

The Power to Change

The Power to Change

How to harness change to make it work for you

Campbell Macpherson



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*'Change happens' as Forrest Gump should have said.
Those of us who can cope with change will survive.
Those of us who are able to embrace change
and look for the opportunities
will thrive.
And the power to change
lies within every single one of us.*

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About the author

Campbell Macpherson is an author, motivational keynote speaker, international business adviser, executive coach, workshop facilitator, Non-Executive Director and self-titled Change Catalyst. He is also an executive fellow of the world-renowned Henley Business School.

He runs highly acclaimed ‘Leading Change’ and ‘Embracing Change’ workshops for organizations worldwide, using key insights from *The Change Catalyst* and this book, *The Power to Change*.

Campbell has been enabling leaders to clarify their strategy, build cultures that embrace change and lead the successful instigation of sustainable change for more than 25 years as an internal change leader or external adviser for organizations large and small across the UK, Europe, Australia, United States, Asia and the Middle East.

His CV is nothing but change, with myriad jobs and a multitude of careers across a vast array of disciplines. He sold computers for NCR in the 1980s and ran his own multimedia company in the 1990s. He was a Senior Change Manager for Andersen Consulting, Head of eBusiness for the AMP Group, the inaugural Marketing Director of Virgin Wines, HR and Board Director of a 1,000-employee financial services advisory firm, Strategy Director of Zurich Global Life Emerging Markets and a senior adviser to the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, one of the world’s largest sovereign wealth funds.

He also flew jets (really badly) in the Royal Australian Air Force. He has a Physics degree from Melbourne University and was educated at a state school in Queensland, Australia; a school that majored in two main things – teenage pregnancies and surfing, neither of which he was particularly skilled at.

What drives him is a burning desire to help organizations and people change.

He is a firm believer in ‘Responsible Capitalism’: that companies that exist solely for the financial gain of their executives and the creation of value for their shareholders will ultimately fail. To thrive in the long term, businesses must address the needs of all of their stakeholders (customers, employees, suppliers, partners and the communities in which they operate as well as shareholders and executives).

And the most important component of any organization is its people. People are the source of a company's competitive advantage and the drivers of change in any organization. Because all change is personal. Even the largest organizational change programme is actually the culmination of myriad individual, personal changes.

Campbell also strongly believes that none of us is powerless in the face of change. Even when change is done *to* us, we always have a choice. At the very least, we can choose how we react to the change – and this can make all the difference.

Campbell has had 20 different employers and has been made redundant three times. He spent his first 35 years in Australia before moving to the UK in 1999. He has lived as an expat in Abu Dhabi. He has moved house 17 times.

He is a sought-after speaker worldwide and travels the globe helping leaders to lead change and individuals to embrace change via his consultancy, Change & Strategy International (www.changeandstrategy.com).

Strangely, with all this change, Campbell has been married to the same wonderful woman since 1992 and has two truly remarkable adult children. He lives in Oxfordshire and divides his time between the UK, Australia and wherever his clients need him to be.

Preface

The pandemic that changed our world

On an unknown day in 2019, in a bustling ‘wet market’ in Wuhan, China, where caged wildlife co-existed with a slew of slaughtered and soon-to-be-slaughtered animals of all varieties, a flu-like virus seems to have leapt from a pangolin to a human. Most likely, the pangolin was infected by a bat – a species that previously gave us SARS, MERS and Ebola.

We humans have zero natural immunity to this new coronavirus – COVID-19 as it has been named – and as we now know, it is highly contagious and potentially fatal for our elderly and those of us with underlying health conditions.

The economic, social and personal impact of COVID-19 has been profound and, given the extent of the global reaction, its effects are likely to be felt for some time to come. It has changed our world in ways that we are yet to grasp fully.

It has wreaked havoc with our economies, pushing countless businesses to the brink and beyond. Many of us have lost our jobs or our incomes have dried up. Governments around the world have implemented desperate support measures, unheard of in peacetime. Government and corporate debt have skyrocketed. Health systems have been overwhelmed. Police and emergency services have been overstretched. Airports have been transformed into desolate wastelands. Train carriages, offices, restaurants and bars have emptied.

We have quickly learnt how to work from home and, through trial and error, discovered the tips and tricks on how to use video conferencing effectively. Necessity being the mother of invention and all that.

We have fought one another over toilet rolls and rallied to help elderly neighbours.

We have been encouraged and even forced to self-isolate – with the very alien absence of the face-to-face social interaction that we humans crave. We have self-isolated with our partners and families, enduring a prolonged form of close contact that was previously only reserved for Christmas.

COVID-19 has pushed our national and personal anxiety levels through the roof, inflamed by a 24/7 news industry that lurches from providing a

much-needed social service to displaying an almost palpable delight in catastrophizing every new and uncertain development.

