
Preface

About Impact

*Change is inevitable, whether it
represents progress is up to us.*

The chief challenge for CEOs and their teams in our digital age is to have the human side of organizations keep up with the technological, such as artificial intelligence, data science, and advanced robotics. On the surface, the challenges of digital transformation” and the future of work appear technical and technological. However, the human implications range from the simple to the complex. At the “simpler” end of the spectrum lie the human resources challenges of finding capable technologists (simple, but not easy.) Even harder is finding superhero “whole brain” leaders with advanced technological competence **and** leadership capabilities. More complex and harder still is “upskilling” the rest of the organization with the skills, culture, and mindset to work with data and job share with AI. Finally, we must upgrade our social technologies, such as learning, leading, deciding, changing, and collaborating, **partly** to enable technological change, and **partly** to take advantage of the “social tools” new technologies offer.

In theory, as we improve at (say) leading change and

creating the right cultural soil for technology implementation, then we can use technology's tools to be more effective leaders and to nurture the desired culture. As we (for example) learn to use behavioral science to engage employees and change behaviors, our behavioral science implementations will benefit from the increase in change capability. This is the virtuous circle, the Panglossian "best of all possible worlds."

Reality is different. McKinsey claims that of the eighty percent of businesses that undertake some flavor of digital transformation, yet less than one-quarter succeed. Together, let's see whether we can better this performance by upgrading our change capability and the "human side" of our businesses.

Impact is about leading change, and about those "upgrades" to the human side of organizations, leading, learning, communicating, changing, collaborating, deciding, and engaging. As computers do more of our thinking for us, taking over many of our cognitive tasks, our "competitive advantage" is in the social domain. Crudely, we can outsource some of our thinking, but not much of our collaboration. **The upside is liberation from cognitive drudgery; the challenge is to raise our game and to become better at what makes us distinctively human – the social, the collaborative, the creative, the visionary.**

Impact relies on the premise that digital age change is paradoxical in at least three ways. First, the more technologically-enabled workplaces become, the more important the "human" becomes – community, purpose, connection, empathy, relationships, and trust.

Second, while the pace and importance of digital transformation are breathtaking, there are opportunities for change leaders to be much more effective through use of digital tools. They can seize this chance to create workplaces that are, paradoxically, more "human."

Third, we must see past the false dichotomy – **man or machine**. Computers crush humans at chess, yet human/“algo” pairs crush those. Additive manufacturing will change how we make things and will destroy some manufacturing jobs, but a whole class of new jobs, “additive manufacturing programmer” rely on human/ machine synergy.

In *Impact*, the clunky (because authors are slaves to SEO¹) subtitle, *21st-century Change Management, Behavioral Science, Digital Transformation, and Future of Work*, provides sparse guidance to what is under the hood. The book ties technologically driven change to changes in the workplace, changes in culture and mindset, and then to changes in how we change. This top-down approach takes us from the macro (megatrends) to the meso (changing groups, teams, and business) to the micro (human behavior) and sometimes to the nano (neuroscience.) It takes us from the medium-term (CEO priorities for 2030) to the ultra-short-term (getting people to make a beneficial choice this instant.) *Impact* isn’t a book on digital transformation or AI/ robotics in business, nor on business strategy, nor on macro-economics, but the first chapter provides the strategic and economic context for our book on change.

What needs to change in change (and her cousins learning, mindset, growth, culture, and collaboration?) There are six themes in six chapters:

1. **Megatrends, digital transformation, future of work, millennials, and their effect on business strategy and hence on change.**

¹ Search Engine Optimization. I.e. forsaking brevity and elegance so Google ranks you.

2. A summary of **what is wrong with the change management paradigm** and current models and tools.
3. **A rework of everyday change models**, a “humanization” of others, and augmentation of a tool that you can make use of as a day-to-day manager.
4. **Debiasing and critical thinking.** Most astute readers know a little about cognitive biases. There are no management books on how to “debias,” and research on debiasing is at the cutting edge of social psychology.
5. **The behavioral sciences in business.** How little nudges and behavioral science interventions can make a huge difference and how businesses can harness certain biases to increase CX and EX (customer and employee experience.) Returning readers will note that in this chapter alone, there is textual overlap with *“The Science of Organizational Change (hereafter “Science.”)*
6. The effect of information glut and millennial culture **on influencing in the digital age.** Collaboration tools for constant engagement and learning rather that employees pull toward them. Turning JOMO (joy of missing out on powerpoint snoozefests and boring conferences) into FOMO.

