

Partners in Learning
Learning to Lead Change: Building System Capacity
Leadership for Change Library

Leading in a Culture of Change
Michael Fullan
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162 pages

Leading in a Culture of Change demonstrates that successful leaders in education and business have much in common. Fullan took an equal number of change case studies in education and in business and examined leaders' behaviours and mind-sets. Based on his research, he develops a framework for leadership. This book delves into the complexities of leadership; it provides insights, strategies, and better theories of knowledge and action suited to leadership in complex times.

Fullan describes the five core mind-action sets — moral purpose, understanding change processes, relationship building, knowledge building, and coherence making — that characterize successful leaders in all learning organizations. He also articulates three personal characteristics (energy, enthusiasm, hope) that all effective leaders possess. He argues that leaders need to develop the five capabilities to lead in these times of rapid change.

Moral purpose is about both ends and means. It is about acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole. It is the striving to improve the quality of how we live together. Leaders in all organizations contribute for better or worse to moral purpose in their own organizations. Moral purpose is critical to the long success of all organizations.

Understanding the change process. Six guidelines are offered that provide leaders with concrete and novel ways of thinking about the process of change: (1) the goal is not to innovate the most; (2) it is not enough to have the best ideas; (3) recognize and manage the implementation dip; (4) redefine resistance as a potential positive force; (5) reculturing is the name of the game; (6) never a checklist, always complexity. He uses Goleman's findings about leadership styles (coercive, pacesetter, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, coaching) and their impact on people and organizational success to present concrete examples of effectively managing change using the six guidelines.

Relationships. Leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups. The single factor common to every successful change initiative is that relationships improve. If relationships improve, things get better. If they remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Effective leaders constantly foster purposeful interaction and problem solving. They are wary of easy consensus. Emotional intelligence is at the core of leaders who are continuously successful in a culture of change.

Knowledge building. Leaders need to commit themselves to constantly generating and increasing knowledge inside and outside the organization. Effective leaders understand the value and role of knowledge creation, they make it a priority and set about establishing and reinforcing habits of knowledge exchange among organizational members. Fullan describes a number of strategies used in education (i.e., intervisitation, peer networks, learning fairs), business (i.e., British Petroleum's Peer Assist Program and Shell's Fishbowl), and the military (After Action Reviews) for turning information into knowledge by engaging people in an orchestrated social process. The key skill here is to convert information to knowledge through purposeful social interactions.

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Coherence making. Fullan argues that we are in complex (rather than chaotic) times and that the central tendency of dynamic, complex systems is to constantly generate overload causing fragmentation, uncertainty and confusion. Effective leaders guide people through differences and enable differences to surface while creating coherence. They tolerate enough ambiguity to keep creative juices flowing, but seek coherence along the way. They ensure strategies are in place to keep people focused and moving in a purposeful direction.

In summary, moral purpose is concerned with direction and results; understanding change, building relationships, and knowledge building honor the complexity and discovery of the journey; and coherence making extracts valuable patterns worth retaining. Effective leaders make people feel that even the most difficult problems can be tackled productively. They are always hopeful — conveying a sense of optimism and an attitude of never giving up in pursuit of highly valued goals. Their enthusiasm and confidence are infectious and energize people to action.

Developing new leaders. *Leading in a Culture of Change* ends with reference to the Fontaine's fable of the hare and the tortoise. Developing leaders are more "tortoise-like than hare-like." Three powerful lessons about leadership are identified: the vital and paradoxical need for slow knowing over time, the importance of learning in context (intervisitations, peer coaching, walkthroughs, study groups, learning fairs, fishbowls), and the need for leaders at all levels of the organization, in order to achieve widespread internal commitment. Good leaders foster leadership at other levels. Leadership at other levels produces a steady stream of future leaders for the system as a whole. Fullan concludes that leaders in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective not simply by their results and who they are as leaders, but by the leadership they develop in others.

The litmus test of all leadership is whether it mobilizes people's commitment to putting their energy into actions designed to improve things; generating internal over external commitment and external over blind commitment is the mark of effective leadership. *Leading in a Culture of Change* integrates the most current ideas and theories on effective leadership to support and illustrate five core competencies for leading in complex times. Fullan links components of his leadership framework with concrete examples and cases used in education and business. This book is a call for action, equipping leaders with ideas and strategies for deep success.



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