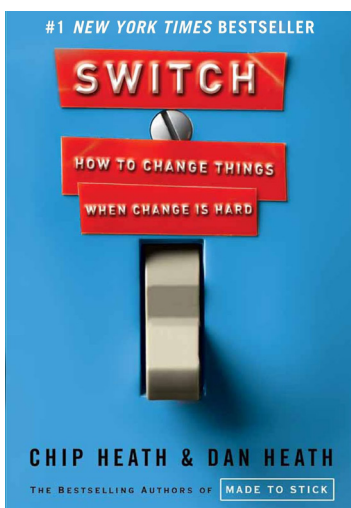


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chip Heath

Chip Heath is a professor at the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University.

Dan Heath

Dan Heath is a senior fellow at Duke University's Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship. Previously they wrote the bestseller Made to Stick.

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THE SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Three Surprises About Change

In a study on popcorn eating habits at movies, people were given popcorn in two different sized buckets. Both were actually quite large—even the smaller bucket contained so much popcorn that people couldn't finish it.

The research question was: would people with a larger inexhaustible supply of popcorn eat more than someone with a smaller inexhaustible supply? The result was stunning: people with the larger buckets ate 53% more than people with the medium size.

The author of the study, Brian Wansink, said, "all our studies showed the same result. People eat more when you give them a bigger container. Period."

If you wanted to change how much popcorn people were eating, you could choose to inform them about the importance of healthy eating, or try to figure out how to motivate them to eat less. Or, you could just give them smaller buckets.

You can see how easy it would be to turn an easy change problem (shrinking buckets) into a hard change problem (convincing people to think differently). And that's the first surprise about change: What looks like a people problem is often a situation problem.

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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. One is to change the person's situation.

But that isn't the whole picture. For individual's behavior to change, you've got to influence not only their environment but their hearts and minds. The problem is this: often the heart and mind disagree. Fervently.

Why is it so hard to make lasting changes in our companies, in our communities, and in our lives? The primary obstacle is a conflict that's built into our brains. Psychologists have discovered that our minds are ruled by two different systems—the rational mind and the emotional mind—that compete for control. The rational mind wants a great beach body; the emotional mind wants that Oreo cookie. The rational mind wants to change something at work; the emotional mind loves the comfort of the existing routine. The tension can doom a change effort.

The tension between the two systems 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's fault, 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-term thinking). That doesn't mean the Elephant is all bad; emotion is the Elephant's turf—love, compassion, sympathy, loyalty, etc. That fierce instinct to protect your kids from harm—that's the Elephant.

And even more important if you're contemplating a change, the Elephant is the one who gets things done. The Rider tends to overanalyze and overthink things; his big weakness is spinning his wheels.

If you want to change things, you've got to appeal to both. The Rider provides the planning and direction, and the Elephant provides the energy. So if you reach the Riders of your team but not the Elephants, team members will have understanding without motivation. If you reach their Elephants but not their Riders, they'll have passion without direction. In both cases, the flaws can be paralyzing. A reluctant Elephant and wheel-spinning Rider can both ensure that nothing changes. But when they move together, change comes easily.

When Rider and Elephant disagree, you've got a problem. The Rider can get his way temporarily—he can tug on the reins hard enough to get the Elephant to submit. But he can't win a tug-of-war with a huge animal for long. He simply gets exhausted. What does that look like when we are talking about change?

Studies have shown that self-control is an exhaustible resource. By self-control we mean self-supervision: all those times when we are not operating on automatic, and have to think carefully about what we are doing or saying and how we are doing or saying it. Here's why this matters for change: When people try to change things, they're usually tinkering with behaviors that have become automatic, and changing those behaviors requires careful supervision by the Rider. The bigger the change you're suggesting, the more it will sap people's self-control.

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So when you hear people say that change is hard because people are lazy or resistant, they're just flat wrong. The opposite is true: change is hard because people wear themselves out. That's the second surprise about change: What looks like laziness is often exhaustion!

While an unmotivated Elephant can doom a change effort, so can the Rider. If he isn't exactly sure what direction to go, he tends to lead the Elephant in circles. That tendency explains the third surprise about change: what looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity. If you want people to change, you must provide crystal-clear direction.

This gives you a glimpse of our basic three-part framework, which can guide you in any change situation:

- **Direct the Rider:** What looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity, so provide crystal-clear direction.
- **Motivate the Elephant:** What looks like laziness is often exhaustion, so be sure to engage people's emotional side.
- **Shape the Path:** What looks like a people problem is often a situation problem, so look closely at the environment people are in.