Central to the whole picture, of changing how we change, of humanizing business, of upskilling workforces, is leadership. In a world where advancing human capability is critical, leaders need to lead that. The idea of **leader as learner** is central to *Impact*. (“The Chief Learning Officer.”) When I coach CEOs,

they draw a pie chart of how they spend time – “developing self and team” is often less than 10%, and sometimes I suspect they are overly kind to themselves. That won’t do. Part of the humanizing journey is putting human development at the forefront of what you do.

In *Impact*, I argue that models and ideas of leadership and change are dated and only sluggishly updated. This is not to denigrate the early contributions of say Kotter, Bennis, Drucker, some of which date from the 1960s, but they could only see as far as they could.

The problem, unlike in the sciences, is that most current business writers and leaders are too worshipful of those dated ideas, too slow to amend them, and reluctant to cast them out of the temple. The “soft” side of business is analogous to religion – the words of the prophet stand above challenge. The same linear templates for organizational change have been in use for 25 years. The most populous organizational change forum on LinkedIn uses the thoroughly debunked Kübler-Ross change curve as its home page image. The same four box diagrams are trotted out as robust frameworks for analyzing change. As experts who want to lead organizations into the 21st-century, we need to update the gurus’ ideas and debunk some of their baloney.

Once we have unpicked some of the older models of change, *Impact* proposes some alternatives. The critical part of this chapter is not the proposed models themselves, but rather the 13 principles used to derive them. Using those, and the proposed models as a starting point, the reader can pick n’ mix to build their own that best fits the context.

This book was nearly titled *The Behavioral Revolution*. While familiarity with cognitive biases in business is widespread, from the work of Ariely, Kahneman, *The Science of Organizational*

Change, and *The Halo Effect*, there are no books that I can discern on **debiasing**. Knowing that you, your staff, your team, and your organization have cognitive biases is a booby-prize if you don't know what to do about it. Therefore, I've trawled the academic literature in this very new area, and combined it with the eye of an OD practitioner to create a chapter that I hope adds practical value and begins to answer the question: how do I debias myself, my staff, my team, and my business?

In a second chapter on behavioral science, *Impact* visits the latest use cases for **nudging** and the latest behavioral techniques. Many of these come from marketing, but the change profession has been incredibly slow to adopt some of these tools to work in change communication. Again, for readers of "*Science*," the first third of this chapter reiterates some of that book.

The revolutions in the "soft" side offer us breakthroughs in **human influencing, learning, and adaptation**. The ideas come from behavioral science and from use of modern communications technologies to create constant engagement, not the periodic engagement of old (town halls, workshops, and so forth). The shift in influencing is toward "pull" models away from "push" models, and toward **personalization from "spray and pray"**. People are naturally curious. Spark that curiosity, and they will "pull" learning and communications toward them rather than having those "pushed" (shoved) at them. Most of my change management activities in the Bronze Age by were of this push and periodic type — "cascades" where communication about a change had to be rolled out group by group, stakeholder by stakeholder to "overcome" resistance, itself a dysfunctional notion.

There is much to learn here from the esports ecosystem. (For cynics, esports finals get more watchers than the Superbowl.) In esports communication, lines between fans,

players, professionals, journalists, “casters,” owners, and sponsors are blurred. Peer-to-peer is central to the model, and everyone in the ecosystem is peer. As with Netflix, esports communications happen in any language, with any subtitle. Entertainment, competition and communication blur, creating levels of engagement “comms” managers can only dream of.

Training too is undergoing a revolution from something that happens on a course, offsite, MBA, or executive education program to something constant. Short videos, CEO vlogs, “learning 2.0” (which combines team working, knowledge management, and learning), and internal “MOOCs” mean more efficient, personalized, timely, and relevant learning.

In summary, we begin with the strategic context, do a little debunking, propose some newer models, then close with three chapters with the newest ideas from the behavioral sciences.