We are uncertain about whom to trust, whom to believe or what to believe. We loathe uncertainty; it makes us fear the worst. The added problem with this pandemic is that we also don't know how long it will last. Uncertainty topped by more uncertainty.

It is the most perfect example of 'Burning Platform' change that we may ever witness; a common phenomenon that we discuss in detail in Chapters 10 and 11 – big change that has been done to us. And through this crisis we have all ridden the emotional roller-coaster that is the 'Burning Platform Change Curve'. We have experienced shock, denial, anger, fear and even depression. Several times.

The good news is, these emotions are normal. It is how we react to change. The trick is to acknowledge them, understand them and start to use them to our own advantage; to assess our situation, embrace the new reality and look for the opportunities. Because opportunities exist even in times of boundless uncertainty and massive disruption.

This virus has also given us a gift if we wish to receive it; a gift that is relevant for nations, corporations and individuals alike. It has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reflect on what is important; to reflect on what it is we need to change.

It has forced us to question some of the key premises that, as a society, we seem to have taken for granted. The most important duty of any government is to keep its people safe. But safe from what? For millennia, governments have assumed that the greatest threat to their citizens was a physical attack from another nation, and globally they have ploughed trillions into weapons and military might, arguably at the expense of far more important aspects of our national and personal security.

While no health system could have been completely prepared for the speed and extent of this pandemic, some public health systems entered this crisis with a massive shortage of equipment, nurses, doctors and hospital beds. Privatized health systems have also been found wanting – and morally questionable. Aged care services, too, have been neglected. Too many people have died untested and untreated at home.

It has forced us to rethink how businesses work. Too many business models operate on the thinnest of margins and have therefore been thrown into this crisis without a financial buffer. They have had no choice but to cut staff to stay afloat. Not all will survive.

Have our governments and our systems of commerce been prioritizing the wrong things? This time it isn't just the banks that are asking for bailouts. Airlines (public and private), railways, retailers, coffee shops, restaurants, pubs, manufacturers, big businesses, small businesses, sole traders and service providers of all persuasions have been in dire need of government cash.

And yet amid all this gloom, the air quality in the world's cities has improved dramatically. Globally, 4 million people have been dying from the effects of air pollution every year, according to the World Health Organization. The US National Academy of Sciences thinks the number could be twice that figure. The pause in manufacturing and the reduction in the number of cars on the roads due to COVID-19 may have saved tens of thousands of lives. How ironic.

Instinctively, we hope that change has an end date; that we can soon get back to the way things were. But what if we can't? What if we shouldn't?

This virus has forced massive change upon us all. We are all its victims. None of us has asked for it. None of us has asked for its consequences either. Like any big change that is forced upon us, we feel powerless in the face of such dramatic disruption. But we aren't powerless. We have the power to pause, reflect, reassess our priorities and identify what is truly important in our lives.

And then we can change.

This book is designed to help us do precisely that.

Acknowledgments

I loved writing this book. I loved researching it, discovering innumerable new insights along the way. I loved drafting it and redrafting it countless times. I loved interviewing fascinating people on the subject of change. I loved using my ‘Leading Change’ and ‘Embracing Change’ workshop delegates as guinea pigs as I was refining the content.

This book is the ying to *The Change Catalyst*’s yang. My first book was about leading change. This is about embracing it. It is for everyone.

The first thank you must go to Lucy Carragher, organizer of the Business Book of the Year Awards in London, who kindly asked me to be the keynote speaker at the 2019 awards gala dinner. I had a wonderful evening – as the videos of the night amply demonstrate! That was the night I met Helen Kogan, MD of Kogan Page, whom I am very proud to say is the publisher of *The Power to Change*. Thank you to Helen and Chris Cudmore for believing in the book and for believing in me. I look forward to a lengthy and fruitful relationship with their fabulous publishing house.

Thanks also to my agent, Jonathan Hayden. *The Power to Change* is the first collaboration between us and we are already working on the next two. I envisage we will be working together for a very long time to come.

Thank you to Dr Bronwyn King AO, founder of Tobacco Free Portfolios, for being so generous with her time. Her story of how she and her team encourages and enables investment companies to stop investing in or financing tobacco is genuinely inspirational, as is Bronwyn, and I am sure that Chapter 13 will leave you both inspired and stunned. Thank you also to Hannah Hickman of HENRY, another deeply inspiring organization that tackles childhood obesity by helping parents to change. There is also much to learn from HENRY’s story in Chapter 24.

Thanks also to the always-smiling Douglas Fraser who did me the favour of proofreading, editing and providing new insights for Chapter 3: ‘Climate Change: The dangerous power of denial’. Who better to whip that into shape than a clever young recent master’s graduate in Environmental Policy and Management?!

Lastly, a gigantic thank you to my incredible wife and life-long partner, Jane, who would often enquire as to how my ‘wisdom dispensing’ was going and proofread the final draft, proclaiming, ‘I love it. It’s better than the first book’.

I’ll take that.