PART ONE: DIRECT THE RIDER

Chapter 2: Find the Bright Spots

In 1990, Jerry Sternin was working for Save the Children in Viet Nam. His job was to fight malnutrition, and due to the political situation, he had six months to make a difference. Quite a challenge, considering he didn't even speak Vietnamese. Sternin took an unusual approach. He traveled to rural villages and met with the mothers, and recruited them to weigh and measure every child in their village. Then they analyzed the results. They found that there were some children, from poor families, who were still bigger and healthier than the average. Next they sought out those families to see what they were doing differently. They found several differences: the kids were being fed four times a day (with the same amount of food overall, just spreading out the meals) and using different ingredients (they included tiny shrimp and crabs from the rice patties, and tossed in sweet-potato greens, which were considered a low-class food).

After that he developed a program where the moms would cook together, using the new approach that they had found. Sternin said they "acted their way into a new way of thinking." The best part was that it was their own solution to the problem, not one imposed from the outside.

What was he doing? Sternin was looking for *bright spots*. A bright spot is a success story, especially one that can be emulated. By organizing cooking groups, he was addressing both the Rider and the Elephant. The mother's Riders got very specific instructions: *Here's how to cook a tasty lunch with shrimp and sweet-potato greens*. And their Elephants got a feeling: hope. *There really is a way to make my daughter healthier—it's something I can do*. Notice that the Path played a role also: with so many involved in the cooking classes there was tremendous social pressure to go along.

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 as we've seen, 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. That's why 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. And that's why bright spots are so essential, because they are your best hope for directing the Rider when you're trying to bring about change.

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To pursue bright spots is to ask the question “What’s working, and how can we do more of it?” Sounds simple, doesn’t it? But in the real world, this question is almost never asked. Instead, the question we ask is 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*.

Chapter 3: Script the Critical Moves

In his book *The Paradox of Choice*, Barry Schwartz describes how an increase in options often paralyzes our decision-making ability. Most of the time, the Rider is on autopilot, with set routines and ways of doing things. Change is a disruption. Change brings new choices that create uncertainty. Too many options create decision paralysis; so does ambiguity.

Ambiguity is exhausting to the Rider, because he is tugging on the reins of the Elephant, trying to direct it down a new path. But when the road is uncertain, the Elephant will insist on taking the most familiar path. Why? Because uncertainty makes the Elephant anxious. And that’s why decision paralysis can be deadly for change—*the most familiar path is always the status quo*.

Many leaders pride themselves on setting high-level direction. “I’ll set the vision and stay out of the details.” While a compelling vision is critical, it isn’t enough. Big-picture, hands-off leadership doesn’t work well in a change situation, because the hardest part of change—the paralyzing part—is precisely in the details.

Ambiguity is the enemy. Any successful change requires a translation of ambiguous goals into concrete behaviors. In short, to make a switch, you need to *script the critical moves*. You can’t script every move—that’s impossible. It’s the *critical moves* that count.

In West Virginia, two researchers were contemplating ways to persuade people to eat a healthier diet. They knew that people were more likely to change when the new behavior expected of them was crystal clear, but unfortunately, “eating a healthier diet” was anything but. Where to begin? They decided to focus on milk. Most Americans drink milk (it’s a great source of calcium) but it’s also the single largest source of saturated fat in the average diet. Their goal: get people to switch to skim or 1% milk. To do that, they needed to focus on getting people to buy it (most people will drink whatever is in the frig).

They took out ads, including one explaining that one glass of whole milk has the same amount of saturated fat as five strips of bacon. At a press conference, they showed local reporters a tube full of fat—the equivalent of the amount found in a half-gallon of whole milk. And they monitored sales data. The sales of low-fat milk rose dramatically.

They gave new information, and tried to do it creatively, but the key was that the choice was very clear: buy low-fat milk. No ambiguity. When you want someone to behave in a new way, explain the “new way” clearly. Don’t assume the new moves are obvious.

To drive it home, think of a healthy eating campaign tied to the U.S. Government’s Food Pyramid. To do that you need to understand the different kinds of food and how to measure your intake. For example, the USDA advises that adults consume 5-7 teaspoons of oil each day. Quick: How many teaspoons of oil did you consume today? The approach is so abstract and removed from how people eat food and buy groceries that it is useless. There’s a huge difference between saying “eat healthier” and “buy 1% milk.”

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Clarity dissolves resistance.