The values of 21st-century change

“The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who, in times of moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.”

Dante, *Divina Comedia*

Rather than pretend that business conversations possess a kind of value-neutrality, I would rather be open with readers about which values and commitments drive my work and which underpin *Impact*. In today’s highly polarized and politicized world, some of you may swipe-left – but some, I hope, may find the transparency refreshing.

Connecting with purpose

In the 1990s, I was a co-founder (co-conspirator) of a community that wanted to bring spirituality to business. This motley

crew had American Christians, progressive Jews, and some Islamic faithful, but mostly we were a New Age (“cafeteria spirituality”) mishmash of yogis, Buddhists, Alchemist/ Celestine Prophecy readers, and 1960s Aquarians. We infiltrated the Academy of Management and started an interest group called **Management, Spirituality, and Religion**². (While you will no longer hear the expression “spirituality at work,” I believe we nudged business in a helpful direction. Google runs a mindfulness program called “Search Inside Yourself” and I have a CEO friend who has a t-shirt that says, “Do you even meditate bro?” Words that sounded woo-woo then, (*servant leadership, presence or being present, conscious leadership, purpose, transformation, organizational democracy, vision, values, cult-like cultures*, i.e., business terms that have their roots in religious language,) have found their way into the mainstream. (In fact, IBM’s 1990s CEO, Lou Gerstner, famously said, “the last thing IBM needs is a vision.” We’ve come a long way.)

The 90s being the 90s, I had gone a little woo in, an attempt to “find myself” (whatever the heck that means.) However, I felt then and still that Ecclesiastes vision of work, “all the works that my hands had wrought, and the labour that I had labored..., all was vanity and vexation ..., was worthless under the sun...” was entirely too dismal.

The consulting firm I founded, Future Considerations, was based around wedding spiritual ideas to business sustainability and is in its 19th year. Our brand was **“better leaders for better businesses for a better world.”**

What mattered to me then, as now, is “good work” and “good works” and business’ stewardship of those.

² If you want to read my thesis on this, Google Spirituality at Work by Paul Gibbons.)

Around 20 years ago, my values shifted, and I found a new spiritual home in an unspiritual place: philosophy. The enlightenment I had sought in the 1990s came to mean something much bigger and broader than just *personal* growth.

The Enlightenment refers to a period in history, roughly the 18th century, where **humanism, science, reason, and progress** captured the imagination of European intellectuals, scientists, and philosophers, **and** traveled across the Atlantic to a young country where its principles inspired that country's founders, chiefly Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, and Adams, as they deliberated over the future of their new country. You might argue that the US was the first use case for Enlightenment ideals. Those ideals inspired me to join the UK's Royal Society of the Arts³, of which Franklin was a member, because its mission is "21st-century enlightenment."

Much of what we value in the contemporary world derives from enlightenment thinking: *democracy, political equality, individual liberty and rights, toleration, human self-actualization, free markets, the end of servitude* (ideologically to begin with), *reason* (rather than received authority), *and science* (rather than superstition.)

How does this philosophical and historical aside shape a book (all my books) on business change? Let me use Steven Pinker's framework, from his *Enlightenment Now*⁴ – **humanism, science, reason, and progress** to describe how those philosophical values, especially humanism, underpin a book on change.

³ The full name is the Royal Society of Arts Manufactures and Commerce. Previous Fellows have included Stephen Hawking, Charles Dickens, Karl Marx, Benjamin Franklin, and Nelson Mandela

⁴ I think "EN" is the most important book of this century so far (perhaps along with *Thinking Fast and Slow* and *Sapiens*) – and am deeply grateful to Pinker for our exchanges while writing *Impact*.

Humanizing Business and Change

“I believe in the possible... You were right when you said you felt small, looking up at all that up there. We are very, very small, but we are profoundly capable of very, very big things.”

Professor Steven Hawking

The notion of “humanizing change” rests inside a deeper conversation about humanizing business, which is nested, like a matryoshka doll, inside our vision for humanity’s future. What could that vague, woo-woo, fluffy-sounding concept, “humanizing business,” mean?

Primo, humanizing business would put **humanistic values** first: freedom, dignity, purpose, toleration, equality, self-actualization, and democracy.

