

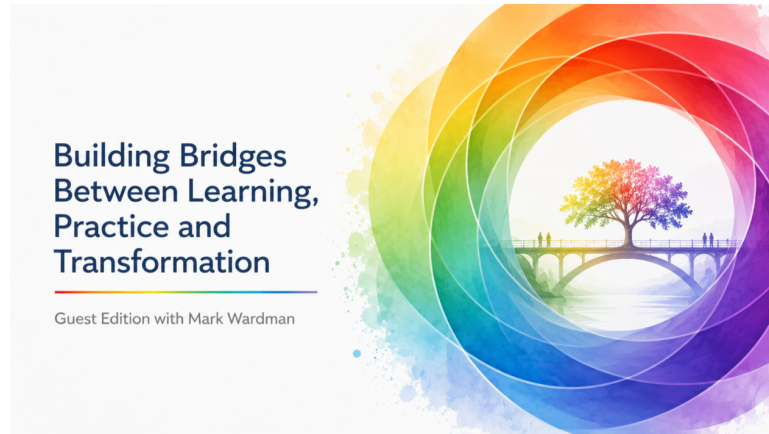


- Edit article
- View stats
- View post



**TfS Dispatch**  
1,559 subscribers

✓ Subscribed



## TfS Dispatch #10 | June 2026



**Sharon Marie Weldon** ✓  
Professor of Healthcare Simulation and Workforce Development; ASPIH President



June 22, 2026

Over the past few months, the TfS Dispatch has taken a deeper dive into the Simulation-Based Intentions (SBIs) that sit at the heart of the Transformative Simulation (TfS) framework.

This month, we take a brief pause from the SBI series to feature a guest contribution from [Mark Wardman](#). Building on themes explored throughout previous Dispatches, Mark offers a fascinating perspective from outside healthcare, drawing on his experience within the Energy and Utility sector to explore how Transformative Simulation can support decision-making, collaboration and safer implementation of change.

Through a real-world case study, Mark demonstrates how simulation can move beyond training to support discovery, collaboration, influence and shared understanding—helping organisations avoid what he describes as “the cart before the horse syndrome” by testing assumptions before implementation.

As always, we hope the Dispatch prompts reflection on how simulation can help us better understand, shape and transform the complex systems in which we work.

---

### “Avoiding The Cart Before the Horse Syndrome?”

This TfS Dispatch builds on Dispatch #9 where Sharon discussed Simulation Based Inclusion. It intends to demonstrate the positive impact of using Transformative Simulation to aid effective decision making.

But first, a quick recap - Transformative Simulation asks some fundamental starting questions;

*"What purpose are we designing for & what do we hope to see or to be revealed? "*

These questions help us to choose the most appropriate Simulation Based Intentions (SBIs), where the SBI's can be considered as different lenses through which to view any simulation activity.

Choosing the correct SBI 'Lens' is important, because : -

*"What we see and what becomes visible is influenced by what we look through...which in turn is influenced by the design"*

For instance, anyone with less than 20/20 vision may use glasses *designed* for short or long sightedness or perhaps varifocal for both.

Other safety critical sectors understand the importance of 'design philosophy' in simulation and use it as a mechanism for research, development and testing, where the outcomes aren't fixed or known. In other words, safety critical industries routinely adopt a '*Design for Discovery*' mindset to provide and test understanding and therefore aid decision making and next steps.

Most of my career has been in the Energy & Utility Sector, which is one of safest sectors in the UK. However, I now work in healthcare which means, I'm able to contrast the differences in safety cultures and safety implementation in both these sectors.

One observable difference is the Energy & Utility sector routinely tests safety critical decisions, procedures & report recommendations ahead of implementation. Whereas in healthcare, it seems many safety critical aspects are implemented on a 'Work as Imagined' or 'Work as Prescribed' basis, without knowing if the proposed solution is 'workable' - is this akin to '*putting the horse before the cart?*'

It stands to reason that 'untested' implementation is more likely to involve unanticipated and unintended consequences, work-arounds and potential latent safety threats – that only become visible further down the line and when you least expect it. Whereas purposely designed Transformative Simulation provides opportunities to 'test' before implementation. This is achieved by *including and involving* stakeholders who can collaborate, contribute and ultimately *influence* the final outcomes. Furthermore, this approach may reveal important aspects that may otherwise have remained hidden and unverballed.

## **Transformative Simulation in Action**

How Transformative Simulation helped an Energy & Utility company arrive at the best-fit solution, whilst simultaneously negating/reducing the following potential threats:

- Silo working and self-serving biases and prejudices
- Work as Imagined vs Work As Done
- Psychological Distance Risk

## **Background**

Almost 20 years ago in 2007/8 the above Company completed a Workforce Renewal Strategy. The strategy considered the uncertainties and associated risks brought about by an ageing workforce and the elimination of a fixed

retirement date. This comprehensive work predicted that potentially 50% of the workforce could retire in the next 15-20 years – essentially the Company was facing a skills gap *tsunami*. This risk was compounded by the '*time to qualification & competency*' for the new recruits to become competent and qualified in their respective disciplines.

