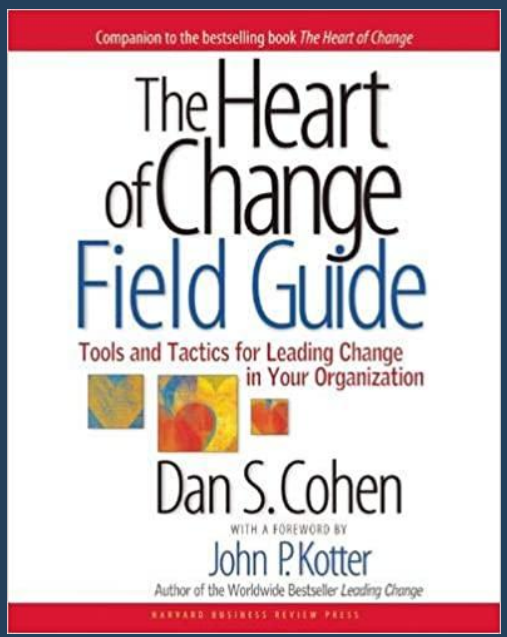

The Heart of Change

Year of publication: 2002
Author: John Kotter
239 pages
Link for purchase: https://amzn.to/3lYcRR6

The book, "The Heart of Change", was published in 2002 by author John Kotter.

This work is a guide that teaches how to promote changes in organizations through behavior and emotions.

Score

8

8 Aplicability
9 Inspiration
8 Innovation
8 Impact on results
8 Structure

Main ideas of the book

- Why are changes difficult to make in organizations?
- Feelings block changes;
- Emotions are at the heart of change;
- The flow of seeing-feeling-changing is more efficient than analyzing-thinking-changing;
- Creating new promoters of change;
- Establishing a new culture.

To whom is this book indicated?

"The Heart of Change" is recommended for anyone who wants to implement major changes in their own organization or in the organization in which they work.

Overview of the book

Overview: Increase urgency

"People change less based on the analysis that shapes their thinking than on the basis of a vision of a truth that influences their feelings."

What limits or prevents people involved in organizations from starting change? Author John Kotter comments on four types of behaviors that may be holding back these changes:

- Complacency;
- Immobility;
- Irrational resistance; and
- Pessimism.

And, then, what is the way to make people, or some of them, abandon the status quo and start worrying about problems and see that change is necessary?
The way is to create a sense of urgency. And this is the first step that the book, "The Heart of Change", highlights for a change to be successful.
It will be difficult for any organization to make changes if these changes are not seen as urgent by some employees, as John quotes:

"Without sufficient urgency, large-scale change may be nothing more than the pointless task of pushing huge rock up the mountain."

But what does that mean? Building a sense of urgency makes the members of the organization always think and take actions aimed at solving problems and, consequently, the future of the company.
Now, you may be asking yourself: how do you create that sense of urgency? How do I get the people involved to realize the need for change?
The key to this, which will also be addressed in the other steps, is the whole to see, feel and change.
To awaken the urgency, it is possible to use objects that people can see, such as videos with customer testimonials, for example. In addition, presenting evidence that proves the need for change is a second important point.
But, don't be focused only on rational arguments, it is the feelings that block the changes and, therefore, it is necessary to instigate them.
And, of course, do not forget the great villains of behavior, which are complacency, anger and fear.

Overview: Build the Orientation Team

After awakening urgency among members of the organization, it is time to structure a team to work on the change process. Naturally, people motivated by this feeling will come together and some of them will have a spirit of leadership.
But, not always the most motivated people are the most suitable for some functions or form a group that works in tune. So, the second step is to build this team of guidelines based on these two characteristics:

1. The team must be composed of people with skills compatible with the needs for change and leadership skills;
2. These people must be able to work on the same team in harmony.

Author John Kotter shows in his book, "The Heart of Change", how effective mentoring teams are created:

- A person with a strong sense of urgency attracts other people;
- The other participants are then selected based on their skills;
- The team is created by attracting and rejecting participants;
- New lower-level groups are formed in organizations.

For team building to go through these four stages and be effective, it is necessary for people to have confidence in what is being done.
Creating that trust is an ongoing process that involves: showing the importance of actions with examples, acting in a coherent way and adding activities as behaviors change. And, thus, show to those involved that change is possible and that the group is able to achieve this.
The last point to be highlighted in the creation of the team concerns an important issue for any team, but one that is not very admired: the meeting.
Meetings are necessary for projects to take place correctly, with proper alignments with the team. But, if meetings are poorly conducted, it tends to diminish trust in the group.
So, it is important to deal with one issue at a time in the meetings, but without letting the next steps go unnoticed and always being responsible for specific activities.

Overview: Develop the right vision

The next step to building the team is precisely to ensure that it has a clear direction for its attitudes. For this, the author John Kotter cites four elements that help guide the team's actions, they are:

1. The budget: how to finance the plan;
2. The plan: how to implement the strategy;
3. The strategy: how to achieve the vision;
4. The vision: where you want to go with actions.

Certainly, to have these four elements going well, the team will need help from other areas of the company. The guidance team conducts the change process, but cannot do it without the help of other employees, as in budgetary matters.
According to the book "The Heart of Change", for the creation of strategies and vision, the team can try to imagine the future, with the consequences of their actions.
John still says that it must be possible to express the vision on a page or in a minute verbally, besides that it must be moving and not be based only on logical and analytical facts. But strategies must be created capable of transforming these visions into realities, promoting change quickly.

