

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

Confidence: How Winning and Losing Streaks Begin and End
Rosabeth Moss Kanter
New York: Crown Publishers, 2004
402 pages

Drawing on sports, business and school systems, Kanter reveals the psychology of winning and losing streaks. Losing streaks demotivate. They create a spiral of downward investment — financially and emotionally. Winning streaks do the opposite — they motivate those in the situation as they attract greater investment from the outside. Confidence is the link between expectations, performance and results.

Winning begets winning because it produces confidence at four levels:

1. Self-confidence: an emotional climate of high expectations;
2. Confidence in one another: positive team-oriented behavior;
3. Confidence in the system; and
4. External confidence: attracting resources.

In losing streaks nine pathologies occur: communication decreases, criticism and blame increase, respect decreases, isolation increases, focus turns inward, rifts widen, initiative decreases, aspirations diminish, and negativity spreads.

To turn around losing streaks or to cultivate continuous winning, Kanter offers three cornerstones. The first stone is *Facing Facts and Reinforcing Responsibility*. The second is *Cultivating Collaboration*. The third involves *Inspiring Initiative and Innovation*.

The work of leaders, says Kanter, is to build the confidence of others. Leaders deliver confidence by espousing high standards in their messages, exemplifying these standards in the conduct they model, and establishing formal mechanisms to provide a structure for acting on these standards. Leadership involves attracting human and financial resources and motivating others to their finest efforts and channeling those efforts in a coherent direction.

Why We Like This Book

Here is a book that gets at the core psychology of change — motivation, investment, confidence, or their opposites. Among the hundreds of books on change, this one helps us keep our eye on the ball. Full of positive and negative examples, it is realistic and inspiring. It provides a clear agenda for leaders, insightful and practical.



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