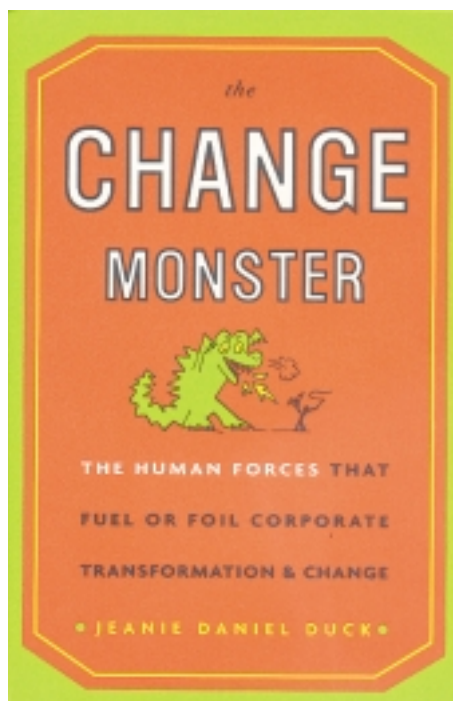


# BOOKS



## The Change Monster

Reviewed by William R. Dodson

In *The Prince*, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote, “There is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than to initiate a new order of things. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old system, and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new one.” *The Change Monster: The Human Forces That Fuel or Foil Corporate Transformation and Change*, by Jeanie Daniel Duck, describes in detail the personal dynamics of organizational change efforts that validate Machiavelli’s thesis. With her book, Duck intends to

“prepare you for the realities of living through major change, so once you’re into it you’ll be less likely to lose heart, go crazy, give up, bail out, or think you’re the only one on the planet ever to have felt so worn out and beaten up by trying to make change happen.” The plethora of personal and corporate anecdotes that fill the book, however, succeed more in disorienting and perhaps even disheartening change agents than in enlightening them about how to handle the difficulties they will inevitably encounter.

Duck is a senior vice president of the Boston Consulting Group. She crafted all of the book’s business-related dramas from her decades-long consulting career at BCG and from the experiences of her BCG colleagues. Thus, the book reads like an extended corporate white paper. It belongs to a genre of business books written by consultancies to promote the work of the consultancies.

The book suffers from The Consultant’s Curse: Too many war stories that are difficult to thread together and place within a neat context. In an attempt to bring order to her presentation, Duck repeatedly returns to dramatizations of two specific business cases. One company is a micro-switch division of Honeywell; the other is a multinational pharmaceutical conglomerate. Each has strong personalities and wily politics that make its change instances unique. *The Change Monster* would’ve been easier to follow if Duck had focused exclusively on those two cases, instead of including a myriad of other narratives that could have worked as sidebars.

Duck observes that organizational change follows what she calls “The Change Curve”: The roller-coaster ride organizations and individuals experience as they embark on remaking themselves. The Change Monster lives on the peaks

and in the valleys of the Curve, waiting to gobble unsuspecting and unsuspecting organizations. The Change Curve has five stages: stagnation, preparation, implementation, determination, and fruition.

1. *Stagnation.* The initial phase is one in which the organization has lost direction or the direction it's on will lead to self-destruction or annihilation by the competition. The company realizes fundamental changes must occur to remake the organization.

2. *Preparation.* This phase is grueling because organizational leaders must define and refine their vision for change and immerse themselves in the plan details—details that leadership expects staff to follow.

3. *Implementation.* This phase signals the actual tactical start of the change initiative. It's the longest phase of the change process and the most painful and sensitive for the organization.

4. *Determination.* In this phase of the change effort, people within the organization begin to realize that its heart really is changing. They question their place in the new world order and exhibit symptoms of what Duck calls, "retroactive resistance." Simply put: People want to return to the "bad old days."

5. *Fruition.* Organizations know they have come upon this phase when they are living the changes that leadership trumpeted during the preparation phase. The fruition phase is not only a time of rejoicing and celebration, but also a bold expression of pride that everyone has survived the difficult times and is thriving in the promised land. The fruition phase, however, is fraught with its own danger: At the height of fruition can be born the seed of stagnation.

Duck uses a melodramatic tone when describing the business cases and a folksy tone when describing the traumas of her own life. The business cases are relevant, obviously, because they flesh out proposals, suggestions, and approaches to managing change; however, the narrative

format is distracting at best. The autobiographical centerpieces and the "aw shucks, mama used to say" tone don't add value to the work. The last chapter is completely autobiographical: It delves into explicit detail about her divorce with her first husband, her first job at a bank, living with her parents, and so on ad nauseum.

Early on, the reader becomes confused as to whether Duck wanted to write a paean to the Boston Consulting Group, an extended white paper by the change management division of the BCG, an autobiography, or a novel.

The book isn't without merit. It has genuine nuggets of observation and methodology. The five phases of change, outlined previously, is a valuable model. Duck also presents a "Recipe for Preparation" at the executive level, but the coverage is brief and doesn't elaborate on how to implement it. She does, however, describe useful and interesting constructs such as the "Behavioral Contract," which grounds individual change initiatives, and the "Ready, Willing, and Able Assessment Tool," which determines a company's readiness and resistance to change.

Ultimately, *The Change Monster* is best suited for veterans of change who know where to skip in the book to find workable weapons they can use to slay the dragons of apathy, ignorance, and fear.

*The Change Monster: The Human Forces That Fuel or Foil Corporate Transformation and Change* by Jeanie Daniel Duck. New York: Crown Pub, [www.bcg.com](http://www.bcg.com). 286 pp. US\$27.50

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