Secondo, humanistic values are BS without humanistic policies. Harassment is still rife; inclusion is still partial; fairness is spotty; employee well-being is an afterthought; family-friendly leave (standard in Europe) is uncommon in the US. Add that to what we will say below about measuring, flourishing, capitalism, and democracy, and we have a huge humanizing project on our hands.

We need to reconsider the **purpose of business**. The dominant paradigm, particularly in the U.S., is that business is there to principally generate shareholder value. Investors of capital and their rights to “surplus” generated by workers trump worker concerns for welfare, well-being, purpose, and security. When profits are threatened, sacking workers is an uncontroversial strategy. When environmental protections are imposed, the business paradigm is to fight those tooth-and-nail in the courts. It is legal, and admired by some, for companies

to jack up the prices of life-saving drugs 10-fold because of duty to shareholders. In the Ford Pinto case decades ago, there was a cost-benefit conversation about how many dollars it would cost to save how many lives. In this paradigm, human concerns take a backseat. That won't do.

Those are the worst examples of *laissez-faire* capitalism coupled with human greed, but such instances number in the tens of thousands. Think about just the last few years, Theranos, VW, Wells Fargo, Purdue Pharmaceuticals, Enron, BP, Koch Industries, and Exxon may spring to mind. It isn't a case of rotten apples; it is a case of a rotten barrel.

The feats of capitalism are many and mighty; it has lifted billions of people from poverty and privation, though (arguably) it is not unique in its capacity to do so. The humanizing journey is one where we extract those human goodies, preserve capitalism's encouragement of investment, risk-taking, innovation, and individual entrepreneurship while reasoning (as a world) on how to avoid inequality, concentrations of political power that result from accumulations of wealth, and environmental destructions that result from "externalizing" those costs (rainforests, ecosystems, climate, and groundwater do not appear on the debit side of balance sheets).

To achieve our "humanizing ends," we would **measure business** differently. Just as the measure of man is not money, the measure of a country should not be GDP (which some say is a proxy for how quickly we are destroying the planet.) As early as 1968, Senator Bobby Kennedy said, "We cannot measure national spirit by the Dow Jones average, nor national achievement by the gross domestic product." Rather we should measure the good things GDP buys, like material sufficiency, education, security, and health, and things that are harder to buy such as happiness, well-being, and community. Conservative

Prime Minister David Cameron introduced GWB (General Well-Being) and started measuring it. Sadly, he is more likely to be remembered for driving his country off the Brexit cliff.

Business has the concept of sustainability, a triple-bottom-line coined by one of my mentors, John Elkington, in 1994 – **people, planet, profit**. The good thing about sustainability is that it is voluntary; the bad thing about it is that it is voluntary. Can we rely on the good faith of businesses to hold themselves to account without public oversight? (Think about privacy, AI, and opioids recently.) How do we get the system to work when the system's incentives drive behavior toward the final “p” at the expense of the first two?

Humanizing business would put human flourishing first. One formal, psychological breakdown of flourishing is fulfillment, meaning, affect, achievement, and relationships or as Studs Terkel put it, “... a purpose, not just a paycheck.” We spend about 100,000 hours of our lives at work, often more of our waking hours than with our families. We should insist on flourishing at work, and if in a leadership role, our policies should nurture it.

Gratifyingly, the business paradigm is shifting. When Unilever was a client ten years ago, its CEO, Paul Polman, introduced our leadership program with the following statement:

“We have long known about the many challenges we are facing - inequality, poverty, youth unemployment, and climate change, just to name a few – and I have always believed that everyone - including business – has a role to play in addressing them. Businesses cannot be bystanders.

***We need to be a giver, not a taker in a society that gives us life in the first place.** It is – after all - not possible to have a strong, functioning business in a world*

of increasing inequality, poverty, and climate change. The good thing is that, next to our moral obligations to address the global challenges, it is also an enormous business opportunity. That's the equally exciting part."

These conclusions were echoed by the Business Roundtable chaired by Jamie Dimon of JP Morgan Chase in 2019. The Roundtable repudiated its 1997 declaration that “the paramount duty of management and of boards of directors is to the corporation’s stockholders” and pledged commitments to five groups of stakeholders—customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and shareholders.

