

## “Switch”

### How to Change Things When Change Is Hard

By Chip Heath and Dan Heath

Kindle Notes by Dave Kraft

But, to us, the duo’s tension is captured best by an analogy used by University of Virginia psychologist Jonathan Haidt in his wonderful 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. He’s completely overmatched. Most of us are all too familiar. 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, and that’s the second surprise about change: What looks like laziness is often exhaustion. What looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity.

If you want people to change, you must provide crystal-clear direction. To change behavior, you’ve got to *direct the Rider, motivate the Elephant, and shape the Path*. If you can do all three at once, dramatic change can happen even if you don’t have lots of power or resources behind you. Some is not a number; soon is not a time. Here’s the number: 100,000. Here’s the time: June 14, 2006—9 a.m.” Whether the switch you seek is in your family, in your charity, in your organization, or in society at large, you’ll get there by making three things happen. You’ll direct the Rider, motivate the Elephant, and shape the Path.

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. “What’s working and how can we do more of it?” That’s the bright-spot philosophy in a single question. Ms. Smith’s class was a bright spot, and as we’ve seen, anytime you have a bright spot, your mission is to clone it. 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? Yet, in the real world, this obvious question is almost never asked. Instead, the question we ask is more problem focused: “What’s broken, and how do we fix it?” Our Rider has a problem focus when he needs a solution focus. If you are a manager, ask yourself: “What is the ratio of the time I spend solving problems to the time I spend scaling successes?”

We need to switch from archaeological problem solving to bright-spot evangelizing. What happened here is decision paralysis. More options, even good ones, can freeze us and make us retreat to the default plan. Bottom line: Decision paralysis disrupts medical decisions and retail decisions and investment decisions and dating decisions. Let’s go out on a limb and suggest that it might affect decisions in your job and life, too. As Barry Schwartz puts it in his book *The Paradox of Choice*, as we face more and more options, “we become overloaded. Choice no longer liberates, it debilitates.

It might even be said to tyrannize.” 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. If you are leading a change effort, you need to remove the ambiguity from your vision of change. Granted, this is asking a lot. It means that you’ll need to understand how to script the critical moves, to translate aspirations into actions. It’s not good enough to ask your team to “be more creative” or to “tighten up on the purse strings.” That’s like telling the American public to “be healthier.” Until you can ladder your way down from a change idea to a specific behavior, you’re not ready to lead a switch. To create movement, you’ve got to be specific and be concrete. The Rider has to be jarred out of introspection, out of analysis. He needs a script that explains how to act, and that’s why the successes we’ve seen have involved such crisp direction. Clarity dissolves

That was Esserman’s destination postcard, and it was an admirable one. When you describe a compelling destination, you’re helping to correct one of the Rider’s great weaknesses—the tendency to get lost in analysis. To the Rider, the “analyzing” phase is often more satisfying than the “doing” phase, and that’s dangerous for your switch. You need a gut-smacking goal, one that appeals to both Rider and Elephant. Destination postcards do double duty: They show the Rider where you’re headed, and they show the Elephant why the journey is worthwhile.

What is essential, though, is to marry your long-term goal with short-term critical moves. When you’re at the beginning, don’t obsess about the middle, because the middle is going to look different once you get there. Just look for a strong beginning and a strong ending and get moving. Give direction to the Rider—both a start and a finish. Send him a destination postcard when change works, it’s because leaders are speaking to the Elephant as well as to the Rider. Kotter and Cohen note that analytical tools work best when “parameters are known, assumptions are minimal, and the future is not fuzzy.” Kotter and Cohen observed that, in almost all successful change efforts, the sequence of change is not ANALYZE-THINK-CHANGE, but rather SEE-FEEL-CHANGE. We know there’s a difference between knowing how to act and being motivated to act.

To solve bigger, more ambiguous problems, we need to encourage open minds, creativity, and hope. One way to motivate action, then, is to make people feel as though they’re already closer to the finish line than they might have thought. A business cliché commands us to “raise the bar.” But that’s exactly the wrong instinct if you want to motivate a reluctant Elephant. You need to lower the bar. Picture taking a high-jump bar and lowering it so far that it can be stepped over. If you want a reluctant Elephant to get moving, you need to shrink the change. Rescue—if people are facing a daunting task, and their instinct is to avoid it, you’ve got to break down the task. Shrink the change. Make the change small enough that they can’t help but score a victory.

One way to shrink change, then, is to limit the investment you’re asking for—only 5 minutes of housecleaning, only one small debt. Another way to shrink change is to think of small wins—milestones that are within reach. (Our dad, when “milestones” seemed too distant, they should look for “inch pebbles.” Nice The overall goal—cleaning the whole house—is too distant to be motivating, but if you can engineer a small win in the first 5 minutes, it might buy you enough enthusiasm to pursue the next milestone.