Chapter 4: Point to the Destination

Crystal Jones joined Teach for America in 2003 and was assigned to teach a first-grade class. Some of her students couldn't hold their pencils; others had basic behavioral problems; some didn't know their alphabet or numbers. No one was where they needed to be for first grade.

Jones was confident she could elevate the kid's abilities; the question was how to get the kids to believe that and cooperate. She knew that if she wanted to motivate the kids, she had to speak their language. At the beginning of the school year, she announced a goal for her class that she knew would captivate them: by the end of the school year, you're going to be *third-graders*. (Not literally, but operating at a third grade level). She put several things in place to support that goal, and by the end of the year, over 90% of the kids were reading at or above a third grade level.

These were some of the same kids who, nine months earlier, didn't know the alphabet.

Crystal Jones set a BHAG—Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal. She established the destination. Notice: it was an inspirational goal for her first-graders. Goals need to have an emotional component—not just be big, but they need to hit you in the gut. To a first-grader, becoming a third-grader in nine months is a gut-smacking goal.

Goals in most organizations lack emotional resonance. SMART goals have become the norm (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timely). Unfortunately, SMART goals are better for steady-state situations than for change situations, because the assumptions underlying them are that the goals are worthwhile. SMART goals presume the emotion; they don't generate it. In looking for a goal that reaches the Elephant—that hits people in the gut—you can't bank on SMART goals. You want a *destination postcard*: a vivid picture from the near-term future that shows what could be possible.

For the Rider, who needs direction, it is imperative to marry the long-term goals with short-term critical moves. This doesn't mean you have to anticipate every possibility that might come down the road; it does mean you have to provide very clear first steps to get things moving. Ambiguity is the enemy; a goal like "eat healthier" gives too much wiggle room. Buy 1% milk is very clear and doable.

The Rider has many strengths: he is a visionary, is willing to make short-term sacrifices for long-term gain, and is able to follow directions. He also has many weaknesses: limited strength, his paralysis in the face of ambiguity, and his focus on problems instead of solutions. When you appeal to the Rider inside you or inside others you want to influence, your game plan should be simple:

1. Follow the bright spots. Focus on what *is* working, not on what isn't.
2. Give Direction to the Rider. Send him a destination postcard (you'll be a third-grader soon) and script his critical moves (buy 1% milk).

Do these and you will prepare the Rider to lead a switch, and you'll arm him for the ongoing struggle with his reluctant and formidable partner, the Elephant.

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PART TWO: MOTIVATE THE ELEPHANT

Chapter 5: Find the Feeling

In *The Heart of Change*, John Kotter and Dan Cohen studied how change happens in large organizations. Summarizing the data, they said that in most change situations, managers initially focus on strategy, structure, culture, or systems, which leads them to miss the most important issue:

“...the core of the matter is always about changing the behavior of people, and behavior change happens in highly successful situations mostly by speaking to people’s feelings.”

In other words, when change works, it’s because leaders are speaking to the Elephant as well as to the Rider.

Kotter and Cohen say that most people think change happens in this order: ANALYZE-THINK-CHANGE. In a normal environment, that might work pretty well. But big change situations don’t look like that. There the sequence is SEE-FEEL-CHANGE. You’re presented with evidence that makes you feel something; it hits you at an emotional level. It speaks to the Elephant.

When people push for change and it doesn’t happen, they often chalk it up to a lack of understanding. A mom grouses, “If my daughter just *understood* that her driving habits are dangerous, she’d change.” But when people fail to change, it’s not usually because of an understanding problem. Smokers understand that cigarettes are unhealthy, but they don’t quit.

At some level, we understand this. But when it comes time to change the behavior of other people, our first instinct is still to teach them something. *Let me explain why smoking is bad for you.* We speak to the Rider when we should be speaking to the Elephant. This realization—that we can make an impeccably rational case for change and people still won’t change—is pretty frustrating!

It’s emotion that motivates the Elephant. In fighting for change, we’ve got to find the feeling. But *which* feeling? Anger, hope, dismay, enthusiasm, fear, happiness, surprise?

Negative emotions can be very powerful, but they work best in the short-term. It’s like having a stone in your shoe—it hurts, and you’ll act quickly to fix the problem. But most change situations aren’t like that. For longer term change, appealing to positive emotions works better. Negative emotions tend to narrow our thoughts and focus and get very specific; positive emotions “broaden and build” our repertoire of thoughts and actions. They stimulate creativity, hope, and joy—the very things we need if we are going to change things.