The next aspect of humanizing business would involve **democratizing it** – better balancing the political those stakeholders have in business decisions. It is an *enlightenment principle* that giving people a democratic say in matters that affect them is morally obligatory: why there were French and American Revolutions. We fight hard for democratic rights in society but check them at the door when we enter workplaces. Were companies structured (for example) as co-operatives, owned and operated by workers, for example, that would equalize power and perhaps equalize benefits from capitalism (the 440-fold wage gap.) That answer is partial because there is no evidence that a democratically run company would take sufficient account of environmental externalities. Groups of humans may prove as greedy and short-sighted as individuals. Humans, in the round, are still in denial about what a 2-, 3-, or 4-degree warmer world would do to our species’ prospects. I still see shopping carts full of thirty single-use plastic bags, and the number of plastic straws used daily would encircle the world 2.5 times. **Corporate democracy** has a value in its own right and may be a step in the right direction, but groups

of humans can still make democratically disastrous decisions.

Humanizing change is part of that journey because how we change (the means by which we effect change in business) can be humanistic or not. Consider political change as an extreme example – we can change through violent revolution (Russia, France, USA), through coercion and neglect of human rights (Mao), through representative democracy, or direct democracy (plebiscite, referenda). Businesses in the early 20th century still used direct, and sometimes violent coercion, such as against unions and strikers. Coercion today is cuddlier, but the threat of termination is still under the table. Take the example of whistle-blowers. Their silence is coerced; they can be fired or sued. For example, I think James Damore’s screed against women and inclusion at Google was moronic. However, should he have been fired?

Coercion is far from dead. A 2019 email from HBS advertised a change course that would help leaders “silence naysayers.” **Carrots and sticks are still alive and well within the change cannon, and some businesses forgo the carrots.** This book has many more examples on humanizing change, which as special importance as we consider the future of work. Change methods used today are a far cry from fully embracing humanistic ideals.

Pythagoras said 2600 years ago, “man [sic] is the measure of all things.”

We need to remember that all human institutions should serve humankind, and not just our short-term material interests, but our spiritual needs, and our long-term needs for a sustainable biosphere to sustain our prosperity⁵.

⁵ One day, someday, the preceding section will become a book in its own right, *Humanizing Business and Change*, but for now, I offer the above as provocations.

Science and change

“Break the cycle, Morty. Rise above. Focus on science.”

Rick, from *Rick and Morty*

As a species, we love the tech goodies that science brings us, but are selective in how we use it to make personal, business, and policy decisions. The *public understanding of science*, science literacy, and news literacy are causes I devote most to. Knowing how science works affects decisions we make as consumers (whether we fall for the latest snake oil remedy or choose to vaccinate our kids.) It affects policy decisions; science ignorance produces ludicrous arguments such as a US Senator bringing a snowball to the floor of the Senate to “disprove” climate change.

Thankfully, there is a sea change afoot in business called *evidence-based management*, an attempt to bring the science to the way we make business decisions (rather than anecdote, tradition, fashion, fads, habit, what is comfortable/ easy, intuition, or ceding decisions mindlessly to authority.) There is fuller discussion of this rich issue in *The Science of Organizational Change*, and I also recommend Pfeffer and Sutton, *Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths, and Total Nonsense Profiting from Evidence-Based Management*, and looking up the *Centre for Evidence-Based Management and Science for Work*. We can end this thought with Demming, “In God we Trust. Others bring data.”

One of things I tried to do in *The Science of Organizational Change* is to bring the full suite of **human sciences** to understanding the human side of business. In my view, too much is invested in business psychology and not enough in wider human sciences, for example, economics, sociology,

anthropology, neuroscience, evolutionary biology, medicine, and philosophy. Without evidence from the wide human sciences, we get too narrow and a sometimes-wrong view of how humans and businesses change.

Basic scientific research, as published in journals, can be hard to fathom and siloed in its approach. In my view, the most fascinating insights come from synergies, for example where evolutionary biology meets influencing, behavioral science meets change management, neuroscience meets performance management, ethics meets HRM, political philosophy meets organization design, epistemology meets knowledge management, anthropology meets culture change, sociology meets communication strategy, cognitive science meets organization development, and well-being at work meets medicine.

