Switch by Chip & Dan Heath
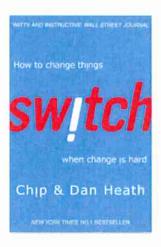
The Five Big Ideas

1. There are three surprises about change.
2. Change often fails because our emotional side (The Elephant) and our rational side (The Rider) can't cooperate long enough for the desired change to occur.
3. Another reason change often fails is because of our surrounding environment. This is known as the "Path."
4. So, to change a behavior, you need to direct The Rider, motivate The Elephant and shape The Path
5. Change isn't easy, but with the right framework, it becomes *easier*.

For things to change, somebody somewhere has to start acting differently. Maybe it's you, maybe it's your team. Picture that person (or people).

Each has an emotional Elephant side and a rational Rider side. You've got to reach both. And you've also got to clear the way for them to succeed. In short, you must do three things:

➤ DIRECT the Rider

FOLLOW THE BRIGHT SPOTS. Investigate what's working and clone it. [Jerry Sternin in Vietnam, solutions-focused therapy]

SCRIPT THE CRITICAL MOVES. Don't think big picture, think in terms of specific behaviors. [1% milk, four rules at the Brazilian railroad]

POINT TO THE DESTINATION. Change is easier when you know where you're going and why it's worth it. ["You'll be third graders soon," "No dry holes" at BP]

➤ MOTIVATE the Elephant

FIND THE FEELING. Knowing something isn't enough to cause change. Make people feel something. [Piling gloves on the table, the chemotherapy video game, Robyn Waters's demos at Target]

SHRINK THE CHANGE. Break down the change until it no longer spooks the Elephant. [The 5-Minute Room Rescue, procurement reform]

GROW YOUR PEOPLE. Cultivate a sense of identity and instill the growth mindset. [Brasilata's "inventors," junior-high math kids' turnaround]

➤ SHAPE the Path

TWEAK THE ENVIRONMENT. When the situation changes, the behavior changes. So change the situation. [Throwing out the phone system at Rackspace, 1-Click ordering, simplifying the online time sheet]

BUILD HABITS. When behavior is habitual, it's "free"—it doesn't tax the Rider. Look for ways to encourage habits. [Setting "action triggers," eating two bowls of soup while dieting, using checklists]

RALLY THE HERD. Behavior is contagious. Help it spread. ["Fataki" in Tanzania, "free spaces" in hospitals, seeding the tip jar]

Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard

by Chip Heath and Dan Heath

Chapter 1: Three Surprises About Change

- The first surprise is that to change a person's behavior, you've got to change that person's situation.
- For individuals' behavior to change, you must influence not only their environment and their hearts and minds. But the heart and mind often disagree.
- Your brain is two systems: The emotional side, which feels pain and pleasure, and the rational side, that deliberates and analyzes.
- We can think of our emotional side as the Elephant, and our rational side as its Rider. When they disagree, the Rider is going to lose.
- But the Elephant gets things done: it provides the drive and energy toward a goal. And the Rider has the weakness of over-analyzing and over-thinking things.
- If you want to change things, you must appeal to both: The Rider provides the planning and direction, while the Elephant provides the energy.
- Self-control is an exhaustible resource. When exhausted, the Rider does not have enough strength to control the Elephant anymore.
- 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 second surprise is that what looks like laziness is often exhaustion. Change is hard because people wear themselves out.
- The third surprise is that what looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity. If the Rider isn't sure of what direction to go, he leads the Elephant in circles.
- If you want people to change, you must provide crystal-clear direction. Otherwise the rider will spin his wheels.
- Distilling this into three parts: Direct the Rider, motivate the Elephant, and shape the Path.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Whenever we are trying to change something, our Riders often become mired in TBU analysis – "True But Useless." What are the TBU's in our schools and District?

2. When reading the early part of this book, what did you find most resonating when thinking about your own work?

3. What actions should we be scripting to achieve our equity goals, as an organization – and how can we "script the critical moves" for others?

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Part 1: Direct the Rider

Chapter 2: Find the Bright Spots

- Bright spots, or successes worth emulating, solve the "not invented here" problem, where people have a knee-jerk, skeptical response to imported solutions.
- In situations where change is needed, the Rider can see too many problems and spend too much time sizing them up, thereby dooming the effort.
- Bright spots are your best hope for directing the Rider in such situations when you're trying to bring about change.
- Solutions-focused therapists pose the Miracle Question: "If all your troubles were solved over overnight, what is the first small sign of this that you'd see in the morning?"
- They then pose to the Exception Question: "When is the last time you saw a little bit of the miracle?"
- By answering this question the client is offering up proof that he or she has already solved the problem, even in some circumstances.
- The bright spot philosophy in a single question is to ask yourself, "What is working and how can we do more of it?"
- The Rider's capacity for analysis is endless; even successes can look like problems to an overactive Rider.
- Big problems are typically solved not by big solutions, but by a series of smaller solutions. This asymmetry is why the Rider's analysis can backfire so easily.
- We must ask less of "What's broken, and how can we fix it?" and instead ask "What's working, and how can we do more of it?"
- Our predilection for the negative creates a problem focus for our Rider; by focusing on bright spots we can create a solution focus.

