

SWITCH – How to Change Things When Change is Hard

By Chip and Dan Heath. Broadway Books, NY. 2010.

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

- **Find 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.

Shape the Path

- **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.

Keep the Switch Going

Here, now, are the ideas in the book presented in more detail.

It was Jonathan Haidt, in his book *The Happiness Hypothesis*, who presented the metaphor of the emotional side of us as the Elephant, and the rational side as the Rider. The Heath's write: 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."

1. The Rider's strength is thinking long-term, but the Rider can get lost in analysis paralysis, and just become exhausted. Rider's can create direction, but not motivation. And, what looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity. Provide crystal-clear direction.
2. The Elephant is where the power and the energy comes from, where the emotion that drives the change is found. Love and compassion, anger and spine-stiffening determination all come from the emotion of the Elephant. However, pure passion without direction can lead to disaster, too.
3. You can think of the Elephant and the Rider as two sides of a polarity, each with their upsides and downsides. The goal is to manage away from the downsides and to find the synergy that comes from integrating the upsides. Self-control is an exhaustible resource, and laziness is often exhaustion. Swirling around the polls is tiring and unproductive.
4. What looks like a people-problem is often a situation-problem. Shape the path, the situation, and you can make it way easier for change to happen.

Direct the Rider

- **Find the Bright Spots.** Investigate what's working and clone it.
 1. Bright Spots are worth emulating.
 2. Eliminate any Bright Spots that aren't typical.
 3. Use conventional wisdom.
 4. Look for unexpected insights.
 5. Spread the word about the efficacy of the Bright Spots.
 6. Rider focuses on problems, not Bright Spots.
 7. The "miracle question" from solutions-focused brief therapy is illustrative of how we can create Bright Spots.
 8. Bright Spots provide hope and motivation for the Elephant.
 9. When the Rider analyzes a problem, he seeks a solution that befits the scale of it, thus missing the simple and wise way.

10. Bad is stronger than good. Watch television to see that.
 11. Our Rider is problem focused when we need a solution focus.
 12. We need to switch from archaeological problem solving to bright-spot evangelizing.
 13. Remember, analyzing is more satisfying to the Rider than acting.
 14. What's working and how can we do more of it?
 - 15.
- **Script the Critical Moves.** Don't think big picture, think in terms of specific behaviors.
 1. Decision Paralysis - More options, even good ones, can freeze us and make us retreat to the default plan.
 2. Ambiguity is exhausting to the Rider.
 3. Uncertainty makes the Elephant anxious.
 4. The most familiar path is always the status quo.
 5. Inertia and decision paralysis will conspire to keep people doing things the old way.
 6. What is needed is crystal-clear guidance and you get that through tight scripting of specific behavior that you would want to see in a tough moment.
 7. When you want someone to behave in a new way, explain the way clearly, concretely and specifically.
 - **Point to the Destination.** Change is easier when you know where you're going and why it's worth it.
 1. Create a Destination Postcard of your vision of the future, a compelling picture of the future. You need a gut-smacking goal.
 2. Destination Postcards show the Rider where we are headed and the Elephant why the journey is worthwhile.
 3. Rationalization is a new enemy here.
 4. So are super-prescriptive, tight, micromanaged goals.
 5. Get rid of rationalization by creating black and white goals.
 6. Remember, when the Elephant really wants something, the Rider can be trusted to find a rationalization for getting it.
 7. Marry your long-term goal with short-term critical moves.

Motivate the Elephant

- **Find the Feeling.** Knowing something isn't enough to cause change. Make people feel something.

1. Change happens when leaders speak to the Elephant and the Rider.
 2. It isn't analyze-think-change, but it is see-feel-change.
 3. It boils down to an identity thing. I can do this. I'm in charge.
 4. We are, all of us, lousy self-evaluators.
 5. The Elephant makes the rosier interpretation of the facts. The Elephant creates positive illusions.
 6. So, how do we dispel positive illusions without raining negativity on them?
 7. The Elephant needs emotion to be energized, but which emotion? Fear, or love?
 8. Positive emotions are designed to broaden and build, while negative are designed to narrow.
 9. Hope, optimism, and excitement motivate the Elephant.
- **Shrink the Change.** Break down the change until it no longer spooks the Elephant.
 1. People find it more motivating to be partly finished with a longer journey than to be at the starting gate of a shorter one.
 2. The sense of progress is critical, because the Elephant is easily demoralized.
 3. If you want the Elephant to get moving, you have to shrink the change.
 4. You do that by addressing the dread that is on the front end of change.
 5. The Elephant hates doing things with no immediate payoff.
 6. To get the Elephant off his duff, you need to reassure it that the task won't be so bad.
 7. Break a daunting task down into incremental steps. One step at a time, one small win at a time.
 8. These small wins don't happen naturally. Plan for them.
 9. When you engineer early successes, what you're really doing is engineering hope. Hope is precious to a change effort. It's Elephant fuel.
 10. Scaled down steps demystify the journey.
 11. If you know where you are going, and the next step, you gain the confidence that keeps you going.
 12. When a task feels too big, the Elephant will resist.
 13. Big changes come from a succession of small successes.

