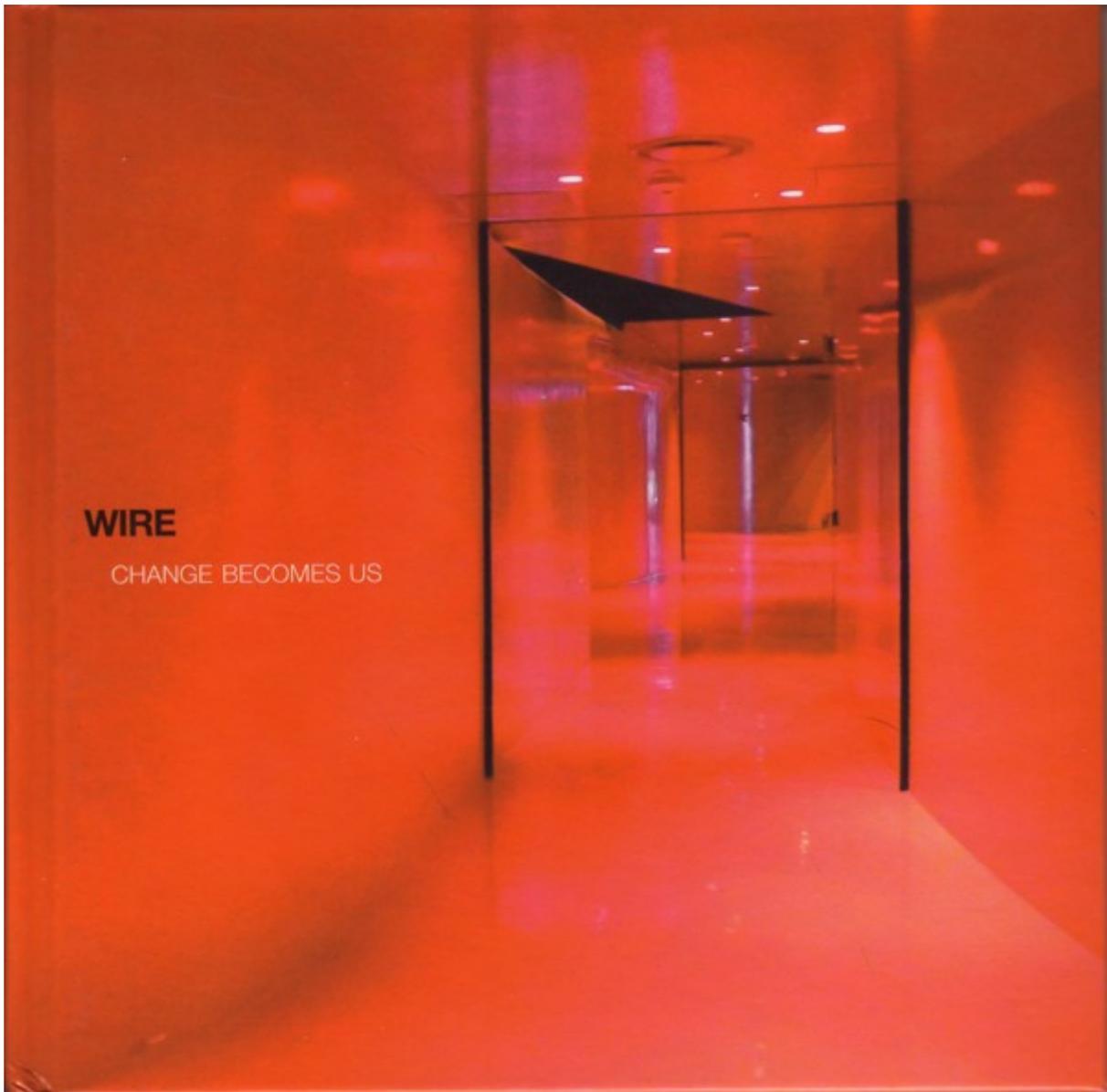


Change Becomes Us

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Change Becomes Us is an album by Wire, one of my favourite bands. Whilst they may be an acquired taste, if you decide to listen to them, do so with open ears. But this article is not a plug for Wire, but the phrase "Change Becomes Us" resonates with me as the way we act and react is a reflection of who we are and the culture that surrounds us.

Everyone is now getting a taste, at first hand, of organisational change management and lessons on how to make a cultural change happen. Across the Western World, each Government is running its own model, but on the whole is balancing the needs of the nation against the democratic rights of its citizens, set against a backdrop of the expectations to move about freely and unhindered. This then becomes a reflection of the nations cultural acceptance of change.

The full cast is there, champions, actors, resistors, followers, sceptics, CAVE (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) - CAVE is one of my favourite acronyms!

The first steps were to motivate the champions and the followers to restrict their movements. Then the resistors and sceptics came to the surface, showing how the change does not apply to them, creating their own justifications, finding their workarounds, trying to convince us that each was a special case. The result of their actions was to create unprecedented numbers, driving hundreds of miles in some cases, to escape to the country for exercise.

On Monday 23rd March, the UK Government launched countermeasures to the behaviour and interpretation of those resistors. I doubt that will be sufficient and the next stage will be legislated measures enforcing increased measures, with penalties for infraction. That could well prove expensive for the CAVE's!

Alongside each of these stages, we have seen communication across many platforms, the official channels and the repeated versions on television and social media. Alongside this is the misinformation, especially around social media, claiming miracle cures, conspiracies and other weird and wacky theories. From the initial generalisation some weeks ago, the message is becoming refined and is now becoming far more explicit.

Had the message been more explicit to start with, would the change have been different? The pace of the messaging is strategic with a communication plan that weighs up the options between outright edicts and a more passive, persuasive message. There is no doubt that an immediate edict would have resulted in far worse panic buying and an infrastructure collapse. Instead, we had panic buying of toilet rolls and paracetamol, but on the whole the supply chain is coping, albeit on reduced product lines.

It is in this context that you can see the Government does have a strategy for a very complex situation. They accept that there will be a deaths, but smoothing out the peak to reduce unnecessary deaths where possible, changing behaviours so that the health service will continue to function and balance the care provided to the nation.

As I said at the beginning, this is an exercise in organisational change management. In business, when you make changes, do you have a strategy that will result in the desired outcome, no matter how painful the journey may be?