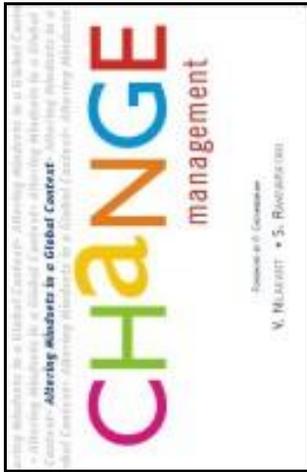


Dr. Aneeta Madhok



Book review

Nilakant, V.; Ramanarayan, S.: Change Management – *Altering Mindsets in a Global Context*. Fourth Printing, Response Books, A division of Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007. Price Rs. _____

Everybody is interested in the management of change. Most organizations are caught in a reactive response to the changing environment and forget that they can strategise to proactively respond to change in a way that is constructive for the firm and it takes advantage of the trends that shape corporate and economic existence. The challenges of crafting such a proactive response are tremendous and have been the source of much work of management consultants across all verticals and in all domains of management. As India stands on the upturn of an exponential growth that is going to catapult its economy as a major player on the entire planet, this book is not only well timed in its debut but also well placed in its presentation of a practical and relevant model for management of change in organizations. This view is fully endorsed in the foreword by Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram.

The authors Nilakant and Ramanarayan have previously published a book titled *Managing Organisational Change* which was written in the early forming and storming years of the current spate of globalization that began in early 1990's with the liberalization of the Indian economy led by Manmohan Singh who was then the Finance Minister. Given the scenario of today, when many Indian companies have transcended national boundaries and are well on their way towards becoming global transnational firms operating seamlessly across the globe, this book brings home some lessons that could be well learned by others on similar growth paths. Unlike the previous book, this one endeavours, in the authors own words, to bring lessons from across the globe that can be relevant and practical for all, including Indian organizations going global. The authors claim that the research based knowledge contained in the book is about not just structural changes (as in mergers, de-mergers, organic growth) and not just about process changes

(as in quality improvements, lean production, logistics etc.) but about changing the living and growing reality of the organization (as in mindsets and ways in which people think and act in organizations).

Going back to basics in change management theory, the authors trace the fundamentals of Kurt Lewin's theoretical foundations of change management as being the state achieved by the dynamic outcome of competing forces for change and stability. Further drawing upon Anthony Giddens postulates, and those of Edgar Schein, to build upon Lewin's model the authors make a case for Lewin's second contribution to change management theory in emphasizing the role of action research and dialogue in the change management process to create new organization routines and mental models. With these fundamentals in place, the authors Nilakant and Ramanarayan propose their own change management model that proposes a holistic form of leadership that builds on four pillars: Appreciating Change, Mobilising Support, Executing Change and Building Change Capability. The criticality of leadership in the change management process envisages four roles of the change leader: Cognitive Tuner, People Catalyzer, Systems Architect and Efficacy Builder.

The book further goes on to bring much data from best practices across the globe, vignettes of corporations who managed change successfully and unsuccessfully, economic and industry analysis, and much more research, and makes a compelling case for each of the four aspects of the change management model proposed by them. Appreciating Change is about understanding the various factors in the environment that drive change, business and industry cycles as additional forces of change, and the ways and means to develop a change agenda. Refining the change agenda comes through understanding the mental and business models underlying the appreciation of change process. Mobilising Support comes through persuasive communication, influencing processes, creating compelling reasons for change, and many other processes that are laid out by the authors. The case for mobilizing support in the change process is placed as an imperative to build a chain reaction among the people that make the organization so that change management becomes self sustaining and resistance to change is overcome and ownership of the change process is embedded deeper in the mental models that drive organizational routines. Executing Change is the crucial stage in the change management model proposed and poses many challenges. A framework for executing change is built upon a case analysis of a failed change management attempt and proposes developing cross functional linkages, aligning policies and removing structural impediments to change, developing new routines for innovation and improvement, attending to human aspects of executing change, and, the role of the change leader as a systems architect. Building Change Capability through the self efficacy, focus and energy of the leader, framing challenging goals, creating ownership, structuring activities for learning, and, promoting learning to build a positive behavioural context. A descriptive model of the components of change capability is also proposed by the authors.

