

# Facilitating Change

(From: *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*.  
Chip Heath and Dan Heath. Broadway Books, 2010)

In their book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*, Chip and Dan Heath, authors and professors, ask the question why it's so hard to make lasting changes in our companies, in our communities, and in our own lives. The primary obstacle, say the Heaths, is a conflict that's built into our brains. Psychologists have discovered that our minds are ruled by two different systems—the rational mind and the emotional mind—that compete for control. The rational mind wants a great beach body; the emotional mind wants that Oreo cookie. The rational mind wants to change something at work; the emotional mind loves the comfort of the existing routine. This tension can doom a change effort—but if it is overcome, change can come quickly. They propose a framework that sets out three ways change happens.

1. **Direct the Rider** (the conscious mind), eliminating what looks like resistance but is more often a lack of clarity by providing crystal-clear direction.
  - Following 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.
2. **Motivate the Elephant** (the subconscious), eliminating what looks like laziness but is more often exhaustion by engaging emotions to get people on the same path as you.
  - 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.
3. **Shape the Path** (the situation), eliminating what looks like a people problem but is more often a situation problem, by making the environment more conducive to the change you seek.
  - 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.

## Resources

Heath, Chip and Dan Heath. *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*. New York: Broadway, 2010.

Heath, Chip and Dan Heath. *Switch Your Organization: A Workbook*. Download from <http://heathbrothers.com/resources>.

Website: Heath Brothers: <http://heathbrothers.com>

# A Framework for Change

<b><i>Direct the Rider (the conscious mind):</i> eliminating what looks like resistance but is more often a lack of clarity by providing crystal-clear direction.</b>	
	Ways to use this in your project
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9. Rally the herd: behavior is contagious. Help it spread.	

# HOW TO MAKE A SWITCH

*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]

# Direct the Rider

## FIND *the* BRIGHT SPOTS

### Ask the Exception Question.

When does the problem you're fighting not happen? I.e., when does your teenager not talk back? When have the two warring departments collaborated instead of feuding? When does your front-line employee show a "customer-service focus"?

### Ask the Miracle Question.

You wake up in the morning and your problems are solved. What's the first small sign that things have changed? Remember, you're not defining the miracle itself—e.g., it would be a miracle if your marriage was great, you got a big bonus at work, and your community experienced a big economic turnaround (like the opposite of a Country & Western song, except your dog would also have to come back). Rather, you're trying to find something concrete you can work toward and the first small sign will do this for you. The Exception Question is the most useful question to start with, but the Miracle Question will help if you can't think of any existing bright spots.

### Make sure your bright spot is about YOU.

Bright spots are not the same as benchmarking. The fact that your competitor is outperforming you on some front does not mean that they're a "bright spot." (It wouldn't be helpful, after all, to tell an alcoholic that a sober person is a "bright spot.") People resist being told, "Why aren't you more like your sister?" Bright spots are specific to you and your team. Where are YOU succeeding now, or where have YOU succeeded before? By pinpointing those moments, you can avoid triggering the "not invented here" reaction. You can reassure people that they're capable of solving their own problems.

### What is working today, and how can you do more of it?

Are there certain teams or units that are leading the way? Are there certain managers or salespeople who exemplify the direction you're headed? If so, those are your bright spots. Like Jerry Sternin and the mothers in Vietnam, you should go shadow them and figure out what they're doing that's making their performance better than other groups.

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## The Recipe *for* Bright Spots

*Example: Jerry Sternin and mothers in Vietnam*

1. **Gather data on the issue.**  
*Record the height and weight of all the kids in the village.*
2. **Study the data to find the bright spots (the unusually positive performers).**  
*There were several kids who were perfectly healthy for their age, despite being very poor.*
3. **Make sure you understand the "normal way" things are done.**  
*Jerry Sternin and the mothers knew that most families served 2 large bowls of white rice.*
4. **Next, study the bright spots to see what they're doing differently.**  
*The bright-spot moms were serving 4 small meals, and using uncommon foods like sweet potato greens and tiny shrimp.*
5. **Make sure none of those practices are "exceptional" in some way.**  
*For instance, if one of the healthy kids had been receiving extra food from a rich relative in another area, then that's not a scalable technique.*
6. **Find a way to reproduce the practices of the bright spots among other people.**  
*The moms formed cooking circles where they could learn the new practices from each other.*

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### Remember...

