

Make communication multi-way and conversational by encouraging top-down, bottom-up and peer-to-peer communication.

Learn fast, learn regularly, learn well

Implementation is a vital part of the design process.

It is impossible to predict all the potential outcomes.

Build in regular feedback loops to learn quickly and be agile in your responses.

Give your designs a really hard time

Be tough on your designs and really test them against the criteria (developed as advised above).

Involve multiple stakeholders, to bring diverse perspectives that highlight potential issues and opportunities.

Pay attention to the horizon

Look up from your project regularly.

Consider what is changing in the external environment.

Discover other change or organisation design projects in the organisation, which could have an impact on the design, or on your transition and communication plans.

This research is published in full as: Varney S (2015) Organisation Design: A framework for thinking about your own approach. HR Essentials 3, Institute for Employment Studies.

Visit www.employment-studies.co.uk/hre3 to read the full guide.

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