Chapter 3: Script the Critical Moves

- In times of change, the status quo is replaced with decisions; these new choices create uncertainty, which leads to decision paralysis.
- Ambiguity exhausts the rider because it tugs on the reins of the Elephant, trying to direct it down a new path.
- Uncertainty makes the Elephant anxious, and so it will insist on taking the default path, which is the status quo.
- Change begins at the level of individual decisions and actions; scripting guides the behavior that you want to see in a difficult moment.

- Scripting only the critical moves, instead of all moves, provides focus and makes it easier for people to change direction.
- Don't assume the new moves are obvious. Translate aspirations into actions by clearly defining behavioral goals.
- Conventional wisdom says that people resist change, people are stubborn and set in their ways; but clarity dissolves resistance.

Chapter 4: Point to the Destination

- Good to Great showed that a "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal," or BHAG, was a motivational goal that distinguished lasting companies from less successful ones.
- In creating change, we want a *destination postcard*, or inspirational and vivid picture of the near-term future that shows what is possible.
- By pointing to an attractive destination, the Rider applies his strengths to figure out how to get there, instead of getting lost in analysis.
- SMART goals, or those that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timely, address ambiguity and irrelevance, but lack emotional response.
- SMART goals are better for steady-state situations than change situations, because the assumptions underlying them are that the goals are worthwhile.
- When a big picture goal is imprecise, its ambiguity creates wiggle room for the Elephant to rationalize failure.
- A Black & White goal, by contrast, is all-or-nothing, but uninspiring and scripts critical behaviors instead of creating a destination postcard.
- B&W goals may be the solution for the potential for inaction on your team, or for silent resistance that may slow or sabotage your change initiative.
- Your goal can be less unyielding, but marry your long-term goal with short term critical moves while providing a behavioral script.
- Don't obsess about the middle, because it's going to look different once you get there. Look for a strong beginning and strong ending and get moving.
- In summary, for the Rider, follow the bright spots, and give direction by sending a destination postcard and scripting critical moves.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some of the "bright spots" in your work? When do you not have trouble overcoming problems – those are your bright spots.

2. In what situations does District 90 experience decision paralysis?

3. Can you describe some changes in your life that you embraced without resistance – and even looked forward to? Think about how that change made you feel.

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Part 2: Motivate the Elephant

Chapter 5: Find the Feeling

- When change works, it's because leaders are speaking to the Elephant as well as to the Rider.
- Analytical tools work best when the parameters are known, the assumptions are minimal, and the future is not fuzzy.
- The sequence of change is not ANALYZE-THINK-CHANGE but SEE-FEEL-CHANGE, as you're presented with evidence that makes you feel something.
- Trying to fight inertia and indifference with analytical arguments is a solution that does not match the problem.
- We are bad at self-evaluation because it involves interpretation, and the Elephant tends to take the rosiest interpretation of the facts.
- These *positive illusions* make change difficult because they make it difficult for us to get a clear picture of where we are and how we're doing.
- The ambiguity in terms like "leader" or "team player" only enables our corresponding positive illusions.
- Some may try to create a "burning platform," or crisis to convince people they're facing a catastrophe and have no choice but to move.
- Negative emotions produce particular actions and facial expressions, and have a narrowing effect on our thoughts, providing focus.
- Positive emotions "broaden and build" our repertoire of thoughts an actions: They broaden what we consider doing, through which we build resources and skills.
- To solve bigger, more ambiguous problems, we must rely on positive emotion and encourage open minds, creativity, and hope.

Chapter 6: Shrink the Change

- People find it more motivating to be partially finished with a longer journey than to be at the starting line of a shorter one.
- That sense of progress is critical, because the Elephant is easily demoralized. It needs reassurance for the first step.
- If leading a change effort, don't focus solely on what's new and different about the change to come; remind people what's already been conquered.
- If people are facing a daunting task, and their instinct is to avoid it, shrink the change.
- Make the change small enough that they can't help but score a victory. Progress will snowball, and you will motivate the Elephant.
- You can shrink the change either by limiting the investment you're asking for, or by setting milestones within reach.

- When you engineer early successes, what you are really doing is engineering hope, which is Elephant fuel.
- Once people are on the path and making progress, it's important to make their advances visible. Such encouragement is self-reinforcing.
- This also focuses attention on small milestones that are attainable and visible rather than the eventual destination, which may seem very remote.
- A small win reduces importance, reduces demands, and raises perceived skill levels, each of which makes the change more self-sustaining.

