



## BOOK REVIEW – THE CHANGE CATALYST: SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS CHANGE BY CAMPBELL MACPHERSON

ARTICLE BY **Graham White**



If Coincidences mean you're on the right path as suggested by Simon Van Booy, then the two significant coincidences which collide to make this book **possibly one of the most informative and influential books you will have the opportunity to read this year** are ensuring you are not just on the path to successful change you are on the highway to it.

The first of these two significant events is that change has become an inevitable and uncontrollable reality in every aspect of our lives. Whichever employment sector you work in change has happened, is happening and will continue to happen in the future. Therefore for any who doubt this certainty let me remind you that less than five years ago a USA wide survey confirmed that the average American believed the landline telephone was and would always be an irreplaceable aspect of the average American home. Five years earlier the UK media made fun of the suggestion that this thing called the internet could ever unseat what was thought of as the most indispensable technology, the television.

Change has been influencing the evolution of human life in one way or another for thousands of years. As recently as the first half of the 20th Century the gradual mechanisation of agriculture transformed the western world's labour market. What is so different less than a hundred years later is the accelerated pace and widening breadth of change. As technology embeds itself across all aspects of human existence and when everything from essential home tools to "AI" driven manufacturing is tumbling into a spiral of perpetual motion it is clear that change is changing the way change changes everything.

The second of the significant events in this timely collision of coincidences comes in the form of a physics graduate who initially thought his future was to be a high flyer in military jets but instead has seen him become a world renowned high flying enabler of change. Successfully instigating sustainable change for almost thirty years across the UK, Europe, US, Australia, Asia and the Middle East **Campbell Macpherson brings a remarkable wealth of experience from across a variety of roles in numerous industries and business disciplines, he combines a passion for clear and focused leadership techniques with an absolute belief that an organisations people are the only resource capable of guaranteeing the delivery of its strategy.**

The outcome of this collision is a book that begins with a bold reminder from Stephen Covey that it takes only one person to be a “transformer” of an organisation and this book in a very interesting and systematic way provides the strategy that this transformer may be persuaded to use if they want to ensure a successful change. The book ends with a reminder from the author himself that change is inevitable but successful change is not.

**So what is it about this book that I believe will capture your imagination and convince you to believe my claims of its potential decadal impact?** If you are an adviser, a consultant, an interim, an executive, a board member or an in-house change leader the answer is simple, **this book delivers a road map for change** that ignores even the most basic of business writing etiquette. From the very outset of this book the standard writing model is forgotten by ignoring the principle of have an introduction followed by a Part One and Part Two, and instead introduces a part zero at the beginning of the book and then five separate parts each very individual in their structure and novel in the content design? However, the originality of the title “Part Zero” pales into insignificance when you discover the uniqueness of the content of this section of the book which cross referencing everything from Star Trek to Born Free the book launches into the inevitability of change in a manner that ensures the reader is clear even at this early stage of the book that whilst nothing in life is guaranteed change is unavoidable if not preordained.

As you complete Part Zero and carrying tightly in your mind this new revelation about change you head into the first of five sections of this remarkable publication and discover the shocking reality that only one in every eight change initiatives succeed. Whilst we are repeatedly reminded never to begin a presentation with a negative this depressing truth surprisingly sets the book on a firm foundation from which the reader is now on the edge of their hypothetical seat seeking to know why. We need not worry about waiting for the answer as the book immediately proceeds to develop a six part analysis of why so many initiatives end so badly. Pulling hard on your collar you will find yourself reflecting on these reasons and embarrassingly having to admit to voicing some if not all of them yourself.

From this point onward the book becomes an unending source of answers to every question you have asked or will ask about implementing change. As you move through each section of part two it is as if the writer is reading your mind just moments ahead of each question forming in your mind. Part Two in particular is a joyful revelation of each and every ingredient you will need to implement successful change. Equipped with this information you then march boldly into culture change as outlined in Part Three and then with a resounding cheer you embrace Part Four and get down to the business of planning what a change programme will look like. I will leave Part Five as a surprise for each reader to discover.

Macpherson has a burning desire to make a positive difference to the way that organisations work and the impact they have on their customers, employees and shareholders. This theme permeates every chapter of the book and as you move through this you become more and more embolden by the desire to be that one in eight organisation that delivers success. Reminding us that everyone wants change but nobody wants to change we end this part of the book with an opportunity to dive into the change adverse culture that most of us find ourselves living in. At the same time you end this section of the book desperate to move on and discover what success looks like.

Not wishing to spoil the exciting use of examples and real experiences I will say little more about the specific content only that Macpherson has developed this book in a systematic fashion identifying the necessary ingredients of change, the hurdles that will get in your way and then how you put the knowledge learned into practice. This methodical and pragmatic structure is a blessing in disguise as it ensures your journey through the book follows a logical process that makes it not only an essential read but also a reference guide, change manual and a detailed implementation plan with numerous personal experiences and examples of putting into practice the essence of what the book is all about.

It would be amiss of me not to note that for some hesitant readers they may feel a slight sense of déjà vu when reading the personal experiences of the writer. I would also suspect that others who have previously or are currently struggling with change before picking up this book may want to claim with a sense of frustration that they have heard all of this before and it hasn't worked up to now. However, they would all be wrong. I could understand these concerns if we were recommending another book about best practices, but this is not just a list of anecdotes from one organisation's experiences and nor is it the ideas of a single mind, but rather the time tested wisdom of many people's experiences shared, developed and retested time and time again to ensure they can help any organisation develop its own solutions for a successful future. **This book and its myriad of real life experiences presents a treasure trove of knowledge that has been honed on the sharpening stone of success.** It offers any reader with even a semblance of self-belief a clear and unadulterated process that if followed correctly, presents the most likely solution to deliver successful change. Spelled out in the most basic terms **the book will ensure a level of success for your organisational change that is many levels higher that it would have been without it.**

And if you don't believe me let me finish with the words of Alastair Conway, CEO James Hay Partnership. "If you want your next change or strategy to be the 1 in 8 that succeeds; buy this book."

Graham White, Retired HR Director