



# Our Iceberg Is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions

*John P. Kotter , Holger Rathgeber*

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**Our Iceberg Is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions** John P. Kotter , Holger Rathgeber

**A new edition of the classic business parable that has sold more than a million copies since 2006.**

*Our Iceberg Is Melting* is a simple fable about doing well in an ever-changing world. Based on the award-winning work of Harvard's John Kotter, it is a story that has been used to help thousands of people and organizations.

The fable is about a penguin colony in Antarctica. A group of beautiful emperor penguins live as they have for many years. Then one curious bird discovers a potentially devastating problem threatening their home—and pretty much no one listens to him.

The characters in the story, Fred, Alice, Louis, Buddy, the Professor, and NoNo, are like people we recognize—even ourselves. Their tale is one of resistance to change and heroic action, seemingly intractable obstacles and the most clever tactics for dealing with those obstacles. It's a story that is occurring in different forms all around us today—but the penguins handle the very real challenges a great deal better than most of us.

*Our Iceberg Is Melting* is based on pioneering work that shows how Eight Steps produce needed change in any sort of group. It's a story that can be enjoyed by anyone while at the same time providing invaluable guidance for a world that just keeps moving faster and faster.

## Our Iceberg Is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions Details

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Anthony says

At first I wondered how this book was different than "Who Moved My Cheese?" The answer is that this book deals with organizational or social change, while WMMC? deals mostly with personal change.

The book accurately "types" people in a creative way, and subtly offers real tips for persuading large groups of people. Sadly, some people who read this book will not be swayed by it - not because the information is untrue, but because people are unaware of what they are doing and how they are feeling.

If you doubt what I am saying... cross your arms across your chest. Do it now. How do you feel?

Now cross your arms the other way, so that whatever arm you normally cross on top is now under your other arm. How do you feel? Awkward? Most people only ever cross their arms one way - in fact, according to "The Definitive Book of Body Language", 90% cross the left arm over the right.

The point of this exercise is that there are many behaviors that people exhibit implicitly, without conscious awareness. Beyond behavior, people are usually unaware of their perspective on life, too. In short, humans think they know what they think, but all too often we misinform ourselves. The conscious and the unconscious do not work in lock step.

For more on these topics, I would recommend "Moral Minds" by Marc D. Hauser, "Frogs Into Princes" by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, "The Myth of the Rational Market" by Justin Fox, and "Buyology" by Martin Lindstrom.

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## **Malissa says**

It's not about global warming!

What would you do if you found out the community you live in and had been lived in by your ancestors for years was suddenly going to be non-existent? How would you handle it? What if you found out that the company you worked for had to undergo a major redesign? What if you had to implode all that you have known? Could you handle it? How would you handle it? This books give you 8 simple steps to make it through this process/this journey of change by telling a fable. What if you were a penguin and you found out that your iceberg was melting? What if you were the only one who realized this? Could you convince others of the need to change?

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## **Louis Prosperi says**

A fun and interesting fable using the story of a colony of Emperor Penguins as a metaphor for how an organization can go about making a needed change.

I enjoy business books in general, but among my favorites are the "story"-based books, such "The One-Minute Manager", "Who Moved My Cheese", "Inside the Magic Kingdom", "The Go-Giver", "It's Not About You", and others. These books take complex and sometimes fear-inducing subjects (like change) and present them in friendly ways to help readers understand how they can deal with them in their business and personal lives.

The focus of this book is leading change, and is based on John Kotter's "8 Steps to Leading Change" originally outlined in his book "Leading Change". The use of the penguin fable allows the authors to present these steps in the context of a story that illustrates how the steps work together in enabling the penguins to make a significant change in their lives.

I recommend this book to anyone involved in leading any sort of change, whether it be in your business, a local organization, your church, or even your personal life.

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### **Sabrina Kammer says**

In der heutigen Gesellschaft wird das Thema Veränderungen gross geschrieben - auch an mir geht es nicht einfach so vorbei.

Tagtäglich lernen wir immer mehr dazu - ob das nun im beruflichen Bereich ist oder im Privaten. Wir lernen nie aus und wenn man betrachtet, wie schnell sich die Gesellschaft weiter entwickelt und was von uns gefordert wird, sind wir beinahe gezwungen, uns weiter zu entwickeln und mit dem 'Trend' zu gehen. Denn wenn wir nicht immer mehr dazu lernen, werden wir irgendwann den Anschluss verlieren und das zieht meistens, je nach Bereich, grössere Probleme mit sich.

