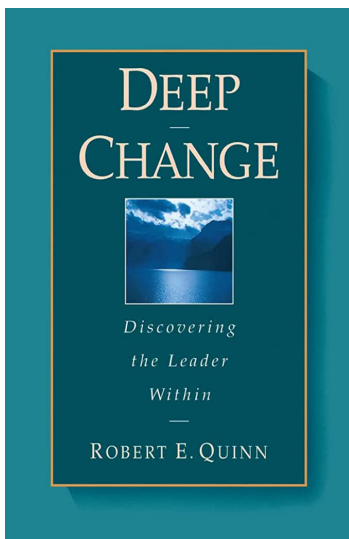


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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Deep Change

THE NUTSHELL

At some point, every individual, and every organization, comes to a place where a choice is required: to experience slow death, or make a deep change.

Slow death is when things have stopped working. The things that have brought success before aren't adequate anymore. In an organization, the numbers are beginning to go down, morale is dropping, there isn't a clear vision or a sense of unity. It may take months, it may take years, but the end is clear. If something doesn't happen, if something doesn't change, the decline will inevitably continue. The world has changed, and to survive, organizations also need to change.

The alternative is *deep change*. When we talk about change, often we mean *incremental* change. Slow change, little by little, step by step, with a sense of control. Slow change is tweaking the system to hopefully improve it.

Deep Change is different. It is a major change, often with a radical departure from the past and even the areas we have felt competent in. It involves a letting go of control and "walking naked into the land of uncertainty." It means learning to look at everything differently, and often doing things very differently. It means significant change from the status quo.

Often when we see the need for change, our first reaction is to point at how other people need to change. If we are in leadership, we may put significant effort into getting people to change—we try to persuade, even coerce—but that usually doesn't work. People don't generally like being told they need to

Deep Change

change and resist it. Leaders have a choice then: we can blame the people, or take a look inside and say “The change didn’t happen because I didn’t model it.”

It’s easier to not pursue a deep change. There are always more things going on, more tasks that we have to attend to, than we have time for. And, pursuing deep change requires time. Time to look at what we are doing, and why. Time to see how our lives might not be aligned with what is really important. Time to decide what to do about it. As we invest the required time, we become aware of our own lack of integrity; of the gap between our deepest values and the choices we are making. Addressing this gap changes us, and positions us to change the organizations we are part of.

When we make the decision to change, we face a series of tough challenges. Change doesn’t happen in a linear way; we often have to make it up as we go along. Having a vision for something isn’t necessarily having a plan. Deep change involves an extensive learning process that results from trying different things, evaluating them, and trying other things. It requires a certain type of confidence—not confidence in your skills necessarily, but confidence in your ability to learn and grow when in new or unknown circumstances.

Another challenge is that organizations have a natural resistance to change. Systems and procedures are in place to help things be efficient, but these same things make innovation and change difficult. There may be a culture of conformity or a bureaucracy that stifles initiative. Bringing change, then, involves *risks* and *courage*. Risk because there is no guarantee of success when you try something new, and courage because there will be forces arrayed against the changes that have to be battled through. It requires having a vision of what could be, and a willingness to put the health and well-being of the organization first, even at great personal cost.

Developing vision is a key element of the change process, but most executives are uncomfortable with it. It is one thing to develop a “vision statement” that you hang on the wall; many companies have statements but no real vision. It takes work and time to develop vision, including time spent with people in the organization to identify the core values and desires that are already in people. When a vision touches those things, people embrace it, because it connects with their lives, and is no longer just theory.

Leaders who have a vision, are willing to courageously take the risks involved, and are willing to “walk their talk” (personally model the changes they are pursuing) become transformational leaders. They transform the organizations they are part of, and often the people who comprise the organization. They exercise a kind of moral power that people pay attention to and follow. These leaders are rare, but tremendously impactful. Anyone can be a transformational leader, but because of the high cost (including huge personal investment, risk of change, and the possibility of failure) few actually are. But, our organizations often cry out for someone to step into this place.

The truth is, we each have as much power as we really want. Many of us long to be “empowered,” but no one can really empower us. Others may create an environment where it is easier to empower ourselves, but no one can do it for us. We must take responsibility for our own empowerment, and make the deep changes necessary to have it. In the final analysis, we each have as much power as we really want.