Some treatment is also given to leadership processes in the concluding chapter of the book. The role of appreciative enquiry in building positive organizational scholarship is described as are certain qualities of leadership character and conduct. A few examples of

leadership framework from companies are presented in an attempt to build a leadership development framework. Four core leadership roles are analysed in the context of creating a mindset for change management.

There are many audiences for this book. Students of change management and organizational development, academicians who teach and research the subject, managers who deal with influencing organizational response to change, and consultants who act as external change agents in enabling this organizational response. The book is academic in nature to the extent that it provides a model and research to support the assertions of the authors. There is a good review of literature and organizational data to support the model and its postulates. Students researching the topic would be delighted to find ample and accurate referencing and amazing linkages of data to concepts. Teachers would find that the models proposed have depth of thought and philosophy implicitly placed in the contents of the book. Consultants would find plenty of nuggets of information and concepts to enable them to develop their own line of thinking and would add to the substance they bring to the client interface in the change management process. Managers would benefit by cognitively clear concepts that help create clarity from the chaos that change brings. The application and interpretation of the models, however is not dealt with. The bridge between theory and practice is left untouched. To this extent, the book is one additional perspective for the audience segments targeted and helps each one of them develop a commonsense approach to organizational change management. Another question that arises upon reading of this book is that of newness or novelty. The approach is logical and rational, but sometimes looks like old wine in new bottles displayed differently. Apart from new verbiage and simplicity of jargon-less expression, there is not much new thinking that the book has to offer. The role of the leader in leading the change management process has been looked at with a fresh lens. However, the criticality of leadership in the change management process, though stated, does not seem to emerge as there is only one last chapter in which some of the issues are discussed. More attention needs to be given to this as it is normal experience that organizational response to change cascades from top down.

Organisations need to respond proactively to changes in the environment and the models proposed by the authors in the book do address this issue. However, the reality is that many organizations have today woken up to the realization that they need not be recipients of change, but also can lead the changes and the trends that are set for others. Organizations create change as much as they are impacted by it. Anticipating the future has been the success mantra of many. To be on the cutting edge of new pioneering management processes and lead from the front is something that this book does not address. Innovation is about leading change, not just following it.

Change is evolutionary and revolutionary. It is constant and relentless. There is never a starting point and a finishing point. An ancient Chinese proverb says 'You never enter the same river twice'. Each time an organization looks inward and outward, it's a changed situation. The model presented by the authors builds on the Kurt Lewin model that assumed an ice cube metaphor for change management as a process of unfreezing, changing and refreezing the organization, its routines and mental models through

processes of appreciating change, mobilizing support, executing change and building change capability. In reality all the four happen simultaneously, rather than sequentially and it is a multi-pronged multi-faceted and multi-dimensional approach led by wise and sagacious leaders that will build and embed proactive organizational response to change. Change management in such frames assumes a beginning and an end where organizations can be refrozen into the desired shape and achieve equilibrium. Change management theory has evolved beyond this frame to embrace reality that change is like the metaphor of a river and organizational efforts for a planned change management intervention need to address a constantly changing environment and equilibrium is dynamically balanced. Current and future thinking on the subject will project this trend as organization theorists and change management experts also evolve in their perspectives.

Aneeta Madhok
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Reviewers Profile:

Aneeta Madhok, MBA (XLRI), PhD, CMC, Dean, Centre for Human Resources at the S.P. Jain Center of Management in Dubai and Singapore, is an academician, and a professional trainer and teacher in the field of Organizational Behavior and Human Resources Management. Dr. Madhok graduated with a degree in Psychology Honours from Delhi University and completed her MBA in Human Resources and Organisation Development from XLRI, Jamshedpur. After having extensively worked for eight years in all areas of Personnel Management and HRD, she undertook doctoral studies and completed her Ph.D. in the field of Managerial Leadership and Work Motivation in 1991. Dr. Madhok looks for opportunities to translate management practice into theory and vice versa. She is keenly interested in the ways that individuals integrate themselves with organizations and group dynamics in teams. Her research and consulting work has led her to provide insights and management process solutions to several leading organizations. She has to her credit over 70 publications including refereed articles, consulting projects, newspaper articles and book reviews published nationally and internationally. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes, and chairs the Professional Standards Committee of ICMCI. She is also the immediate Past President of the Institute of Management Consultants of India, fellow of Sumedhas Academy for Human Context, a Certified Management Consultant and has been the recipient of scholarship awarded by the Foreign Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, and the Best Management Teacher award of the Bombay Management Association.