Chapter 6: Shrink the Change

In 2007 two researchers published a study of hotel maids and their exercise habits. The results were surprising, to say the least.

First, a note about the maids. The average hotel maid cleans fifteen rooms a day, each one taking 20-30 minutes to complete. Imagine their job: walking, bending, pushing, lifting, carrying, scrubbing, and dusting. That’s actually a lot of exercise—well beyond the daily doses recommended by the Surgeon General.

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But the maids didn't see it that way. 67% reported they didn't exercise regularly, and more than a third said they didn't exercise at all. Their exercise didn't fit the common picture of what it looks like (go to a gym, etc), but they were still burning the calories.

The maids were divided into two groups, and one was told they were exercise superstars. That group got a document describing the benefits of exercise, and estimates of how many calories their normal activities were burning (40 calories for fifteen minutes of changing linens, etc). The other group got the same information about the benefits of exercise, but wasn't told that their work "counted" as exercise.

Four weeks later the researchers checked in again with the maids and found something remarkable. The maids who were told they were good exercisers had lost an average of 1.8 pounds—almost half a pound per week. The others hadn't lost any. What made the difference?

To understand, think of a promotion at a local car wash featuring loyalty cards. Every time customers bought a car wash, they got a stamp on their cards, and when they filled up their cards with eight stamps, they got a free wash. Another group of customers at the same car wash got a slightly different loyalty card. This one required they get 10 stamps (instead of eight) but they were given a "head start." When they got their cards, two stamps had already been added. Note: the goal was the same for both: buy eight car washes and get a reward. But the psychology was different; in one case you are already 20% of the way towards the goal, vs. starting from scratch. A few months later, almost twice as many of the head start group had received a free wash, and they generally earned it faster.

One way to motivate action is to make people feel as if they are already closer to the finish line than they might have thought. It creates a sense of progress, and that is critical, because the Elephant in us is easily demoralized. If you are leading a change effort, start looking for those first two stamps to put on your teams cards.

If you want to get a reluctant Elephant moving, you need to *shrink the change*.

Another way to shrink the change is to focus on *small wins*—milestones that are within reach. If you've ever been on a really long drive, you've probably used this technique on yourself. Maybe you broke the journey down into smaller segments and promised yourself you would stop for coffee after 75 miles. It's easier to focus on that than "I'll be at Grandma's in 10 hours."

When you create early successes, what you are really doing is creating hope. Hope is Elephant fuel! Once people are on the path and making progress, it's important to make the advances visible, so people can see their progress. That's the secret behind Weight Watchers—you weigh in every week, and any progress is celebrated.

In identifying small wins, look for two traits: 1) They are meaningful. 2) They are "within immediate reach." And if you can't achieve both those traits, choose the latter! If the task feels too big, the Elephant will resist it. That's why Alcoholics Anonymous focuses on "one day at a time." Going a lifetime without drinking feels impossible; going 24 hours feels doable.

Small targets lead to small victories, and small victories can often trigger a positive spiral of behavior. We've seen that again and again—big changes come from a succession of small changes. It's OK if the first changes seem almost trivial; the challenge is to get the Elephant moving, even if the movement is slow at first.

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Chapter 7: Grow Your People

When people make choices, they tend to rely on one of two basic models for decision-making: the *consequences* model or the *identity* model. The consequence model is a familiar one. It assumes that we weigh the costs and benefits of our options and choose what is best for us. It's a very rational approach.

In the identity model, we essentially ask ourselves three questions when we have a decision to make: *Who am I? What kind of situation is this? What would someone like me do in this situation?* Identity isn't just something we are born with; we also adopt different identities over the course of our life (I'm a good father, devout Catholic, patriotic citizen, scientist, etc).

Because identities are central to the way people make decisions, any change effort that violates someone's identity is doomed to failure. So the question is: How can you make your change a matter of identity rather than a matter of consequences?

As an example, consider the Brazilian firm Brasilata. It's a manufacturing firm that produces various kinds of steel cans. Not a high growth or particularly exciting field. But Brasilata isn't a boring firm—it has one of the best reputations for innovation of any company in Latin America. How does a manufacturer of cans become known as an innovator?

A new identity was the core of their approach. Employees became known as "inventors" and when new employees joined the firm, they were asked to sign an "innovation contract." Top management challenged employees to be on the lookout for better ways to do things. The program succeeded dramatically—in 2008, employees submitted 134,846 ideas (an average of 145.2 ideas per inventor!) Many of the suggestions led to new products; others brought huge cost savings.

