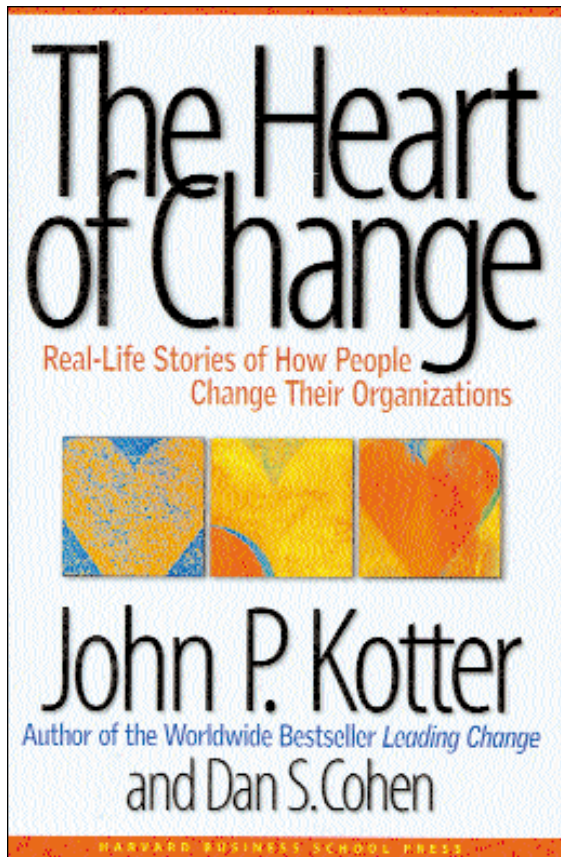


# BOOKS



The Heart of Change  
Real-Life Stories of How People  
Change Their Organizations

By John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen  
Reviewed by Michael Cassidy

The only constant, the pundits remind us, is change: ubiquitous, continual, and absolutely essential for organizational survival. In *The Heart of Change*, change management expert John P. Kotter and consultant Dan S. Cohen argue persuasively that successful change is reflected in behaviors that support change efforts. When people begin to feel and view the world around them differently, change occurs as a result of their new perception of the circumstances.

Kotter and Cohen offer many arguments heard before, but in an updated, and eminently readable form. The authors have translated recent change theo-

ries and research findings into an efficient and useful overview.

The concept of successful change as a result of shifting personal attitudes isn't a new idea. More than 50 years ago, David Krathwohl and Benjamin Bloom, renowned for their revolutionary work on learning taxonomies, argued that behavioral change is grounded in valuing. Valuing must be preceded by an openness to listen, see and entertain new ideas, according to those two learning experts.

Now, many preachers of organizational change tend towards extremes. At one extreme reside the analysts, priding themselves on the rigor of their analytic



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# ON THE NIGHT STAND

By Chris Chen



My nightstand isn't crowded by management tomes, although they'd hide the dust that shows on the stand's black lacquer finish. I tend

not to read a lot of management books because I think many of them contain a single—though powerful and profound—idea and take far too many pages to explain it.

Some of the books I've found well worth the time to read are John O. Whitney's *The Trust Factor* and *The Experience Economy* by Pine and Gilmore. The first provides insight on the impact that mistrust has on the effectiveness of organizations; the second explains the necessity of providing rich and engaging experiences for clients. I've incorporated both concepts into my training designs and used them in my work as an internal consultant.

Because I find most concept books too lengthy (I'm probably just impatient), I prefer toolkit books with collections of briefly described practical ideas that can be implemented readily. In that vein, I've made much use of *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* by Senge et al. and the esoteric *Authentic Management*, by Herman and Korenich.

I consider human behavior to be my field of expertise. Though such disciplines as information technology change by the minute, I believe human nature has changed very little since Eve and Adam. So, the only book that maintains a permanent spot on my nightstand is the Bible. Regardless of your faith, it contains much wisdom about how and why people behave as they do.

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## When people **view** the world around them differently, change occurs as a result of their new **perception** of the circumstances.

methods. Think of Spock, everyone's favorite Vulcan on *Star Trek*, who embodied pure logic and empiricism. Analysts such as Spock think we should eschew at all costs the inherent irrationality of the human element. The other extreme is represented by the touchy-feely folks, who sometimes place the role of emotion on too-high a pedestal.

Fortunately, not all organizational change experts are as radical. Management scholar and controversial former editor of the *Harvard Business Journal* Rosabeth Moss Kanter emphasizes the importance of the political dimensions of change. In her many works, Kanter says when people don't like what's happening, they resist it.

Another exception is prominent neurologist Antonio R. Damasio. Relying on clinical evidence, Damasio argues in his 1994 book *Descartes' Error* that reason and feeling are inherently intertwined in our neurological makeup. That belief—how we feel affects how we think—is the heart of Kotter and Cohen's case for effective organizational change.

Many people tend to view step approaches as impractical. But the authors propose that successful change can indeed be implemented using an eight-step path. Addressing issues such as urgency, team composition, and communication, the steps provide an effective organizing structure to create change.

An appealing aspect of the book is its liberal use of hands-on war stories. These brief, first-person accounts serve as rich qualitative data to support the authors' advice.

One particularly inspiring story concerns a company's desire to reduce costs. A manager, curious about what the company was spending on gloves in the manufacturing plants, asked a summer intern to look into it. The intern reported that the plants were purchasing 424 types of gloves ranging widely in cost but generally equal in quality. Unaware of the high number of gloves, the manager asked the intern to collect a sample of each kind of glove. When division managers saw the astounding array, it had a profound impact.

The introduction of a visual component such as the glove display communicated the financial implications of failing to standardize the purchasing process and changed the managers' attitudes more effectively than any number of tables, graphs, or statistical analyses.

Aiming to help people implement change through grasping the fundamental importance of creativity, feeling, leadership and focus, Kotter and Cohen have compiled a delightful and accessible work. Just telling others to change won't work, the authors point out, and neither will using data or reason alone. Spock said, "Logic is the beginning of wisdom, not the end."

*The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* by John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. 208 pp. US\$20

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