

Change Is Like a Slinky by Hans Finzel, Northfield Publishing (Chicago), 2004.
(35 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Room for Dreamers

Wherever you find yourself in your organization—on the bottom, somewhere in middle management, or at the top—there is always room for more dreamers, because dreamers think about the future and the “what-ifs.” (Page 25)

2. Resist Change—Love Status Quo

Those who resist change are the ones who are in love with the status quo. They thrive on the past more than they envision the future. (Page 25)

3. Jim Crowe—Don’t Stand Still!

Jim Crowe of Level 3 Communications is known to live by mantra, “Take risks, learn quickly from your mistakes, and above all . . . do not stand still.” Page 30)

4. Change is a Juggernaut

Change is a juggernaut. But if you allow yourself to be weighed down by a meritless attachment to yesteryear, you won’t stand a chance. (Page 35)

5. Report Need for Change

How are your coworkers treated when they report needs for change in systems, products, or service? Is it safe for them to bring a bad report to management? The first rule of successful change is to stare reality square in the face and admit your problems. Don’t shoot the messengers. (Page 36)

6. Making the Right Changes

Successful organizations and groups are looking to the future. They are making the right changes to embrace change—instead of running from it. They do so largely by organizing themselves for rapid response, and staffing themselves with forward-thinking people. Think back-ward, and you’ll limit your employment prospects immeasurable. Page 38)

7. Have the Mindset of a Paradigm Pioneer

New employees are willing to flex and start from scratch without previous bias and history, so why not you? Here’s a vital exercise: Pretend you are new to the group even

if you have been around forever. Have the mindset of a paradigm pioneer, not a nostalgic. Today's dynamic organization thrives on people who adapt fast—not those who resist change and unplug themselves emotionally when change is rolled out. (Page 39)

8. We Can Always Improve

We always make the world a better place. We can always improve our organizations. There is always something we can do better—whether it's a product we develop, or a service we provide. (Page 39)

9. Visionary Leaders Disrupt Status Quo

In their book *Visionary Leadership*, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus talk about leaders as change agents: "Visionary leaders disrupt the status quo, challenge the Gospel, and disequilibriate the system in the interest of effecting change that ultimately benefits is all." (Page 40)

10. Good Visionary Leaders Necessary

The change brought about by a good visionary leader is the kind that is necessary and benefits the entire organization—not just his or her own career prospects. (Page 40)

11. Leaders Are Pioneers

And if you are a leader, then you have to be the one most concerned about doing something. Followers may see the problem, but they will usually wait for leaders to take the risk to bringing about the change process. In my experience, followers rarely have the 20/20 vision that leaders have about the looming problems that are just over the horizon of the group.

If you are in midmanagement in an organization that needs radical change, start working on your leaders. Perhaps then place to begin is to help them see some of the issues mentioned above. But be kind and diplomatic, because many leaders become defensive. Regardless of how your group got there and what its growth needs are, you can be a pioneer of the change process. In effect, you will be demonstrating leadership yourself!

A word of reality about leaders and the change process. Sooner or later leaders have to buy into the process or the leaders have to be changed. Because without leadership buy-in, it will not happen. Perhaps it is time for you to step up as a leader in the campaign of change in your organization.

Leaders are pioneers. They are people who venture into unexplored territory . They guide us to new and often unfamiliar destinations. People who take the lead are the foot soldiers in the campaigns for change. . . . The unique reason for having leaders—their differentiating function—is to move us forward. Leaders get us going someplace. (Page 45)

12. List Things That Need Change

Make a list of the things that you have already seen in your organization that needs change. What are you hearing? What is stopping you? (Page 46)

13. Stick with It Up to a Point

I get letters and E-mail from people regularly who ask me that very question. “Here is the situation I am in. What is your recommendation?” someone writes. “Should I try to bring about change? . . . Is there any hope that things will be different, or should I just bail out and find a group that’s more satisfying to work with?” I usually try to encourage people to stick with it . . . up to a point. If they don’t see any movement or any responsiveness to the suggestion for change, it probably is best to move on. (Page 52)

14. Who Can Be a Change Agents?

We all expect leaders to look toward initiating change, but it may surprise you who else can act as agent of change. Consider these groups:

1. *Leaders.* It would be an ideal world if leaders always embraced change with open arms. However, that is usually not the case. Leaders often have the most to lose and the least to gain by revolutions that upset the status quo. Their very jobs can be at stake. Their power can be compromised. The humble leader with a servant’s heart will relax his or her grasp on the organization and allow for open dialogue about necessary changes. In some cases a leader’s attempts to bring about needed change are blocked by a board of directors that won’t allow things to change. If possible, try to get new directors into the mix.
2. *Followers.* In corporate America, we have witnessed stockholder revolutions that have brought dramatic change. If you are just one of the members of the group and not a leader, you still have tremendous power to bring about change. I have seen many churches where the congregation has brought about a revolution because of their dissatisfaction with leadership.
3. *The board of directors.* It is amazing how many passive boards exist, especially in the nonprofit sector. And the early years of the new millennium have seen a rash of irresponsibility at the corporate board level. Many timid board members will allow the organization to get away with murder as long as the bottom line is cared for and

the members look good. Consider the boards that supposedly oversaw the development at Enron and Tyco. How can these directors defend themselves by saying they weren't aware of what was going on? Boards do have the power and authority to bring about change in organizational life, but only through the established leadership structure and the CEO. If they are not happy with the responsiveness of the CEO, then the solution is a no-brainer . . . change the players.