Remember: This "inventor" identity, which fueled both business success and employee satisfaction, was made up. None of the employees were born that way. But it shaped their behaviors in a major way.

There is one problem—while a new identity can take root quickly, living up to it can be hard. For instance, it probably took a while before Brasilata's employees were any good at inventing. At first, they probably struggled to come up with *any* suggestions for the company, and they might have felt like imposters calling themselves "inventors."

Here's the thing: when you fight to make your switch, especially one that involves a new identity, you and your audience are going to have times of failure. And the Elephant really, really hates to fail.

This presents a difficulty for you when you are trying to change or trying to lead change. How do you keep the Elephant motivated when it faces a long, treacherous road? The answer may sound strange: you need to create the expectation of failure—not the failure of the mission itself, but failure en route.

One characteristic of successful people is a "growth mindset." People with a growth mindset believe that abilities are like muscles—they can be built up with practice. And people with a growth mindset accept failure as part of the process of increasing their abilities. (The opposite is a fixed mindset, where people believe their abilities are set. They tend to avoid challenges, because if you fail, and others see it, you will be exposed as a loser, inadequate, etc.)

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A growth mindset is optimistic, because even while it meets failure, it believes success will come. *We will struggle, we will fail, we will be knocked down, but throughout, we'll get better, and we'll succeed in the end.* That's critical, because people will persevere only if they perceive falling down as *learning* rather than *failing*.

Whereas the Rider needs direction, the Elephant needs motivation. Motivation comes from feeling (knowledge isn't enough by itself to motivate change). It also comes from confidence. The Elephant has to believe that it's *capable* of conquering the change. The two routes to building people's confidence are to shrink the change, or grow your people (or, preferably, both).

PART THREE: SHAPE THE PATH

Chapter 8: Tweak the Environment

When someone cuts you off in traffic, you probably instinctively think: *What a jerk!* What you almost certainly don't think is, *Gosh, I wonder what's wrong that he is in such a hurry.* While we don't want to just excuse bad behavior, think about your own driving habits for a moment. Think of a time when your crazy driving may have made someone want to curse you. Was your driving on that day an expression of your true character (i.e., you're a jerk to the core), or was it sparked by the situation you were in?

When someone behind the wheel of a car is twenty minutes late for an urgent appointment, that person may *become* a terrible driver. What looks like a person problem is often a situation problem. We all have a tendency to attribute people's behavior to *the way they are* rather than to *the situation they are in*.

This is why the third element of our framework, the Path, is so critical. If you want people to change, you can provide clear direction (Rider) or boost their motivation and determination (Elephant). Or, you can simply make the journey easier. Create a steep downhill slope and give them a push.

In short, you can shape the path.

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.

Tweaking the environment is about making the right behaviors a little bit easier and the wrong behaviors a little bit harder. Think about Amazon's 1-Click ordering. With one-tenth the effort of dialing a phone number, you can buy a new book or DVD. Amazon's site designers have simply made a desired behavior—you spending money on their site—a little bit easier. In doing so, they've generated untold millions of dollars in incremental revenue.

Organizations can tweak their environments to promote certain behaviors; so can individuals. Brian Wansink has a devoted following of dieters who swear by his prime directive: shrink your dinnerware. Use smaller plates, bowls, and cups. Wansink knows that if we use big plates, we feel obligated to cover them with food—a half-full plate somehow feels wrong. But bigger plates = more food = overeating. We can control our eating by tweaking our environment—using smaller dinnerware.

Often what seems like a "character problem" is correctible when you change the environment.

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Chapter 9: Build Habits

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.

That's why it is easier for smokers to quit while they are on vacation—at home, every part of their environment is loaded with smoking associations. It's like trying to quit while inside a Camel advertisement—everywhere you look are reminders of the habit. There's the drawer with the lighters, the ashtrays, the smell of smoke in the closet, etc. When a smoker goes on vacation, the environment becomes neutral. That doesn't mean it's easy to quit, but it is *easier*.

Since we can't always be on vacation, what are some practical ways to create habits? The answer is part environment, part mental.

One key approach is to develop "action triggers." Action triggers can be quite effective in motivating action. In one study, college students had the option to earn extra credit in class by writing a paper about how they spent Christmas Eve. There was one catch: to get the credit, they had to submit the paper by December 26. The students were divided into two groups; one had to set action triggers (noting in advance when and where they were going to write the report) and the other didn't. 33% of the latter group got the paper done; 75% of those who set action triggers turned it in.