In diesem Buch wird auf eine wundervolle Weise gezeigt, wie wir Veränderungen begegnen und wie wir das Beste daraus machen. Mit einer Kolonie von Pinguinen und dem Problem eines schmelzenden Eisberges wird aufgezeigt, welche Möglichkeiten wir haben, wenn wir sie denn ergreifen - und auch, wenn wir uns dagegen wehren.

Ich fand den Schreibstil unheimlich toll und auch, wie der Autor dieses doch komplexe Thema auf diese wundervolle Art an den Leser bringt. Man lernt unheimlich viel davon, ohne es vielleicht im ersten Moment zu begreifen.

'Das Pinguin-Prinzip' kann ich für jeden weiterempfehlen, der sich mit dieser Thematik auseinander setzen möchte und keine schwere Kost mag. Das Buch bekommt von mir 4 Sterne.

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### **Jill says**

Good grief! This was being touted as the "go-to" book for organizational learning and dealing with change. Yes, the premise is cute and readable, and contains John Kotter's excellent business sense of operational strength and leadership. But the true brilliance of this book is that it costs \$26.00 and businesses will be buying it by the bucketful and subjecting their teams to yet another interminable day or weekend long work retreat to identify their inner penguins. I suggest you go to the bookstore and buy a cup of coffee..bring this book into the cafe and read it. Trust me, you'll get the idea and still have coffee left...and still have \$26 as well.

I then suggest any number of Kotter's books in the Harvard Business Essential series...he is good. And if you are pressed for time, turn to the last chapter of the penguin book for the 8 vital steps of realizing change and growth in an organization. Its good, its helpful, its smart. But I just hate those business exercises (find your hedgehog, are you the pasta or the sauce, etc) that take the place of real communication and emotional and business intelligence. Now I have to go write my book starring cute little koalas...entitled "Hey! someone is eating all our eucalyptus!"

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## K.D. Absolutely says

Enjoyable easy read. It is hard not to like this book especially if you read only one or two books in a year. You will like this book if you are working in a corporation that believes in continuous improvement driven by the desire to be the best leader and world-class. You will take this as a work bible if you want to be part of a big change and that your contribution is being desired and valued. Why not? Change is the only thing permanent in this world. When there is a change, we need to recognize it and be part of it instead of resisting it and stay forever in a morass. Also, we all want to be counted. We all want to contribute and be seen as a visionary leader, a capable manager and/or a valuable team player. We all enjoy being recognized for our achievements. We all need to work and provide for our family or to our future. Some people may consider me an old corporate dog but I can still learn new tricks and in my field of specialization that is information technology (I.T.), I better be adaptable to change as oh boy, things in this field change like that twister in Dorothy's farm: fast and furious.

My issue is the story in this book because there seems to be an on-going racket among these management book writers. This book is a fable with a colony of penguins and a seagull as characters. It has practically zero originality. It is just a rehash of Spencer Johnson's 1998 bestselling book, *Who Moved My Cheese?*. In that book, Johnson used two little people, "*Hem*" and "*Haw*" as those who first resisted change and adapted to it later after learning their painful lesson. He had "*Sniff*" and "*Scurry*" as those who were early adapters to the change. When this book was distributed to a lot of employees prior to being laid-off or those who have to take on more jobs as they were retained in the downsizing companies, they said "*does the management mean that we have to behave like mice and accept their offer even if it is disadvantageous to us?*" The message of the book was perfect and clear but the choice of the characters was just stupid. But still, companies facing change bought volumes of this book and distributed to their employees hoping that this will change their mindset and behave like stupid mice.

Seven years after that Johnson's book was first published, came this clone: *Our Iceberg is Melting: Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions*. The duo composed of a Harvard professor **John Kotter** and a global manager **Holger Rathgeber** probably had a frenzy of penguin movies (*Surfs Up*, *Happy Feet*, *March of the Penguins*, *Attack of the Penguins*, *Zombie Penguins*, etc) with their kids so they thought of using penguins instead of humans and seagull instead of mice. In terms of the ways to adopt to change let's compare their lists:

"WHO MOVED MY CHEESE?" has these:

- 1) **Change Happens** *They keep moving the cheese*
- 2) **Anticipate Change** *Get ready for the cheese to move*
- 3) **Monitor Change** *Smell the cheese often so you know when it is getting old*
- 4) **Adapt to Change Quickly** *The quicker you let go of old cheese, the sooner you can enjoy the new cheese*
- 5) **Change Move with the cheese**
- 6) **Enjoy Change!** *Savor the adventure and enjoy the taste of the new cheese!*
- 7) **Be Ready to Change Quickly and Enjoy it Again** *They keep moving the cheese*