Chapter 7: Grow Your People

- Shrinking the change makes people feel "big" relative to the challenge. Or you can grow the people, giving them strength to act.
- In the *consequences model* of decision making, we weigh costs and benefits and make the choice that maximizes our satisfaction.
- In the *identity model,* we ask "Who am I?", "What kind of situation is this?", and "What would someone like me do in this situation?"
- An identity model omits any calculation of costs and benefits.
- Because identities are central to the way people make decisions, any change effort that violates someone's identity is likely doomed to failure.
- If someone doesn't aspire to be the person who would make the change you're asking, then you must work hard so they aspire to a different self-image.
- People are receptive to new identities, and identities "grow" from small beginnings. Start small and build momentum.
- Even an ultimately successful quest is going to involve failure en route, and your Elephant really hates to fail.
- People with a fixed mindset avoid challenges, feel threatened by negative feedback, and try not to be seen exerting too much effort.
- People with a growth mindset believe that abilities are like muscles, and that they can be built up with practice.
- Those with a growth mindset stretch themselves, take risks, accept feedback, and take a long term view. They can't help but progress in their lives and careers.
- A growth mindset compliment praises effort rather than skill.
- The business world implicitly rejects the growth mindset. You plan and then execute; practice looks like poor execution.
- If failure is a necessary part of change, then the way people interpret failure is critical.
- Although growth mindset seems to draw attention to failure, and even encourages us to seek out failure, it is unflaggingly optimistic.
- It reframes failure as a natural part of the change process. People only persevere if they perceive falling down as learning, not falling

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some ways that D90 has been trying to get people to change by using information, rather than feeling? Is that working?

2. In your life, have you experienced times when a seemingly small act led to big change? Was it a good example of "snowballing," where one change leads to another which leads to another?

3. How would you describe the identify of your school or our District? How might we appeal to folks' identity as a way of motivating their Elephants?

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Part 3: Shape the Path

Chapter 8: Tweak the Environment

- The Fundamental Attribution Error is our inclination to attribute people's behavior to the way they are rather than to the situation they're in.
- What looks like a people problem is often a situation problem; that problem can be remedied by shaping the path.
- Tweaking the environment is about making the right behaviors a little bit easier and the wrong behaviors a little bit harder.
- You know you've got a smart solution when everyone hates it and it still works, or if it works so well that hate turns to enthusiasm.
- When it comes to changing our own behavior, environmental tweaks may prove more effective than self-control.
- The Haddon Matrix is a framework that decomposes accidents into pre-event, event, and post-event time periods.
- Pre-event focuses on prevention, event focuses on minimizing the probability of damage, and post-event focuses on minimizing damage.

Chapter 9: Build Habits

- One of the subtle ways in which our environment acts on us is by reinforcing or deterring our habits.
- Good habits allow good things to happen without the Rider taking charge, which is good because his self-control is exhaustible.
- An action trigger is when you've made the decision to execute a certain action when you encounter a certain situational trigger.
- An action trigger preloads the next action; there is no cycle of conscious deliberation. You conserve the Rider's self-control.
- By predeciding with an action trigger, you pass the control of your behavior onto the environment. You create an "instant habit."
- Leaders who can instill habits that reinforce their teams' goals are essentially making progress for free.
- The hard question for a leader is not how to form habits but which habits to encourage.
- When creating a habit to support your change, it needs to advance the mission, and it needs to be relatively easy to embrace.
- In shaping the Path, the humble checklist is a tool that combines the strategies of tweaking the environment and building habits.
- Checklists educate people about what's best, showing them the ironclad way to do something.

- Even without ironclad ways of doing something, checklists avoid blindspots in a complex environment, and provide insurance against overconfidence.

Chapter 10: Rally the Herd

- In ambiguous situations or unfamiliar environments, such as during change, we all look to others for cues on how to behave.
- In situations where the herd has embraced the right behavior, publicize it. Otherwise, publicizing will hurt, not help.
- Rallying the support of others who could in turn influence those you hope to sway is an attempt to change the culture.
- "Free spaces" are small-scale meetings where reformers can gather and ready themselves for action without observation by the dominant group.
- Every culture is shaped by language. Incubating a new language with a new set of values can create an "oppositional identity."
- If you want to change the culture of your organization, you must let the reformers come together in a free space.
- You must also permit an identity conflict, or an "us versus them" struggle to happen. Think of it as organizational molting.

Chapter 11: Keep the Switch Going

- Recognize and celebrate your first step on the path to change. And when you spot that movement, reinforce it.
- Set a behavioral destination and then use "approximations," rewarding each tiny step toward the destination.
- Reinforcement is the key to getting past the first step on the journey, but we are quicker to grouse than to praise.
- Learning to find bright spots, or approximations, and reward them requires constantly scanning the environment.
- Change is not an event; it is a process. And to lead a process requires persistence.
- The mere exposure effect says the more you're exposed to something, the more you like it. This can help sustain change.
- Cognitive dissonance says that once people have begun to act in a new way, it will be difficult for them to dislike the way they're acting.
- As small changes snowball into big changes, inertia will shift from resisting change to supporting it.
- People who change have a clear direction (the Rider), ample motivation (the Elephant), and a supportive environment (the Path).

Questions for Discussion:

1. Think back over your day. In how many ways did your environment shape your behavior?

2. We all imitate the behavior of others, whether it is positive or negative. What social behaviors in our midst would you like to see changed?

3. How do you "rally your herd?" How can we collectively support the development of "free space" that can be created to bring together the people who want to change?