Action triggers can't make you do something you don't want to do, but they can motivate people to do the things they know they need to do. One value of action triggers is that we are *preloading* the decision. We are making it something we don't need to think about (which preserves the Rider's self-control). In fact, that is often when they are most useful—in situations that are most draining to the Rider's self-control.

In essence, what action triggers do is create an "instant habit." Habits are behavioral autopilot, and that's what action triggers set up. Leaders who can instill habits that reinforce teams' goals are essentially making progress for free. They've changed behavior in a way that doesn't draw down the Rider's reserves of self-control.

In the Gulf War, General William "Gus" Pagonis was in charge of logistics. He was responsible for moving 550,000 troops, along with all their equipment, halfway around the world. Needless to say, clear and efficient communication was essential. Pagonis held a dialing meeting that started at 8 am and ended at 8:30. He also required everyone to *stand up* during the whole meeting. Here are some of his comments:

"Early on, I discovered that making people stand up keeps the ball moving at a quicker pace. People speak their peace and make room for the next person to go. If someone gets long-winded, other's body language becomes quite noticeable, and people get back on track. The peer group has great power."

Pagonis was consciously creating a habit. He could have had a two-hour, seated blabfest, or started with 15 minutes of small talk. The exciting thing here is that the habit served the mission. To get the job done, they needed focus, clarity, and efficiency. Standing up doesn't guarantee it, but it helped—and it didn't cost anything.

In trying to make a switch, the hardest struggle is to maintain motivation, to keep your Elephant on the road. That puts a huge burden on the Rider, who has to rein in the Elephant when it strays. Shaping the path helps to relieve the Rider's burden, whether it is done by tweaking the environment or building habits.

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Chapter 10: Rally the Herd

Think of the last time you were in a situation where you weren't totally sure how to behave. What did you do to try to fit in? You watched other people, of course. In ambiguous situations, we all look to others for cues about how to behave. When you are leading an Elephant on an unfamiliar path, chances are it's going to follow the herd.

The herd is powerful. That explains why things like obesity are contagious. One study found that when someone became obese, the odds that person's close mutual friends becoming obese tripled. Dr. Christakis, who led the study, said, "You change your idea of what is an acceptable body type by looking at the people around you." Both consciously and unconsciously, we imitate the behavior of others. That's especially true in unfamiliar situations. And change situations are, by definition, unfamiliar. So if you want to change things, you have to pay close attention to social signals, because they can either guarantee a change effort or doom it.

So...how do you create a herd?

One way is to publicize examples of right behavior (the kind you are looking for). A group of social psychologists persuaded a hotel manager to test out a new sign in the hotel bathrooms. Many hotels have little signs encouraging people to use their towels more than once to help the environment. The new sign simply said that "the majority of guests at the hotel" reuse their towels at least once during their stay. Guests who got this sign were 26% more likely to reuse their towels. They took cues from the herd.

A second way is to get like-minded people together. Chances are good that in your organization there are a number of people who are already modeling the behavior you want, and others that are very positive about it. Find ways to link them together and get them talking and dreaming. A synergy will develop that will grow and sweep others along until the change is well-established.

Chapter 11: Keep the Switch Going

"A long journey starts with a single step." True, but you know what else starts with a single step? An ill-conceived ramble that you abandon after a few minutes. In other words, 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 that first step. Something you've done has worked. You've directed the Rider, motivated the Elephant, shaped the Path—and now your team is moving, or you're moving. When you spot movement, you've got to reinforce it.

Think about animal trainers. How do you teach a monkey to ride a skateboard? You don't punish it. Trainers set a behavioral destination and then reward each tiny step towards it. For example, in the first hour of the first day, the monkey gets a chunk of mango for not freaking out when the trainer puts the board in his cage. Later he gets a chunk for touching it, then for sitting on it, then for letting the trainer push him on it. Mango, mango, mango. Hundreds of sessions later, you've got a mango-bloated monkey ready to skate a half-pipe.

Reinforcement is the secret to getting past the first step of your long journey and on the second, third, and more. The problem is most of us are terrible reinforcers. We are much quicker to grumble than to praise. We need to develop the skill of "catching people being good" and affirming that.

Switch

The good news is that once the change is started, it tends to snowball. It begins to take on a life and momentum of its own, until it is solidly established. This is encouraging: Big changes can start with very small steps. Small changes tend to snowball. That doesn't mean it's easy; it's neither always easy nor always hard.

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.