Finally, the noblest of business' purposes is scaling science in the furtherance of human flourishing. (Without business, too much magnificent human inventiveness would remain on lab benches.) That may seem trivially true, but certain enterprises use science for harm and “benefit to humanity” is often peripheral in deciding (for example) which pharmaceuticals to develop. This is a difficult problem – allowing people/entrepreneurs to pursue technology development according to their passion, but steering, as I think we must, technology for the benefit of all.

This is at the core of my mission, **the ethics at the juncture of science and business, including bringing the best science from outside business and interdisciplinary thinking to bear on the human side of business.** This is a big and exciting project – we've only begun to scratch the surface.

Reason and change

“Those who are governed by reason desire nothing for themselves, which they do not also desire for the rest of humankind.”

Baruch Spinoza

Reason may seem too abstract – how else would one decide what to believe or do? Yet there are many sources of belief – intuition, authority, reason, and evidence. I have had many senior executives say, “I prefer to trust my gut when it comes to decision making...,” and a famous world leader recently flatulated, “my gut tells me more than anyone else’s brain.” Before the Enlightenment, also known as the **Age of Reason**, authorities such as the clergy and monarchy had ideological power (Galileo, The Inquisition) sometimes using violent means to enforce it. Kant described lack of reason as, “... lack of courage to use one’s own mind without another’s guidance. *Dare to know! (Sapere aude.)*” For him, our reason was our ultimate liberation from servitude.

Today, in our digital age, anyone with a keyboard can represent themselves as an authority – we have the Food Babe and Gwyneth Paltrow offering advice on nutrition, we have Alex Jones, who once had 10 million visitors monthly, claiming the Newtown killing of 21 six-year-olds was faked, and we have politicians claiming global warming is a Chinese hoax.

The raises a theme we visit in chapter 6 (Influencing and Change) – the Information Age; is characterized by a war on truth and expertise, to a great extent, fought on social media. This post-truth, information disordered world has consequences for reason in both politics and business.

In 2016, sales of dystopian fiction soared. The publisher of

Orwell's 1984 printed 550,000 extra copies to meet demand (a 9500 percent increase). Orwellian language is finding its way back to contemporary descriptions of political speech: *blackwhite* is acclaim for someone willing to say black is white when loyalty demands it; *bellyfeel* means uncritical emotional acceptance of an idea – what American comedian Stephen Colbert called “truthiness.” There are “fake news” farms in Macedonia churning out alt-right propaganda to get paid in clicks, and Russian spies have shown themselves more adept at manipulating Facebook than Western ones. The political consequences are a rise in authoritarianism in over two dozen countries – those would-be dictators recruit the Nazi cry “Lügenpresse” (fake news, lying press) to avoid accountability because, as the Washington Post says, “democracy dies in darkness” or as I say “sunlight is the best disinfectant.”

And so it is with business, where we make dozens of decisions per day, sometimes with billions or more on the line. (I sometimes use the Deepwater Horizon example, where a few unreasoned decisions cost in the region of one trillion.) Think how much scarce investment capital is set afire by fallacious reasoning, misunderstanding data, deciding with “my gut,” and on fads and fashions. Therefore, in this book and its prequel, I spend much time on reasoning and the many sources of poor business decision making, including, biases, fallacies, groupthink, fads, and more.

President Kennedy said a few months before he was assassinated, “We too often enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.” Information disorder is a crisis for our personal, professional, and political lives – we need reason and science to combat the problem.

Progress and change

“University classrooms still look like they did in the 15th century. If humankind is to keep up with the demands of business and technology, how we learn will have to be completely overturned. Gamification, just-in-time, personalized, blended learning, VR, AI-enabled will have to be more than words uttered wisely at conferences.”

Paul Gibbons

As we increasingly share workplaces with machines—the future of work—we will be forced to reckon with our own distinctiveness... what we can do that machines cannot. We are not that much smarter than a century ago, but our machines are. The answer to that will not be biological changes, CRISPR, epigenetics, or neuroscience, to augment our brains. Not yet.