Bright spots don't have to be shining success stories. Remember the story of Bobby, the troubled teen, in the book. There was NO time when he was an Eagle Scout.

You're just looking for situations when things are working better than others. Don't look for "perfect," because you may not find it. Look for "the best of what's available."

## SCRIPT *the* CRITICAL MOVES

### Be clear about how people should act.

This is one of the hardest—and most important—parts of the framework. As a leader, you're going to be tempted to tell your people things like: "Be more innovative!" "Treat the customer with white-glove service!" "Give better feedback to your people!" But you can't stop there. Remember the child-abuse study? Do you think those parents would have changed if the therapists had said, "Be more loving parents!" Of course not. Look for the behaviors.

### Pick one place to start.

You may have a list of 20 things you'd like to accomplish but can you rank-order them? What would be the most cost-effective way of making progress? Remember, you don't need to develop the complete battle plan, you just need to take a substantial step toward your final destination. Buying 1% milk didn't solve the diet problems of West Virginians, but it was a really important first step.

### If you can't nail it exactly, consider the best approximation.

For a change effort to work, leaders have to transform aspirations into actions. And there isn't always a neat, elegant translation. For instance, at Shearson, the manager's aspiration was to have one of the best research teams in the industry. But that's not an action. It's not even close. So he had to think up some behavioral approximations.

Imagine saying the following sentence to your people: If we act this way— \_\_\_\_\_—then we can't help but get closer to the goal. How would you fill in the blank? For the Shearson leader, that approximation was for his team to make 125 calls per month. He knew that if they made that many calls, they couldn't help but get a lot smarter about their coverage areas, make lots of contacts, etc. What's the best approximation for your team?

### Kill the abstractions exercise.

Take your change appeal and put a squiggly line under every abstraction (i.e., everything that wouldn't create a clear mental picture in the mind of your grandmother, front-line employee, customer, etc.) How many abstractions can you just get rid of? For the few critical concepts that remain, can you come up with a specific example?

### Evaluate your critical move candidates.

If you're trying to decide between different "critical moves" for your team, try assessing your options using the following checklist. Put checkmark beside how many features a particular move would have. Give priority to critical moves that evoke more parts of the framework. As an example, we have filled out the checklist as if we were the Shearson leader, considering whether to ask our team to make 125 calls per month. You can see that it scores very well.

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## Checklist: Do You Have the Right "Critical Move"?

*Example: Shearson's 125 Calls Per Month Guideline*

- ✓ **Does it evoke emotion? (Find the feeling)**  
*No. 125 calls per month is not emotional.*
  - ✓ **Does it feel do-able? (Shrink the change)**  
*Yes. It was really hard but within the team's grasp.*
  - ✓ **Was it a part of success stories in the past? (Find the bright spots)**  
*Yes. Past analysts who succeeded had made many more calls than unsuccessful analysts.*
  - ✓ **Will your team see the connection with the big picture? (Point to the destination)**  
*Absolutely. The destination was "I.I. or Die." The phone calls were intended to vault them toward that destination.*
  - ✓ **Would it provide a quick win? (Grow your people)**  
*Possibly. The "quick win" was not certain, but it was much more likely with a high volume of customer calls.*
  - ✓ **Would it create positive peer pressure? (Rally the herd)**  
*Yes. The manager publicized the number of calls each analyst made, creating a sense of competition.*
  - ✓ **Is it consistent with the way people think about themselves in the firm? (Grow Your People)**  
*Yes. The analysts thought of themselves as being hard workers and good networkers. (Even though they weren't performing very well, their identity was consistent with the challenge.*
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## Does your change pass the “video test”?

In other words, have you made your request so specific and behavioral that a 3rd-party outsider could watch a video of your audience and confirm whether they’d heeded your recommendation or not? The recommendation to “buy 1% milk” would have passed the video test, because

you could imagine a grocery-store video camera that captures people as they make their milk purchases. The instructions for child abusers would also pass the “video test,” since you could easily compare their actions to their instructions. How would your change efforts fare on the test?

