

Book review of the heart of change



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Introduction

The book “ The Heart of Change” is written by John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen. John P. Kotter (1947) is the professor at HBS (Harvard Business School). He also is an author and is considered an expert on change and leadership. He fastidiously discusses about the change taking place in the best organizations. He won many awards for his books on leadership and change. While, Dan S. Cohen is the principal with Deloitte Consulting and he mainly focuses on the large scale organizations. This book “ The Heart of Change” is about the real life stories that how people change their organizations by using the eight step model ideas.

It actually is the follow up of his (Kotter’s) enormously fantastic book “ Leading Change”. Kotter wrote this book six years ago to help people in bringing change within the organizations. With the passage of time, he got to know that people could not handle large scale organizational change well and made remarkable mistakes due to little exposure of highly successful transformations.

“ Most people did not handle large-scale change well” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. ix).

The time he wrote the book “ Leading Change”, many questions remained unanswered (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. ix). But then he received an invitation from Deloitte Consulting to do a project and happened to have a considerable set of interviews which were helpful to create better understanding of the eight step model. This book “ The Heart of Change” is about the problems and the solutions people faced in eight-step model. The most important thing discussed in the book is how to change the behavior of
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the people within the organization and what is the process people experience to bring about the change. Total thirty four stories are shared by the author in this book to make the reader understand about large-scale organizational change. The book presents a notion that organizational leaders are supposed to make efforts and work harder to influence the employees and make them to scrutinize or observe the large scale change with feelings and emotions. According to Kotter & Cohen (2002) people are quite aware of change and they respond sensitively to it. Different emotions come out and it only is because of the leader of the organization who can help employees understand change by using the ideas behind the eight step model.

Summary

This book deals with the question that how do organizations change.

According to Kotter and Cohen (2002), we are living in a turbulent world where it is very necessary to bring change and the organizations that are afraid of or bring change and are stuck at one position will never grow and will be left behind. Eight steps are presented in this book to implement change within the organizations. The steps are as follows:

Increase Urgency

Build the Guiding Team

Get the Vision Right

Communicate for Buy-In

Empower Action

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Create Short-Term Wins

Don't Let Up

Make Stick Change

In the first step “ Increase Urgency” the authors (Kotter & Cohen) state that this stage makes people to take some initiative to bring change within the organization. It makes them to think and realize that they must do something for that. A short story “ The Videotape of the Angry Customer” is mentioned in this step to show how the sense of urgency was generated among the organizational employees. It, no doubt, was a good and effective way to increase urgency among them.

The next step, according to Kotter and Cohen (2002) is “ building a guiding team”. It helps leaders to bring right people with right characteristics together so that an effective change can take place. Team work is a necessary aspect of the organizations. All the employees are not same, so it is mandatory to build a team of effective and efficient change agents by the leaders. An example given here is of “ Meeting Down Under” to clarify how an Australian corporation selected a sum of fifty-five people to meet and eventually lead change within the organization.

The third stage “ Get the vision right” enables guiding team to get a vision and make complex issues simpler. It deals with four elements i. e. budgets, plans, strategies and vision (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). The fourth step is “ communicate for buy-in”. The major goal here is to stimulate better understanding and use as many people as possible and necessary to bring

change. This step shows that how engaging in authentic dialogues can solve different issues taking place in organization. The fifth step “ Empower Action” is the idea of removing hurdles and key obstacles for employees and facilitates them properly. Change leaders focus on bosses. They focus on removing obstacles but not giving power. Some other barriers that need to be broken are:

Removing the System barrier

Removing barriers of the mind

Removing information barriers

The sixth step is “ short-term wins” is much related to the fifth step because empowerment leads to short term wins. Short-term wins:

“...nourish faith in the change effort, emotionally reward the hard workers, keep the critics at bay, and build momentum” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

The idea of short term wins is of great significance because these are our short wins that make us confident and keep the morale high. In seventh step “ don't let up” Kotter (2002) suggests keeping introducing change until the vision is achieved. The eighth and final step “ make change stick” is the toughest step to deal with and implement to. Supportive and strong organizational culture is necessary to keep the change constant.

Analysis and evaluation of the book

Strengths:

The concept of change is given through this book in a very inspiring and effective way. The idea of eight-step model is very fascinating to bring about the change. Different stories are described according to the steps which have made this book so interesting and worth reading. Change is the need of time and time is passing very quickly. We live in a world where everything is changing day by day. Nothing is constant except change; as quoted by a Greek Philosopher:

Change is the only constant (Heraclitus).