Collaboration, through language, allowed the cultural complexity we see around us to evolve in a blink of an evolutionary eye. Our superpower, with respect to machines, is reasoning together, building bridges, not walls, empathizing, embracing “other” as “brother,” collaborating globally, and using our **social superpower**. That is where the answer lies for humanity in the 21st-century changes.

When our cultural adaptability falls short of technological advancement, culture takes time to catch up, and social problems and conflicts are caused by this lag. The great 20th century sociologist, Ogburn, called this phenomenon “cultural lag.”

What might be the costs to business if our social technologies (learning, collaborating, leading, deciding, etc.) lag further behind our “hard” technologies? Are we equipped to be the second smartest species on the planet? Is our cultural adaptability as humans, perhaps our greatest advantage

over other species, fast enough for today? Can how we learn, organize, and lead (in business and in public institutions) keep up? Other futurists already wonder whether the human mind might become obsolete, replaced by computers the way internal combustion replaced steam power.

This challenge goes beyond business; pundits project that 50 to 100 million jobs will soon be lost or radically changed (compare this with under 10 million during a recession.) Ergo, society, too, will need to adapt its institutions, policy, and culture. Can we cushion the economic blow, retrain, and redeploy tens of millions of workers? Historically, we have struggled with fractions of that number. The political tremors from manufacturing jobs lost through automation, outsourcing, and downsizing in the 1990s are still being felt – the AI/ robotics upheaval will produce far greater social and political shear.

To reiterate, **change is inevitable, whether it represents progress is up to us.**

Change is not just for specialists

I've written *Impact* to appeal to both change experts *and* the general executive leadership population. That makes marketing impossible because the first thing a marketing specialist or publisher asks is, "Who is your target audience?" When you say "everybody," they give you a wan smile, roll their eyes, and look at you as if you were four.

Change experts, I hope, will find the ideas new and thought-provoking. I'm not so deluded as to think they will like or agree with them all. It would be a frightfully boring book if they did.

The management community may take away so something else. One of the things I'm known for saying is that

change management is too important to be left to specialists and leading change cannot be outsourced at all. Change is constant (not just when projects happen) and change is 80 percent of the manager's job or at least 80 percent of her headaches. But where does the leader go to learn that? Not, for sure, in business schools' degree programs. Rarely in the very best executive education programs: Duke, Oxford, and Columbia.

While I don't think nonexperts will become experts in the dark arts of facilitation, Large Group Interventions, coaching, communications planning, training, and organization development, I do think they need to understand contemporary behavioral science enough to ask hard questions. They do need to understand the difference between agile and waterfall planning processes (and what that means for leading change). They do need to master how to think systemically about change, and they do need to understand how much communication and influence have changed in the 21st-century due to technology and millennial culture.

They also need to know a half-dozen or so models and not those debunked by research. No the change models cooked up in the 1990s and before because they are simply no longer relevant. Some offer downright misleading advice for digital age leaders. Kotter, Collins, Hiatt, and Conner were prescient thinkers and groundbreakers in change – but need Government Health Warnings on their covers today. Change scholars will note that several valuable innovations have not been discussed: “Kegan and Fahey's Immunity to change,” Graves' “Spiral Dynamics,” “Scharmer's Theory U,” “Torbert's Leadership Development Framework,” and “Oshry's Power and Systems.” Patience Padawan – our consultancy practice used all of those in its leadership development work and they

merit serious treatment appearing in Volume III which covers leadership.

A heretical approach

*“Good writers ... prefer to be understood
rather than admired.”*

Nietzsche

In my view, it's better to challenge orthodoxy and risk being wrong than to repeat what everyone else says with a different spin, risk being boring, and hope we are all right. (We ain't.) The ideas within are mine, except where noted, and so are the mistakes. The advantage of that is originality and (I hope) a fresh perspective, that of a philosopher and scientist who has been a change practitioner since the 1990s.

Writing is particularly hard when by the time you've added a period (full-stop), your content is dated. I get one hundred emails a day with publications on AI, digital transformation, future of work, behavioral science, complexity theory, evidence-based management, and neuroscience. A book such as this is never truly finished; one just stops writing it.