## POINT *to the* DESTINATION

### Can you paint a rich, detailed picture of what the right destination looks like?

Laura Esserman described a vision of a breast care clinic with everything under one roof—a woman could come in for a mammogram in the morning and, if the test discovered a growth, she could leave with a treatment plan the same day. Notice what’s so effective about this destination: (1) It’s concrete: You can see it in your head. You can imagine the clinic, and you can imagine the woman coming and going. (2) It’s motivational: You can understand why it’s a destination worth chasing. But what if Laura Esserman had blown it? Consider these alternate “destination postcards”:

“We are going to revolutionize the way breast cancer is treated and create a prototype of the next-generation breast cancer clinic, a place that will be the envy of clinics worldwide.” Problem: This is motivational language, but it’s not concrete. You can’t picture the destination. What will make the clinic different and better?

“We are going to reposition radiology as an internal, rather than external, wing of the clinic, and we will reconfigure our space to make that possible.” Problem: You can envision what this would look like—it’s concrete—but it’s not motivational. Who cares where radiology lives? Only in the context of a woman’s care does that become meaningful.

### Avoid metrics as destinations.

Metrics make poor destinations. SMART goals are fine but they should also be inspiring enough to motivate the Elephant. Same goes for financial goals—“return on equity” or “gross margin” targets are not going to inspire many people.

### Does it pass the Champagne Test?

Is your destination clear enough that people will know when to celebrate? This has been called the Champagne Test. Would you know when to crack the bottle of the champagne? Consider JFK’s 1961 call to “put a man on the moon.” It’s pretty obvious when the champagne should flow! Does your destination pass the test?

### Consider moving from process to outcome.

“100% handwashing compliance” may not motivate doctors and nurses to wash their hands as much as “0% hospital-acquired infections.”

### If “backsliding” is a problem, consider a B&W goal.

Do people consistently miss/ignore/underperform the behaviors that are expected of them and then try to rationalize away the failure, in the way that people on a diet do? (“It was such a hard day that I needed that ice cream.”) If so, then consider setting a B&W goal. Set a goal that brooks no dissent. It’s always or never, all or nothing. “Always return a support call within 24 hours.” “Never send an email that’s over 500 words.”

But B&W goals create a danger of demoralization if you don’t meet them consistently. For instance, think of the dieters who blow their diet a few times and then give up, going back to Cheetos and Ben & Jerry’s on a daily basis. To avoid that kind of overreaction to failure, see the section on the growth mindset.

# Motivate the Elephant

## FIND *the* FEELING

### Can you make the need for change visual?

Things you see are more likely to evoke emotion than things you read. If you are trying to encourage your team to provide more consistent service, for instance, could you splice together video footage of your customers talking about bad customer service experiences? Robin Waters at Target showed her colleagues photos of well-designed displays so they could see what was possible. What could you show your colleagues that would show them what's possible? What could you show them that would get their competitive hackles up?

### Negative vs. positive emotion.

Negative emotions are effective to motivate people to tackle short-run challenges that require clear, forceful action. They're less effective when people need to think flexibly or creatively. Which do you need? If you need to inspire positive emotion, can you point to a bright spot that reminds people that they've succeeded in the past?

### The camera crew thought experiment.

Imagine that, in making the case for change to your people, you weren't allowed to speak to them directly. Instead, you had a camera crew at your disposal who would film anything you wanted them to film, and you could pick any 10 minutes of footage that they shot. What would be happening in that footage?

### Build your own shrine.

You read the "glove shrine" example in the first chapter. What kind of "shrine" could you put in the conference room that would wake up YOUR colleagues?

### The pivotal testimonial.

Imagine that you can show your colleagues a video of one person talking, and the video has to persuade them that change is necessary. Who is the person? An employee who's seen problems firsthand? A customer who's sick and tired of the status quo? A competitor who is light-years ahead of you on something?

## SHRINK *the* CHANGE

### Can you put 2 stamps on your team's passbook?

(Remember the car wash loyalty card study.) Here are some candidates for the two stamps: How far have you come in the last quarter? Year? Decade? Does looking at the historical overview give you confidence that you can tackle the current challenge which may look small in comparison?

### Think in terms of ones.

Remember Julie, the overweight mother, who agreed to walk in place for 1 minute each night while watching TV. When people dread change, shrink it down as much as you can. Can you try a new approach on one customer? Can you spend one minute practicing the new sales pitch?