Now let's see what "OUR ICEBERG IS MELTING" says:

### **Set the Stage**

1. Create a Sense of Urgency  
*Help others see the need for change and the importance of acting immediately.*
2. Pull Together the Guiding Team

*Make sure there is a powerful group guiding the change – one with leadership skills, credibility, communications ability, authority, analytical skills, and a sense of urgency.*

### **Decide What to Do**

#### **3. Develop the Change Vision and Strategy**

*Clarify how the future will be different from the past, and how you can make that future a reality.*

### **Make it Happen**

#### **4. Communicate for Understanding and Buy In**

*Make sure as many others as possible understand and accept the vision and the strategy.*

#### **5. Empower Others to Act**

*Remove as many barriers as possible so that those who want to make the vision a reality can do so.*

#### **6. Produce Short-Term Wins**

*Create some visible, unambiguous successes as soon as possible.*

#### **7. Don't Let Up**

*Press harder and faster after the first successes. Be relentless with irritating change after change until the vision is a reality*

### **Make It Stick**

#### **8. Create a New Culture**

*Hold on to the new ways of behaving, and make sure they succeed, until they become strong enough to replace old traditions.*

Very similar, right? The two con men just added some details that are obviously included in the steps because everybody facing changes can think about them. Then they put some sub-headings and explanations to make theirs appear different when put side by side with those of Johnson's. Crazy.

There are a lot of these theories, practices or rules that authors of management or business books twist, rename and presto they have a new bestselling book. MRPII, Class A, Six-Sigma. Quality Circles, Continuous Improvement, Kaizen. Same thing. Same banana. Different Names. Just like same idea but two different set characters, different milieus perhaps. Most glaringly, two sets of bestselling-authors. That's why for a long time, I stopped reading management and business books. I just have to read this as a required reading for our company project and to put myself immediately into a raring-to-change mode.

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## **Bilal Anis says**

A good book about change management narrated in a very simplistic language and in the method of storytelling. The book helps businesses and communities move from old to new territories to cope with their own environment. The main theme of the book is how change can be very difficult and it should be worked out with good planning and team effort. The 8 phases of change management according to Kottler are:

### **1. CREATE A SENSE OF URGENCY**

Help others see the need for change through a bold, aspirational opportunity statement that communicates the importance of acting immediately.

### **2. BUILD A GUIDING COALITION**

A volunteer army needs a coalition of effective people – born of its own ranks – to guide it, coordinate it, and communicate its activities.

### 3. FORM A STRATEGIC VISION AND INITIATIVES

Clarify how the future will be different from the past and how you can make that future a reality through initiatives linked directly to the vision.

### 4. ENLIST A VOLUNTEER ARMY

Large-scale change can only occur when massive numbers of people rally around a common opportunity. They must be bought in and urgent to drive change – moving in the same direction.

### 5. ENABLE ACTION BY REMOVING BARRIERS

Removing barriers such as inefficient processes and hierarchies provides the freedom necessary to work across silos and generate real impact.

### 6. GENERATE SHORT-TERM WINS

Wins are the molecules of results. They must be recognized, collected and communicated – early and often – to track progress and energize volunteers to persist.

### 7. SUSTAIN ACCELERATION

Press harder after the first successes. Your increasing credibility can improve systems, structures and policies. Be relentless with initiating change after change until the vision is a reality.

### 8. INSTITUTE CHANGE

Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success, making sure they continue until they become strong enough to replace old habits.

The above 8 phases are easily summarized by SET THE STAGE ---> DECIDE WHAT TO DO ---> MAKE IT HAPPEN ---> MAKE IT STICK.

It is very important to Think and Feel in this process. By thinking we refer to collecting data and presenting them fairly. In Feeling, we want people to be surprised, compelled and feel what our vision. A change in feeling will lead to change in behaviour. People tend to follow their feelings and copy others, communicating with influential figures are key to success.

Change can be very difficult to people and that is why a change management strategy has to be comprehensive and well planned.

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## Daniel says

Forced to read this by work. Cute little fable about penguins who are facing environmental changes and how



## Ramy says

Update 10/2011 Did not do much to keep you out of the recession when your profits would melt.

## Mark Steed says

Fables have a deceptive power. On the surface they read like the stories of our childhood employing simple vocabulary to describe everyday contexts to which we can all relate. Their narrative structure lulls our adult brain into a false sense of security, disabling the rational analytical faculties that usually protect our cherished world view. We uncritically play along with the story until we reach the point where the fable's inner truth is unavoidable. So it is with John Kotter's *Our Iceberg is Melting*.