- **Grow Your People.** Cultivate a sense of identity and instill the growth mindset.
 1. You can shrink the change, but you can also grow the people!
 2. When people make choices they tend to rely on one of two basic models of decision making: the *consequences* model or the *identity* model.
 3. The identity model asks three questions: Who am I? What kind of situation is this? What would someone like me do in this situation?
 4. What would my tribe do in this situation? We are ethnocentric.
 5. How can you make changes a matter of identity rather than a matter of consequences?
 6. “I aspire to be the kind of person who would make this change.”
 7. However, we tend to panic and quit when we run into The Dip. All change is fraught with failures and we need to push through to excellence when those failures are not cliffs, or cul-de-sacs, but dips.
 8. Dips are where insight happens.
 9. Thus, create the expectation of failure.
 10. Create a growth mindset, not a fixed mindset. Everything is hard before it is easy. See, acknowledge, and appreciate the effort that goes with exercising neuroplasticity.
 11. We will struggle, we will fail, we will be knocked down – but throughout, we’ll get better, and we’ll succeed in the end. (The Stockdale Paradox).
 12. People persevere if they perceive falling down as learning, not failing.
 13. The Elephant has to believe it is capable of conquering the change, and that happens when people feel big relative to the challenge. Get there by shrinking the challenge, and/or growing your people bigger with aspirational identities.

Shape the Path

- **Tweak the Environment.** When the situation changes, the behavior changes. So change the situation.
 1. Watch out for the “Fundamental Attribution Error,” which is the inclination to attribute people’s behavior to *the way they are* rather than to *the situation they are in*.
 2. Move people by making the path easier. Create a steep downhill slope and give them a push. Remove some friction on the trail. Scatter lots of signs around so they know they are making progress and getting closer to the Destination Postcard.
 3. Make right behaviors easier, and wrong behaviors harder.

4. You know you've got a smart solution when everyone hates it and it still works – and in fact, works so well that people's hate turns to enthusiasm.
 5. Environmental tweaks beat self-control every time.
 6. Simple tweaks of the Path can lead to dramatic changes in behavior.
- **Build Habits.** When behavior is habitual, it's "free" – it doesn't tax the Rider. Look for ways to encourage habits.
 1. People are incredibly sensitive to the environment and the culture – to the norms and expectations of the communities they are in.
 2. Habits are behavioral autopilots. They allow behaviors to happen without the Rider being in charge. Habits are free; they don't exhaust the Rider.
 3. How do you lay the mental groundwork for a new habit? Create Action Triggers!
 4. Action Triggers won't get you to do anything you truly don't want to do, but they can motivate people to what they do want to do.
 5. Action triggers simply have to be specific enough and visible enough to interrupt people's normal stream of consciousness.
 6. The typical person who set an action trigger did better than 74 percent of people on the same task who didn't set one.
 7. When creating habits, do two things: The habit formed should serve the mission, which is to get to the Destination Postcard, the vision out there – and make the habit relatively easy to embrace.
 8. Next tool – the humble checklist.
 9. They can help people avoid blind spots in a complex environment, and they can provide insurance against overconfidence.
 - **Rally the Herd.** Behavior is contagious. Help it spread.
 1. Think of a situation you were in where you didn't know how to behave. What did you do? You watched other people, of course.
 2. "In this entire book, you might not find a single statement that is so rigorously supported by empirical research as this one: You are doing things because you see your peers do them. Behavior is contagious."
 3. The Elephant will follow the herd, not the rogue.
 4. The herd can be the group, and it can be society.
 5. Create "free spaces" where reformers can gather to ready and support themselves for collective action without being observed by members of the dominant group.
 6. Be okay with letting our organization have an identity conflict for a time at least. Let them struggle with Us vs. Them when change is occurring.

Keep the Switch Going

1. Organize and celebrate the first step.
2. Reward “approximations” – incremental steps toward the vision.
3. Catch them doing something right and recognize it.
4. Change is a process, not an event. (Or, it is a Transition, and change is an event in the larger Transition.)
5. When change works, it tends to follow a pattern. This book is about that pattern.

(Obviously, I highly recommend reading the book by the Heath brothers. There are lots and lots of wonderful stories in the book that illustrate each point. Inspiration is helpful.)