### Kick the ball forward.

You read about the 5-Minute Room Rescue. Imagine that, at the end of your next staff meeting, you set a 5-minute timer. What could your people do during those 5 minutes that would "kick the ball forward" for your change? What about 30 minutes? 3 hours?

### Plan for small wins.

Burnout happens when a team confronts the same problems, over and over, without feeling progress. What is a clear milestone that you'll recognize enough to celebrate?

### Don't let success feel too distant.

Bill Parcells said that his team doesn't focus on winning the Super Bowl, they focus on more immediate goals, like great special teams play. Are you being that specific with your goals? How long does your team have to wait before they have a sense of how they're doing? If the answer is months, you have the wrong goals. If it's hours or days, that's great.

## GROW *your* PEOPLE

### Cultivating identity.

**“I aspire to be the kind of person who would make the change.”**

Would most of the people on your team agree with that statement? If so, you don’t have an identity challenge. If not, you do.

#### The adjective test.

What do people pride themselves on in your organization? Which one adjective would most flatter your boss? Creative? Hard-nosed? People-focused? Customer-obsessed? Honest? Frugal? Etc. If that adjective seems like one that many people in the organization would value, then you’re probably on the right track toward finding the right identity.

#### Speaking to a Shared Identity.

If you’re trouble identifying the “identity” that your colleagues share, consider the following approaches:

*Can you appeal to an identity that already exists?*

Doctors and nurses respond to identity as “healers.”  
Parents respond to their identity as Moms and Dads.  
Citizens will respond to their identity as Houstonians, Californians, St. Lucians.

*Is there a common history?*

HP employees all know that HP was founded in a garage, so it would be easy to appeal to that shared story to emphasize virtues of frugality and innovation.

*Is there a competitor you can highlight?*

Warring departments at a car company might pull together in the face of a threat by a formidable foreign or domestic competitor.

*If there’s no existing identity, can you help people create an identity that they would admire?*

Brasilata helped production workers see that they could be “inventors.”

*Is there some public action that could foster an identity?*

Signing a petition or posting a sign about safe driving (or beautifying the state) helped Palo Alto residents see themselves as “Concerned Citizens”.

*Is there a habit that you can build to reinforce the identity?*

Brasilata’s inventors submitted over 100 suggestions each per year. Football fans have their identity reinforced by rooting for every football game.

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### Build the growth mindset.

#### Steal IDEO’s graphic.

At the beginning of your project, steal the U-shaped curve speech from IDEO. Give the talk to your people. It will help them respond positively to the inevitable setbacks you’ll face. Try to anticipate hurdles that you’ll face and address them specifically: I.e., “At first, we’re probably going to have some customers push back on this new approach. When that happens, we can’t throw our hands up and quit.”

#### Lead a discussion about the growth mindset.

Give your team Carol Dweck’s 4-question test from our book. Let people diagnose whether they have the fixed or growth mindset. Share some of the research showing that

the growth mindset is essential to realize your potential. If people have a fixed mindset they may see hard work and effort as signs that the problem is intractable or that they are not the right kind of people to tackle it—can you help them understand that they are building “muscle” that will pay off in the future?

#### Can you instill in your team the idea that failing is often the best way to learn?

Remember the study of the hospitals who tried to adopt Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery (MICS). The hospitals who succeeded adopted what the researcher Edmondson called the “learning frame”—they knew that success would rely on diligent practice and constant learning.

# Shape the Path

## TWEAK *the* ENVIRONMENT

### Emphasize “tweak.”

You don’t need to rearrange the walls in your building. You don’t need to change the compensation structure of your business.

### Do a 5-min rescue on your environment.

What one thing can you shift to make the right behaviors more likely?

### Do a “motion study”.

If you’re trying to make a behavior easier, study it. Watch one person go through the process of making a purchase, filing a complaint, recycling an object, etc. Note where there are bottlenecks and where they get stuck. Then try to rearrange the environment to remove those obstacles. Provide signposts that show people which way to turn (or that celebrate the progress they’ve made already). Eliminate steps. Shape the path.