4. *Constituents*. These are the members of organization. In a volunteer organization, they are the volunteer members. In a school, they are the parents and the students and graduates. In the local church, they are the members of the congregation. In a government, of course, they are its citizens. Constituents have tremendous power of influence if they get themselves organized. Most organizations ultimately exist to serve the constituent base. So constituents definitely have a right and a responsibility to be proponents of change. (Page 54-55)

15. Never Change Just for Change Sake!

By changing just for the sake of changing, instead of doing it for the purpose of remaining relevant and competitive, you will destroy the foundation of our society rather than build on it. Furthermore, you'll mire yourself in needless toil. You don't have to reinvent the wheel—only modernize it. Take the things your forefathers have proven to be true and lasting, then give them a twenty-first-century scrubbing. Throw out what is clearly broken, but only when it has proven itself worthless. Remember, some of our brightest thinkers and innovators today actually have gray hair! (Page 62)

16. A Word to the Elders

If you're part of the Builder generation, today's seniors, yours is the challenge of not developing "hardening of the categories." Show the younger generations you can change and you know the difference between changing methods and enduring values. Don't give up on teaching the up-and-coming generations the eternal value of all you hold dear. The world needs you more than ever! The highly successful book *The Greatest Generation* (over six million copies sold), by Tom Brokaw, shows the enduring value of what an older generation can contribute to the younger. (Page 62-63)

17. What's the Point?

A word of caution: Don't worship change just for the sake of change. Change is only worthwhile when it is valid and justified. To twist an old cliché, fixing something is only a good idea if that something is broken. Don't dismiss the old just because it is old. Many enduring values and principles stand the test of time. Each generation has a responsibility to discern the enduring from the outdated in the whirlwind of today's world. Not only is it a bad idea to change something just because it's old, it's

impractical. There are simply too many enduring principles in our world for them to all be discarded just for the sake of relevance. (Page 66)

18. Leaders Out Front

Leaders are meant to be out in front. They should take followers to places they would not tend to go on their own. They need to see *further* than others see, and see *before* others see it. (Page 83)

19. Group's Vision Must be Dynamic

If you do not have a one-owner shop, the vision needs to be determined as a leadership group. It is a matter of give-and-take consensus building about the ideal future of the organization. Remember that a group's vision, while clinging to its core values, must be dynamic and ever changing for the times and seasons of the organization. If there is a board, they must have buy-in for the vision too. (Page 87)

20. A Vision is a Commitment

A vision is a picture of a future state for the organization, a description of what it would like to be a number of years from now. It is a dynamic picture of the organization the future, as seen by its leadership. It is more than a dream or set of hopes, because top management is demonstrably committed to its realization: it is a commitment. (Page 88)

21. Key Players Must Define the Vision

Although a leader must ultimately steer the group into fulfilling its vision, defining that vision should be determined together by key players of the organization. Then when the vision clears, the leadership must communicate that vision with passion: "Twenty-first century leaders will lead not by the authority of their position but by their ability to articulate a vision and core values for their organizations or congregations." Thus says Aubrey Malphurs in his excellent book, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century*. (Page 89)

22. Mission Statements Defined

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS ARE...

Like Glue—they help leaders hold an organization together.

Like A Magnet—they attract newcomers as members,

employees, customers, or donors.

Like a Yardstick—they allow a leader to measure how his group is doing.

Like a Laser—they point you to your destination.
(Page 89)

23. How Leaders Can Reward Risk Takers

- Reward creativity and pioneering.
 - Allow new blood into leadership.
 - Crosstrain them/give them leadership opportunities.
 - Let them network with others outside the company.
 - Site visits: Call on those who do it right.
 - Allow failure: trial and error.
 - Bring creative people into leadership.
 - Make it safe to be creative in your organization.
 - Celebrate creative acts in your group.
 - Relax the controls that stifle coloring outside the lines.
- (Page 97-98)

24. Expand Your Thinking and Mind

- Take a different route to work every day during the coming week. Make a note of how many different sights, sounds, smells, colors, and patterns you observe.
 - Next time you eat out, order something that you have never tried.
 - Go to your favorite bookstore and buy ten magazines outside your interest area. See what else is happening in the world. What new ideas can you find from these outsiders?
 - Take a stroll through the mall and notice what is hot and what is not. Who is opening new stores and what recently closed? What are the hot boutique stall in the isle of the mall?
 - Read books like Mozart's Brain and the Fighter Pilot, by Richard Restack, or The Art of Possibility, by Rosaline and Benjamin Zander, to learn about how the brain works and how you can encourage creativity in yourself and others.
 - Consider networking as an opportunity to not only promote yourself and what you are pushing, but to get great new ideas to cross-pollinate with your own.
- (Page 104)