The Workforce Renewal strategy revealed that a step change in recruitment and training delivery was required. This necessitated the purchase of a 5.3 acre site and the Design & Build of a multi-million pound Training Academy, comprising internal and external simulation training facilities.

The Training Academy team developed a range of bespoke accredited training programs (see below) targeted to fulfil different skill levels throughout the organisation. Each apprenticeship/traineeship had predefined minimum qualifications and entry criteria. Successful completion required obtaining the requisite qualification & completion of the on-job assessments.

- Graduate Traineeships
- HNC Traineeships
- A-Level Traineeships
- Apprenticeships

A new Recruitment Manager plus additional recruitment staff were appointed to actively promote the new apprenticeships/traineeships and manage the large-scale recruitment process. This involved recruiting across multiple locations and a large geographical area and which could include up to 1250-1500 applications for just the apprenticeship scheme.

## Differences of Opinion

There were now two principal departments involved in the implementation of Workforce Renewal Recruitment & Training Plan – namely HR Recruitment and the Training Academy team. Although there was a commonality in purpose in recruiting the 'best' people, there were significant differences in opinion in how this could be achieved and what selection methods should be employed.

The Training Academy staff, having previously been involved in apprentices & trainees selection favoured a three-stage selection process for applicants who met the entry criteria.

1. An initial desk-top selection filter
2. A practical assessments & selection filter
3. An interview selection filter

Whereas HR recruitment did not see much benefit in the practical assessments and favoured a two-stage selection process involving the initial desk top selection filter and then interview. Accordingly, there were strong arguments to either support practical assessments or against using them.

HR Recruitment's position was that practical assessments were an inefficient use of time and could lack inclusivity, potentially favouring certain groups over others. Furthermore, the use of practical assessments may discourage 'good' applicants from applying. HR advocated that recruitment decisions should instead focus on candidate's attitudes, on the basis that skills can be developed and learned over time. Furthermore, that reasonable adjustments should be available to aid learning.

The Training Academy prioritised practical assessments, reflecting the hands-on nature of engineering apprenticeships & traineeships. Each assessment was tailored to the specific programme to ensure relevance. These assessments

evaluated applicants' aptitude for each role and their suitability for working at height or confined spaces, where claustrophobia or fear of heights could affect safety. This approach also gave applicants insight into the various roles, so applicants could choose to deselect themselves from certain roles, such as overhead lines.

## **The Transformative Simulation Approach**

Both the HR Recruitment Team and the Training Academy brought valuable specialist expertise.

However, the Training Academy staff were an established function with operational insight of the roles combined with the knowledge of developing the new accredited training programmes. In contrast, the HR Recruitment Team were a newly established team, with key personnel only recently being appointed.

The two teams had differing views and approaches - the HR Recruitment team had only a 'Work as Imagined' view of the actual roles and the practical assessments. Therefore, could not really judge the merit/appropriateness of the practical assessments. Whereas the Training team had no feedback mechanism and therefore could not see potential blind-spots with their own assessment approach.

Transformative Simulation provided the ideal forum to reach the best solution for the organisation and trainees rather than an individual department. This could be achieved by both teams being involved & collaborating in an inclusive way - in effect capitalising on the key principles of Relational Coordination theory:- shared goals, shared knowledge, and mutual respect. Fundamentally, even though both teams had different views, they could agree that engaging in a Simulated Recruitment Assessment and Selection day was a worthwhile investment of time.

## **Simulated Recruitment Assessment and Selection Day**

The Simulated Recruitment Assessment & Selection Day was designed primarily upon the *Involvement and Inclusion* SBI's and moving into the *Influence* SBI, underpinned by appropriate debriefs.

All training programmes and practical assessments followed a similar format (see below) although the nature of the practical assessments varied to reflect the requirements of the role/training programme.

- Introduction to the Company & agenda for the practical assessments
- Introduction to training programmes and associated roles
- Introduction to the practical assessments and their relevance to both the role and selection process
- Voluntary completion of practical assessments

The purpose of the Simulated Recruitment Assessment & Selection Day was for the HR Recruitment staff to view and complete the various practical assessments as if they were an applicant. This included understanding the important use of Personnel Protective Equipment for safety in the Energy & Utility Sector.

## **The Transformative Simulation SBI's**

## Simulation Outcomes

Both teams agreed to keep the practical assessments for the various apprenticeships and traineeship programmes.

The Simulated Recruitment and Assessment Day identified further opportunities to improve inclusivity and language. For example, roles on Overhead Lines were commonly described as "Linesman," similar to the historic use of "Chairman." Following discussion, it was agreed to adopt the gender-neutral term "Overhead Lineworker." This aligns with other gender-neutral role titles such as Engineer, Project Manager, Fitter, and Cable Jointer for greater consistency and inclusivity.

Further enhancements included redesigning promotional materials, incorporating professional photography to promote the variety of roles, training programmes and career development. Longer-term improvements were also proposed, including a series of engaging videos, showcasing training programmes and promoting inclusivity. Additionally, a new digital recruitment portal was suggested to streamline the application process to improve the overall efficiency and accessibility, benefitting both applicants and the HR team.