We need to have a proper pattern to benefit us to deal with organizational change. This book is a very good piece of work because the eight steps described by the author are very strong and of great significance for any organization. This “ The Heart of Change” is the second book (follow up of Leading Change) of the writer on the same topic regarding large scale organizational change. It is a great help for leaders to create change within the organization. It is important to bring change rather than getting stick at one place.

“ By transform, I mean the adoption of new technologies, major strategic shifts, process reengineering, mergers and acquisitions, restructurings into different sorts of business units, attempts to significantly improve innovation, and cultural change” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. ix).

The language used in the book is quite simpler and easy to understand. Kotter has been quite straight forward rather than being complicated and the source of complexities for the readers. The first three steps help in just creating a climate for change; the other three engage and enable the organization to create change and the last two steps help others to

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implement and sustain change. So the sequence and the idea of these steps are awesome as all the steps are interlinked and of great significance.

The notions and perceptions are defined efficiently and effectively. The stories are told in a very attractive way to illustrate the feelings and emotions of the people in real life stories. Kotter emphasizes on emotions rather than feelings and thinking which no doubt play an essential role in successful organizations. The flow of " See-Feel-Change" presented by Kotter & Cohen is more appealing than " analysis-think-change". Kotter (2002) replaced " See" with " Analysis" where employees are presented with the analysis of the problem and are not compelled to scrutinize the dramatic situations; while " See" makes people to see and then develop their own feelings about the certain thing or problem. People can better feel what they observe by themselves instead of the situation presented to them and made them to think about the problem in reference to whatever is told to them. They themselves get involved and emotionally change ideas and their behavior. It truly is a good way to enhance creativity of the workers or people. The stories described in the book " The Heart of Change" clearly show how the flow " See-feel-Change" really work. Elaboration of the story according to the See-Feel-Change process is given at the end of each story. It makes it easy for the people to understand the concept clearly and to know that how the people are tackled and motivated to deal with the problems within the organizations.

The concluding part of the book " We See, We Feel, We Change" and " Feeling and Thinking" is much inspirational. Although it is a business book but does not let anyone get bored because it contains great thoughts. It is a <https://assignbuster.com/book-review-of-the-heart-of-change/>

well written book as the language used here is very simple and easy to understand. It is for sure that the eight steps defined here are very interesting and motivating but a very few people can manage to handle well these steps. It is not less than a herculean task but it can help to build a dynamic place of work and makes the employees able to deal with any kind of challenge. The writer stresses that major challenge for people is to change their behavior. This is the only way through which change can be brought or created within the organizations.

“ The single biggest challenge in the process is changing people’s behavior” (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 179)

Weaknesses:

Most of the stories communicated in this book are related to corporate while there are many other organizations, like the institutes of higher studies as well, which work different than such organizations. There is a great difference between business and education sector. So, the stories could be included about different sectors as well. Furthermore, there are excessive stories added in this book that sometimes reader get bored or frustrated by reading same kind of stories over and over again. Because if the reader gets the lesson once, there is no need to repeat the same kind of stories throughout the book.

Kotter suggests that these steps must be performed in a sequence so it is difficult for the leaders to change the direction once the process has started. This model can only be implemented in top-down change process to change the behavior of the people to bring change in large scale organizations.

Application

As, this is a very impressive book and holds a very good sequence of eight steps necessary to manage change, so it would be great if this book and its rules are being applied in our culture and organizations. Change is the need of time and our country, being an underdeveloped country, requires such strategies so that it can shine like a supernova in the map of the world. It would be great if people work collaboratively, sincerely and enthusiastically for bringing change within the organizations.

Conclusion

This is a great book based on the change and leadership by Kotter & Cohen about how to manage change in the work place. It, for sure, is an excellent source to learn that how to lead and manage change within the organizations. The eight steps defined here are very appealing and helpful to bring change in large-scale organizations by changing people's behavior. The information provided in is very beneficial for the change agents who make efforts to bring change. This book is well written and contains great thoughts. Kotter & Cohen also suggest See-Feel-change strategy to help people to see the need for new behavior in their work place. The stories described in "The Heart of Change" clearly show how the sequence works.

This eight-step model can be applied in Pakistani organizations as well and it would result well but perhaps people would not implement it accordingly.

Most of the people adopt the strategy of leg pulling rather than doing work as a team. Illiteracy or poverty can be another factor for not implementing these steps effectively in organizations. But if this whole process is implemented properly in a sequence by keeping a vision ahead, than

Pakistani organizations can also be one of the best and highly successful organizations. All of the steps are of equal importance. Each step is inter-linked with the other one. The “ see-feel-change” approach appeals to the heart and the stories really motivate others how to acknowledge change. Such approach can really build a dynamic culture. It is highly recommended to read this book and get the ideas from, whenever a transformation is required within the organization. So, I would strongly recommend this book because it really is worth reading.