Mainstream publishers desiccate colorful and entertaining language and suck the life out of nonfiction prose. They strip out slang, historical and philosophical asides, and restrict syntax to APA guidelines. I find that boring; even the best business books are unreadably dry. While I've mostly eschewed cussin', I use a fair bit of millennial slang and pop culture references as well as classical ones – a little Stranger Things and Seneca, a little Game of Thrones with some Nietzsche. It's way more fun to write, and I hope it's more fun to read. I

hope I've written serious content without the self-seriousness of the business genre.

From *Impact* to Execution

“Writing is easy. All you have to do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.”

Ernest Hemmingway

Over his four-decade career, this author spent the first fifteen years as a techno-geek, programming IBM mainframes in college in the (cough) 1970s, then as a biochemist, then as an investment banking economist and quant, then back into programming in the 1990s, then as strategy and risk consultant for PwC. My worldview was myopically math and science.

The most recent twenty-five years have been in learning, coaching, change, leadership, organization development, training, and culture change with many of the top few dozen companies in the world as clients. This schizoid career has allowed me to help CEOs, CIOs and their teams in banking, technology, biotech, and energy get better at the human stuff. It also means I bring a harder-edged, no-nonsense, evidence-based approach to the softer stuff.

Speaking

My keynotes have been called “colorful,” which I think was a compliment. Speaking topics (in several languages) include:

- Culture and Mindset for Digital Success
- The Upskilling Imperative
- Leading 21st-century change

- The Future of Work (including humanizing workplaces and change)
- Biases and debiasing for strategists and leadership teams
- The behavioral revolution (described within)
- Humanizing business, Conscious capitalism (or Capitalism 2.0)
- Getting behavioral change from training
- Change management and leadership (of course)

Consulting/ teaching

I ran a leadership consulting firm for 10 years that specialized in very senior, complex, and award-winning programs. We competed successfully with the biggest Executive Education providers, Duke, Harvard, INSEAD by a) focusing on “deep work” and behavioral change, not just conceptual learning, b) integrating sustainability with leadership development, c) using radical structures (multiple learning modalities in the jargon.)

Since then, I’ve added teaching graduate school programs in strategy, leadership, ethics, and “soft-skills” (an expression I loathe, but which remains the best-understood description of conflict, negotiation, and other leadership skills.)

My dream gig is working with a world-class company that aspires to be the best in the world at talent development/culture change – like an Accenture, McKinsey, Microsoft, Tesla, or Shell. Or perhaps achieving the same aims as a non-exec on a Fortune-500 board making use of my specialism in talent, culture, and strategy.

Coaching

I was named one of the two top CEO coaches in Europe by CEO magazine, and sometimes take on senior coaching

engagements. I'm not for everybody – and have a very challenging style. The assignment of which I'm most proud is coaching a bank CFO to prepare him for the CEO selection process, in which he prevailed, and continuing to work with him thereafter.

Connecting

In 2018, I started a podcast called Think Bigger Think Better (styled somewhat after Sam Harris' *Waking Up*, but more practical) in which I've interviewed economists, cabinet ministers, TED talkers, psychologists, historians, NYT best-selling authors, philosophers, CEOs, CBOs, and change management experts from around the world.

Finally, we live in digital times, so here you go.

- Email me paul@paulgibbons.net – please no emails saying my uncle in Kenya has left me eight figures in his will.
- LinkedIn is Paul G Gibbons, Fort Collins, Colorado.
- All the diagrams from this book and “*Science*” are posted on Imgur. (Please use freely with attribution.)
- Find *Think Bigger Think Better* on iTunes and fine podcast apps everywhere.
- Find blogs, podcasts, videos, and books at paulgibbons.net. Join my mailing list, and I will name my third child after you. (I'm 58, so I recommend haste.)
- Hit me up on Twitter (mostly politics and science)—I'm @paulggibbons.
- On Facebook, I'm Think Bigger Think Better.
- On YouTube, I'm philosophyfirst.
- Instagram does not compute, even though my teenager looks at nothing else.

Whether this is your first or second encounter with these ideas, an avid fan, or a new reader, I hope you find this treatment thought-provoking and useful in the tricky world of navigating complex change as we enter the third decade of the 21st-century.

Paul

Colorado, 2019