## Personal Reflections

Prior to the simulation the underlying tensions were evident, reflected in the differing views on the practical assessments. This may have been influenced by perceived gender bias: the all-female HR Recruitment Team were concerned assessments were strength-based and exclusionary, while the all-male Training Team, experienced in the various roles, were wary of 'office-based' selection decisions lacking practical insight and operational understanding.

The Transformative Simulation approach enabled both teams to collaborate effectively, dispelling preconceived assumptions about each other's motivations. The HR Recruitment team recognised the practical assessments authentically reflected key aspects of the roles, ensuring clear alignment between assessment and job requirements. In turn, the Training Team gained confidence that HR's approach actively promoted inclusivity, supporting access to a wider, more diverse talent pool.

The Energy and Utility sector understands that hierarchical gradients and psychological distance can introduce risk, as the further individuals are from operational reality, the more abstract and diluted their perception of risk becomes. In contrast, frontline staff experience risk directly, with immediate and tangible consequences.

Transformative Simulation helped to bridge this gap by enabling HR Recruitment team to better understand the value of practical assessments and the linkage to the operational reality - particularly the risks of appointing individuals unsuited to safety-critical roles, such as those with a fear of heights, confined spaces or working on 'live' electrical apparatus.

In summary - The Transformative Simulation approach proved successful and justified the investment of time. It fostered greater mutual understanding and collaboration between the two teams and avoided implementing an insufficiently tested process. Moreover, it allowed the two teams to improve the recruitment and selection process in both the short and medium term.

What benefits could Transformative Simulation bring to your area of work?

## New Publication

### The Conceptual Bridge Between Simulation-Based Education and Transformative Simulation

One of the recurring questions within healthcare simulation is how Simulation-Based Education (SBE) and Transformative Simulation (TfS) relate to one another. Are they distinct approaches, complementary perspectives, or simply different points along the same continuum?

In this recently published essay, an international group of authors explores this question and proposes a conceptual bridge between SBE and TfS, grounded in transformative pedagogy. The paper argues that while SBE is often oriented towards individual and team learning, TfS focuses on collective understanding, cultural change and systems transformation. Rather than viewing these approaches as competing paradigms, the authors present them as interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

The paper introduces a bi-directional model showing how educational simulation can contribute to transformation, and how insights generated through Transformative Simulation can be embedded back into education and training. In doing so, it offers a coherent framework for understanding simulation as a tool for individual, organisational and systems-level development.

For those interested in the evolving relationship between education, improvement and transformation, this paper provides an important contribution to the ongoing conversation about the future purpose of simulation in healthcare.

Read here: <https://www.johs.org.uk/article/doi/10.54531/CMYQ9770>

---

### TfS in Practice Webinar: Guys & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, England

On the 1st May, [Colette Laws-Chapman](#) shared how simulation has historically been used across her organisation - often aligning with what is now understood as Transformative Simulation.

Drawing on a range of work, Colette reflected on how simulation has supported patient safety, workforce development, and system learning, and how her approach has evolved from intuitive practice to a more deliberate use of the Transformative Simulation framework, ensuring her approach has become more intentional, ethical and impactful.

If you missed it, [watch the recording here](#)

---

**Next TfS in Practice Webinar – [Phil Gurnett](#)**

17 Friday 14 July 2026

🕒 13:00–14:00 UK time

Open to all – 🔗 [TfS in Practice Webinar | Join meeting in Teams | Microsoft Teams](#)

### 📢 Get Involved

- Want to **present at a webinar**? Let us know.
- Interested in joining the **Strategic Group** or being added to the **mailing list**? Email [SIGS@aspih.org.uk](mailto:SIGS@aspih.org.uk).
- Our TfS WhatsApp group [Join here](#)
- Further resources available here:  
<https://aspih.org.uk/resources/transformative-simulation/>

Thanks for being here. This movement is growing - and it needs your insight, curiosity, and creativity.

**#TransformativeSimulation #TfS #SimulationForChange #SystemsChange #ASPiH #CulturalChange #Improvement #HumanFactors #PatientSafety**

### Comments

👍❤️👏 31 · 2 comments · 1 repost



Like

Comment

Share

Add a comment...

😊 🖼️

Most recent ▾



**Mark Wardman** · 1st  
Emergency Preparedness Resilience & Response Manager

1mo ...

Thank you Sharon for the opportunity to write another article promoting the benefits of Transformative Simulation and learning from other safety critical sectors. Mark

Like · 🌐 3 | Reply · 1 reply



**Sharon Marie Weldon** ✓ Author  
Professor of Healthcare Simulation and Workforce Developmen...

1mo ...

It was a pleasure to feature your work again [Mark](#). One of the strengths of Transformative Simulation is the opportunity to learn across sectors, and your example provides a powerful illustration of how simulation can support safer implementation of change in complex systems. ...more

Like | Reply | 19 impressions