*Our Iceberg is Melting* presents as a children's book: it is in large print with colourful illustrations - a five year old probably would enjoy it, if they had the patience to sit for the 45 minutes it takes to read. It is the story of an Emperor Penguin colony faced with a potentially devastating problem that is threatening their home. Fred, a low-ranking quirky penguin discovers that the iceberg on which the colony has lived for unknown generations is melting and is likely to fracture. The story charts how a small group lead the colony through the process of coming up with a solution and effecting their plan.

As well written as it is, the author is no children's writer. A Harvard Business School professor, John Kotter is one of the world's experts and best-selling author on leadership and change. "*Our Iceberg is Melting* is a simple fable about doing well in an ever-changing world". The characters that we meet in *Our Iceberg is Melting* are 'types' that are found in every organisation. The tale "is one of resistance to change and heroic action, seemingly intractable obstacles and the most clever tactics for dealing with those obstacles" (quotes from dust jacket).

*Our Iceberg is Melting* is a powerful illustration of Kotter's Eight Step Process of Successful Change outlined in his book *Leading Change*:

Create a sense of urgency. Help others see the need for change and the importance of acting immediately.

Pull together the guiding team. Make sure there is a powerful group guiding the change - one with leadership skills, credibility, communications ability, authority, analytical skills, and a sense of urgency.

Develop the change, vision and strategy. Clarify how the future will be different from the past, and how you can make that future a reality.

Make sure as many others as possible understand and accept the vision and strategy.

Empower others to act. Remove as many barriers as possible so that those who want to make the vision a reality can do so.

Create some visible, unambiguous successes as soon as possible.

Don't let up. Press harder and faster after the first successes. Be relentless with initiating change after change until the vision is a reality.

Create a new culture. Hold on to the new ways of behaving, and make sure they succeed, until they become strong enough to replace old traditions.

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## Dirk Grobbelaar says

For such a short book this was a surprisingly tedious read.

I know that change is inevitable and that people are more often than not resistant to change, hence the need for change management. This little book sets out to make it a bit easier to relate to, and to highlight the importance of change and the pitfalls of change management. It also attempts to discuss the dangers of **not** changing in a dynamic environment.

The problem is, there's nothing really **new** here.

As to whether this book will actually change the way people react to change... well, the verdict is still out on that. We're busy with change management at work, so I'll reserve judgment until sometime next year.

Rating this book is difficult, since the practical implication also needs to be considered. All in all I found reading it a bit dull, even if the principles are sound. I can hardly give it more than two stars at this stage...

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## David says

I knew it was time to leave the corporate world when our vice-president, a friend who had been a truly smart woman when we first started to work together, bought 300 copies of this trendy 2006 business fable\* (involving penguins and melting icebergs) for the entire division.

Not entirely coincidentally, the day that the invitation to the offsite meeting for an all-day training exercise based on the book showed up on my calendar, was the day that I gave notice.

I got out of there just in time. Another couple of weeks and I'd have been dressing up as Fred the visionary penguin, baking under the soul-destroying glare of the fluorescent lights of the Sequoia room in the South San Francisco Embassy Suites. And believe me, I have **paid my dues** as far as abusive corporate training sessions are concerned:

<http://www.goodreads.com/story/show/2...>

The horror! The horror!

(\*: Can you guess which expert on dairy products writes the foreword to the parable of the penguins? Hmmm. Can you?)

People who don't work in the corporate world often succumb to the temptation to believe in wild conspiracy theories about plans for world domination by evil corporate overlords. I don't lose much sleep over such theories. It's not that I think the corporate wannabe overlords are benign. I just ask myself how much domination can we expect from an executive class that tries to instill loyalty by humiliating employees through forcing them to attend motivational offsite meetings based on this kind of drivel.

One of the blurbs on Amazon tells us that some upper manager type in the Department of Defence snapped up 400 copies. I don't know if I should feel more, or less, secure as a result.

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## Katy Krumbach says

A group of penguins find themselves on ice which develops cracks. When the alarm is raised that the group needs to move to a more stable piece of ice the others in the group respond in very familiar ways: denial, admitting the problem but refusing to discuss consequences, panic and fear, and those who seek a solution.

The situations and reactions to the iceberg melting are clear, identifiable, and are easy to relate to the personal experiences. Kotter invites the reader to imagine how others are relating to the same situation and how different responses may create tension in groups. When used as a group discussion topic, this allegorical story may offer ways to imagine different ways to react, respond and relate to a stressful interaction.

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