### Can you run the McDonalds playbook?

Think of the way McDonalds designs its environment so that its employees can deliver food with incredible consistency, despite a lack of work experience (or an excess of motivation). They pay obsessive attention to every step of the process. The ketchup dispenser, for instance, isn’t like the one in your fridge. It has a plunger on top that,

when pressed, delivers precisely the right amount of ketchup for one burger. That way, if you have to deliver 10 burgers in a minute, you don’t have to think at all. You just press the plunger 10 times. Have you looked at your own operations through that lens? Have you made every step as easy as possible on your employees?

### Avoid the Fundamental Attribution Error.

Think about the people who are resisting the change efforts at work. Are you guilty of the Fundamental Attribution Error with them? (I.e., have you concluded that they are “foot-draggers” or “fossils”?) Remember the story of Amanda Tucker—the Nike manager who became a better communicator when her office was rearranged to eliminate email distractions. As a thought experiment, ask yourself, in what environment might be “foot-dragging” colleagues suddenly become change champions?

### Can you 1-Click your process?

Amazon has made millions of dollars because of its 1-Click Ordering button. All that button did was remove 1 or 2 steps from the normal checkout process. What 1 or 2 steps can you remove from the normal course of business for your employees?

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## BUILD HABITS

### Set an action trigger.

Don’t forget the very compelling research that demonstrates the effectiveness of action triggers. The power of action triggers is that decisions are “pre-loaded.” If you want to act in a new way (adopting a new exercise plan, being more diligent about your managerial reviews, etc.), picture the exact time and situation when you will execute the plan. For instance, I will check in on Julie’s progress tomorrow morning right after I’ve poured my first cup of coffee. (Note: the best action triggers are unique. Putting up the fifth Post-It note on your desk, or the 23rd calendar reminder in your email program is unlikely to act as a good cue.)

### Can you piggyback a new habit on an old one?

It’s easiest to start a new routine when you can build it onto an existing routine that happens at a regular time and place. If you often forget to take your vitamins in the morning, put the vitamin bottle on top of the toothpaste.

You know you’re going to remember to brush your teeth, so you can “piggyback” your vitamin habit on your tooth-brushing habit. Similarly, it might be easier for hospitals to get doctors to wash their hands if they put sanitizer levers beside the trays where they pick up a patient’s chart—squeeze and rub before picking up the chart.

### Create a checklist.

Suppose you had a five-item checklist for the most important routines in your business. What 5 things do you need to do every time? (Note we’re not advocating long checklists. The preflight checklist to launch a 747 is less than a page!)

### Stand up your meetings.

We discussed the power of the “stand-up meeting” as a way to keep discussions brief and focused. Given the way your meetings have evolved, what habits have you implicitly encouraged (whether good or bad)? Are there ways you could alter the format of your meetings—the routine—to make them more effective? If so, set an action trigger—I’m going to pilot this new “meeting style” next Thursday with the staff meeting.

### Publicize your action triggers.

What is the aspect of your change efforts that people tend to put off, or that tends to get displaced in favor of more “urgent” work? Ask your team to set action triggers – and to announce their intentions publicly in a meeting.

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## RALLY *the* HERD

### Be smart about social pressure.

If the majority of people on your team are already following the new plan, then publicize that fact. Social pressure will influence the others to conform. But beware if only a minority is doing something. Publicizing this fact may lead others to slack off. Solution: Can you set up a free space to protect your pro-change minority from being squelched or co-opted? (In essence, a free space turns a minority into a majority.)

### If people embrace change, make sure their actions are visible.

People who resist change may tend to cluster together and create a kind of “echo chamber.” They may conclude, falsely, that most people dislike the new direction as much as they do. As a manager, you can help fight the echo chamber by showcasing people who are actively supporting the change. Shine a spotlight on the early signs of success. If there’s a bright spot, make sure everyone knows about it.

### Design a free space.

Remember the medical interns whose afternoon rotations served as a “free space,” allowing them to build strength and plan their approach. There are many ways to create a free space. The “skunkworks” – a totally separate, offsite facility – is a dramatic version of a free space. But there are less dramatic methods that can still be effective. ? Maybe you can reserve a temporary workspace for them to occupy. You could set up a “war room” for them where they can meet and coordinate every day (even if it’s just a conference room). You could encourage them to take a “working lunch” every day where they could coordinate over a meal. Or perhaps they could meet an hour earlier (or later) than most people are in the office.