25. What is Truly Important to You and Your Organization?

Take some time to reflect on what is truly important to you and your organization. What values emerge as directional pointers? What are their values that determine your practice? Where do they come from? Are you satisfied with them? Are they a rock-solid basis for both personal and organizational life, or are you in shifting sand and caught in a side tow? (Page 115)

26. Keep Abreast of Changing Tides

Understanding that your college education is outdated within five years, what are you doing to keep up in your marketplace? Build your own office library of books, taped, journals, web sites, magazines, clippings, seminars, and contacts. Be sure to always plan enough time to read to keep abreast of the changing tide in your world. (Page 115)

27. Good Ideas

“The best way to get good ideas is to get a lot of ideas.” (Page 121)

28. Find Your Train to the Future

During my interview to become the president and CEO of my organization, the board of directors ask me about the future. Of course, they were concerned about what I thought of the future of the organization and whether our future would be successful if the organization was entrusted to my leadership. “How do you see the future?” they asked. “What is your greatest fear?” I shared with them a decade ago what I still believe today: “My greatest fear is becoming irrelevant.” And I went on to add, “Irrelevancy is a bigger risk than inefficiency.” We have become so efficient at doing things right, instead of being efficient at doing right things. Leading the change toward the future always means trying to stake out the territory of effectiveness and relevancy. (Page 122)

29. Broaden Your Interests

Make visits near and far, in this country, visit and study the competition—what do they think about the future? Overseas, study other approaches. How are things different there? What can we learn? (You can develop contacts in other lands over the internet.) (Page 124)

30. Study Past Failures, What went Wrong?

Study past failures—how other folks, convinced of their gravy train’s eternal lasting power, ended up swept away by change. What precise skills did they lack? What lie did they embrace? What was their fatal mistake? (Page 124)

31. Alignment Needed for Your Organization?

Alignment jobs are what many groups need. You can’t be sure what is wrong, but the organization is not running well. The wheels are wobbling. Different pieces of the organization are not in sync with each other. Only through launching the process of change in the right way can alignment issues be rightly addressed and corrected. (Page 126)

32. Checking the Alignment

Actually, a great way to figure out how well you are aligned is to perform a vision audit. One of the best books out there on vision in leadership is *Visionary Leadership*, by Burt Nanus. Pay special attention to his fourth bullet. He says the best way to gauge momentum is to do what I call a vision audit. The four questions of the audit help determine whether the organization really has the vision and knows what it is:

1. Does the organization have a clear stated vision? If so, what is it?
2. If the organization continues on its current path, where will it be heading over the next decade? How good will such direction be?
3. Do the key people in the organization know where the organization is headed and agree on the direction?
4. Do the structures, processes, personal, incentives, and information system support the current direction of the organization? (Page 128-129)

33. The Eight Stage Process of Creating Major Change

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Create the guiding coalition
3. Develop a vision and strategy
4. Communicating the change vision
5. Empowering board-based action
6. Generating short term wins
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

In our own organization we have formed a long-range change team to tackle issues of alignment. Their charter is to represent all the stockholders of our group and

recommend bold changes in all the areas needing alignment. We use Kotter's eight-stage process as a rail on which to ride. No compromise. We recognize that for us it is a long term process because of the size of our organization (eight hundred people spread through seventy countries) and our age (sixty years of traditions.) If your group is younger or smaller, it can of course be compressed. Since I, chief executive officer, and our chief operating officer are both a part of the change team, there is bite to the group, and it does have the authority to actually see that things get done. Form a group like this with neither teeth nor authority and it is just wishful thinking and a waste of time. Haven't we all been on committees with no power that decides nothing of any merit that anyone adopted? (Page 130-131)

34. Top Reasons Why Followers Resist Change

1. *Fear*: The unknown is a threat to their comfort zones.
2. *Insecurity*: They may be worse off after the changes are implemented.
3. *Power*: They may lose power in the shuffle.
4. *Inertia*: It is easier to maintain the status quo.
5. *Energy*: It takes a lot of work to change things

(Page 149)

35. Leaders Don't Even Know the Questions

The greatest innovations and forward strides we will make in our calling will arise from ideas generated at the fringes of our organization. And how can we be aware of these if we spend no time at the fringes?

Leaders don't have all the answers. When it comes to the organizations future, leaders don't even know many of the questions. The answers come from those doing the work. And how well we leaders even harvest those profound ideas if we do not listen long, hard, and often? Leaders trying to preserve the status quo close themselves off and listen only to those voiced that agree with them. Learning leaders listen genuinely and relentlessly to the voices around them.

(Page 255)