Overview: Communicate to promote purchase

As mentioned in the previous topic, the guidance team cannot make all the changes on its own, it needs the help of other members of the organization.
Furthermore, she needs that help to go further. It is necessary for everyone involved to buy the established vision and work for the change to occur.
Therefore, the organization and commitment of the team will be a reason for other people to be part of this change. However, what most prevents other employees from starting to support a cause is the lack of knowledge of what it is about.
As explained by the author John Kotter in his book, "The Heart of Change", to change this scenario, it is necessary to do the homework and clarify all doubts regarding the changes clearly and quickly, showing conviction and confidence in the plans with authority in what should be dealt with.
Going through the same process of seeing, feeling and changing, exposing ideas and clarifying doubts is in the step of seeing, in this case showing others what the movement is about.
With the vision well explained, it is time to feel, where the other employees are released from fear of what they did not know and begin to be optimistic about the ideas presented. Closing this process, people buy the change and start working to achieve it.

Overview: Empowerment for Action

The term Empowerment, in this case, is used to give people the appropriate means to achieve goals, and that can mean removing restrictions. The fifth step, as described by author John Kotter, can be summed up in a few words:

"*It's all about removing barriers.*"

And what can these barriers be? Let's highlight in order what may be restricting the changes:

- The Boss: if the boss doesn't believe in change and opposes it, that will be the main barrier faced by those involved. Since he occupies a higher position in the organization, it is common for people to be afraid to go against the boss's opinion. One way to deal with this is, first, to show him that he is creating a difficulty and understand why he is acting in this way;
- The system: bureaucracy is another impediment. The established strategies and visions may not be included in the company's reward systems. The solution is that these systems encourage creativity and also help to build self-confidence;
- The mind: the problem here is psychological and irrational, people are led to believe that they cannot perform some actions, they are discredited by themselves. The tips given by the author to deal with this are: "never underestimate the incapacitating power of the mind" and "never underestimate the ability of intelligent people to help others see their possibilities";
- The lack of information: to deal with this barrier, a simple way out, but one that is not widely practiced, is feedback on the actions themselves, as it helps in self-knowledge about how we interact.

The book, "The Heart of Change", clarifies that dealing with all barriers at once is not the solution, but gradually it is possible to work on each one of them, in order to eliminate the restrictions that involve the process of change.

Overview: Providing short-term wins and not allowing discouragement

Short-term victories show that changes are becoming reality, so they keep the faith of those involved in this improvement process alive, and not only that, they serve to dispel those who did not believe.
For this, the author John Kotter states in his book, "The Heart of Change", that these victories should appear soon, so it is not recommended to create several projects at the same time. It is necessary to have steps in which your achievements are celebrated and point to the vision.
As stated, these quick victories serve to stimulate other people, therefore, the achievements must be exposed with the objective of reaching the largest number of people possible.
However, care is vital in this phase, so that people do not see this success as an “opportunity” to return to the phase of lack of urgency. Therefore, victories are necessary, but discouragement must not be allowed, which marks the sixth and seventh step towards change.
To prevent the wave of discouragement from reaching, even with the sense of urgency present, it is important that people are not exhausted from working so much.
The change process does require effort and work, and in addition the organization must continue to function. It is important to delegate tasks and discard functions that are no longer needed in this process.

Overview: Making change lasting

"Jumps into the future sometimes end in falls in the past."

Making change lasting is the eighth step for change to be real. But this is not so easy, the most common tendency is that all effort surrenders to the strength of traditions.
According to author John Kotter, for this not to happen, the company's culture must change. This is a long and demanding process, and it is a mistake to ignore your need.
When implementing a new culture in a company, the people who work in it must feel part of it to be the promoters of this change over time.
So, always expose what is relevant to the company, showing your success with the changes. Guiding new employees and establishing promotions for people who support the new standards are also solutions highlighted by the book, "The Heart of Change", to strengthen and take root.
But remember: culture comes later. It comes after acting at the heart of change, motivating people and showing results. And it is essential that the effort is not in vain.

What do other authors say about it?

In the recommended “Everybody Matters”, the authors Bob Chapman and Raj Sisodia explore how true leaders must continually study to develop and develop those around them so that they can also become excellent leaders who believe and value people.

In addition, employees should be encouraged to innovate and try new things even if they fail. This makes them realize that managers have full confidence in their potential and their work. In the book, this practice is called "responsible freedom".

The author Charles Duhigg, in the book "The Power of Habit", emphasizes that there is no magic formula that will automatically change your habits, but with time and effort, habits can be shaped.

Finally, in “Good to Great”, the author Jim Collins, explains how applying the culture of discipline in a company can leverage the results, disseminating this practice to all employees, which are essential for the success of an organization.

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

Now that you know the steps necessary to establish real changes in organizations, how about recapping some ideas covered by author John Kotter?

- Change must be seen as urgent and necessary to mobilize people;
- The team should not be composed only of those who believe in the change, but also of people qualified for the functions;
- It is necessary to establish an objective for your actions;
- Communicate your performance to attract more people;
- Eliminate the barriers that will appear in this process;
- Divide the project into smaller parts so that short-term wins are achieved and motivate people;
- Don't let people go back to the status quo;
- Create a new culture in the company.

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