When you engineer early successes, what you're really doing is engineering hope. Hope is precious to a change effort. It's Elephant fuel. It's like climbing a tall ladder and focusing on the next step rather than gawking up at the top. By using the miracle scale, you always have a clear idea of where you're going next, and you have a clear sense of what the next small victory will be. You're moving forward, and, even better, you're getting more confident in your ability to keep moving forward. When you set small, visible goals, and people achieve them, they start to get it into their heads that they can succeed. Former UCLA coach John Wooden, one of the greatest college basketball coaches of all time, once said, "When you improve a little each day, eventually big things occur.... Don't look for the quick, big improvement. Seek the small improvement one day at a time. Coaches are masters of shrinking the change. By pushing their teams to attain a sequence of "small, visible goals," they build momentum. One thing we can control is how we define the ultimate victory and the small victories that lead up to it. Small targets lead to small victories, and small victories can often trigger a positive spiral of behavior.

It's a theme we've seen again and again—big changes come from a succession of small changes. It's OK if the first changes seem almost trivial. We've seen that one way to motivate a switch is to shrink the change, which makes people feel "big" relative to the challenge. Identity is going to play a role in nearly every change situation. the research of James March, a professor of political science at Stanford University.

When people make choices, they tend to rely on one of two basic models of decision making:

The consequences model – What will we achieve? Bottom line results?

The identity model-What are my values? What is truly important to me?

People are receptive to developing new identities. Those identities "grow" from small beginnings.

Two kinds of Mindsets:

Fixed mindset.

Growth mindset

People who have a fixed mindset believe that their abilities are basically static. If you are someone with a fixed mindset, you tend to avoid challenges, because if you fail, you fear that others will see your failure as an indication of your true ability and see you as a loser. In contrast, people who have a growth mindset believe that abilities are like muscles—they can be built up with practice. With a growth mindset, you tend to accept more challenges despite the risk of failure. people with a growth mindset—those who stretch themselves, take risks, accept feedback, and take the long-term view—can't help but progress in their lives and careers. If failure is a necessary part of change, then the way people understand failure is critical.

The growth mindset, then, is a buffer against defeatism. It reframes failure as a natural part of the change process. And that's critical, because people will persevere only if they perceive falling down as learning rather than as failing. The Elephant has to believe that it's capable of conquering the change. And there are two routes to building people's confidence so that they feel "big" relative to their challenge. You can shrink the change or grow your people (or, preferably, both). make the journey easier. Create a steep downhill slope and give them a push. Remove some friction from the trail. Scatter around lots of signs to tell them they're getting close. In short, you can shape the Path. "We're taught to focus on incentives by our business background," says Bregman. "Or even our parents: 'Do this or you won't get your allowance!'" But executives—and parents—often have more tools than they think they have. If you change the path, you'll change the behavior.

What looks like a people problem is often a situation problem. Simple tweaks of the Path can lead to dramatic changes in behavior. To change yourself or other people, you've got to change habits, Does this mean that simply by imagining a time and place where you'll do something, you increase the likelihood that you'll actually do it? Yes and no. Action triggers won't get you (or anyone else) to do something you truly don't want to do. An action trigger never would have convinced college students to participate in an online calculus camp on Christmas Day. But, as the extra-credit study demonstrates, action triggers can have a profound power to motivate people to do the things they know they need to do. Peter Gollwitzer argues that the value of action triggers resides in the fact that we are preloading a

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Habits are behavioral autopilot, and that's exactly what action triggers are setting up. A recent meta-study that analyzed 8,155 participants across 85 studies found that the typical person who set an action trigger did better than 74 percent of people on the same task who didn't set one. There are only two things to think about: (1) The habit needs to advance the mission, as did Pagonis's stand-up meetings. (2) The habit needs to be relatively easy to embrace. Change was coming into conflict with culture, and let's face it, a new rule is no match for a culture. But reinforcement does require you to have a clear view of the destination, and it requires you to be savvy enough to reinforce the bright-spot behaviors when they happen. 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.

In summary, you must:

**DIRECT the Rider FOLLOW THE BRIGHT SPOTS.** Investigate what's working and clone it.

**SCRIPT THE CRITICAL MOVES.** Don't think big picture, think in terms of specific behaviors.

**POINT TO THE DESTINATION.** Change is easier when you know where you're going and why it's worth it.

**MOTIVATE the Elephant FIND THE FEELING.** Knowing something isn't enough to cause change. Make people feel something.

**SHRINK THE CHANGE.** Break down the change until it no longer spooks the Elephant.

**GROW YOUR PEOPLE.** Cultivate a sense of identity and instill the growth mindset.

**TWEAK THE ENVIRONMENT.** When the situation changes, the behavior changes. So change the situation.

**BUILD HABITS.** When behavior is habitual, it's "free"—it doesn't tax the Rider. Look for ways to encourage habits.

**RALLY THE HERD.** Behavior is contagious. Help it spread.

What is the most trivial thing that you can do—right at this moment—that would represent a baby step toward the goal?