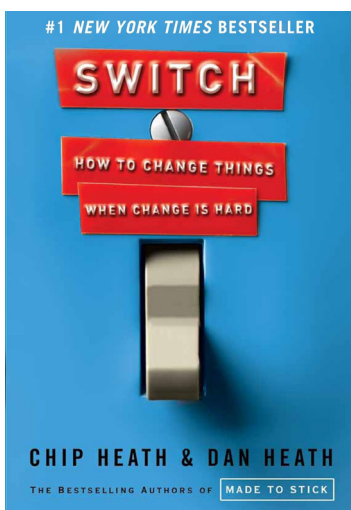


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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THE NUTSHELL

Ultimately, all change efforts boil down to the same mission: Can you get people to start behaving in a new way? In this book, we argue that successful changes share a common pattern. They require the leader to do three things at once: Appeal to both people's hearts and minds, and shape the environment they are in. Easier said than done, especially when people's hearts and minds often disagree—fervently!

The tension between our hearts and minds is captured best by an analogy used by psychologist Jonathon Haidt in his book *The Happiness Hypothesis*. Haidt says that our emotional side is an Elephant and our rational side is its Rider. Perched atop the Elephant, the Rider holds the reins and seems to be the leader. But the Rider's control is precarious because the Rider is so small relative to the Elephant. Anytime the six-ton Elephant and the Rider disagree about which direction to go, the Rider is going to lose.

Most of us are familiar with situations in which our Elephant overwhelms our Rider. You've experienced this if you've ever slept in, overeaten, procrastinated, gave in to fear, etc. The weakness of the Elephant, our emotional side, is clear: it's lazy and skittish, often looking for the quick payoff (ice cream cone) over the long-term payoff (being thin). When change efforts fail, it's usually the Elephant triumphing, since the kinds of change we want typically involve short-term sacrifices for long-term payoffs. (The Rider is the opposite; his strength is in long-

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term thinking). This doesn't mean the Elephant is all bad; emotion is the Elephant's turf—love, compassion, sympathy, loyalty, etc. The fierce instinct to protect your kids from harm—that's the Elephant. You have to address both for change to be effective.

The first key to effective change efforts is to *Direct the Rider*. The Rider needs crystal-clear direction.

First, identify “bright spots.” Bright spots are places where things are working; where the change you want is already happening. They paint a picture of what you want.

The Rider part of our mind has many strengths. The Rider is a thinker and a planner and can plot a course for a better future. But, the Rider has a terrible weakness—the tendency to spin his wheels. In tough times, the Rider sees problems everywhere, and “analysis paralysis” often kicks in. Therefore, to make progress on a change, you need ways to *direct* the Rider. Show him where to go, how to act, what destination to pursue. This is why bright spots are so essential, because they are your best hope for directing the Rider when you're trying to bring about change.

To pursue bright spots is to ask the questions “What's working, and how can we do more of it?” Sounds simple, doesn't it? But in reality, this question is almost never asked. Instead, the questions we ask are more problem focused: “What's broken, and how do we fix it?” We naturally tend to focus on the negative, but in times of change, that isn't helpful. Our Rider needs to have a *solution focus*.

Second, to direct the Rider you need to *script the critical moves*. Be precise: “Buy 1% milk” is a much better directive than “Eat healthy” because there is no ambiguity in it. Clarity dissolves resistance.

Finally, make sure the final destination is clear. The rider needs to know what the target is; he needs to know what constitutes a “win.”

While the Rider needs direction, the Elephant needs motivation. Successful change always requires that you speak to people's feelings. When change doesn't happen, people often think it's due to a lack of information: “If they understood the dangers, they would change.” Millions of smokers can tell you that this isn't the issue. It's motivation that is needed, which comes from our emotions (especially from positive ones).

Motivation can come several ways. One is through focusing on *small wins*—milestones that are within reach. (Don't drink for the next 24 hours). These small wins create hope and build momentum. Another way is by *shrinking the change*. Remind people of the progress they have already made, that they aren't starting from scratch. Emotionally, it's easier to start at “square 3” than “square 1,” even if you end up covering the same number of squares.

Finally, the Elephant can be motivated by *Growing Your People*. Help people connect with their identity (who they are), or even develop a new identity within your organization (“I'm a customer service fanatic”). People will act in accordance with their identity—“this is the kind of person I am.” You need to help people understand that growing into a new identity will include times they fail, and that failure is OK, normal, even good. Then, they won't give up and quit as soon as they fall short one time.

The Rider needs direction, and the Elephant needs motivation. There is one other thing you can do to facilitate the change process: make the journey easier. Create a downhill slope and give a push. Shape the Path.

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Think about how often in your daily life people have tweaked the environment to shape your behavior. Traffic engineers put in signs, stoplights, and lane markers. Grocers put the milk in the back so you will spend more time in the store.

People are incredibly sensitive to the environment and culture they are in. One of the subtle ways in which our environment acts on us is by reinforcing (or deterring) our habits. To change yourself or other people, you have to change habits. Change the environment, and it becomes easier to change the habit—they are closely connected.

One way to develop habits is to create “action triggers.” An action trigger is when you decide ahead of time what you will do and when. By deciding ahead of time you “pre-load the decision” which also makes it easier to follow through.

Finally, you can “rally the herd.” In ambiguous situations, we all look to others for cues about how to behave. (Change situations are always ambiguous). When you are leading an Elephant on an unfamiliar path, chances are it’s going to follow the herd.

Publicize those who are doing the “right behaviors.” Let others know where the herd is going—it will create momentum. Get the people together who are already on board with the change you are pursuing and let them reinforce each other—a synergy will develop that will eventually sweep others along.

Once change is in process, how do you keep it going? “A long journey starts with a single step.” However, a single step doesn’t guarantee the long journey will be finished. How do you keep those steps coming?

The first thing to do is recognize and celebrate the first step. Second, reinforce positive behaviors; learn how to spot them (most of us focus on the negative more than the positive). The good news is that once the change starts, if you reinforce it, it will begin to develop momentum and take on a life of its own. This doesn’t mean change is easy, but it is possible.

What we can say with confidence is that when change works, it tends to follow a pattern. The people who change have clear direction, ample motivation, and a supportive environment. In other words, when change works, it’s because the Rider, the Elephant, and the Path are all aligned in support of the switch.