



October 2010

### ***CREATING CHANGE: MAKING THE “SWITCH”***

As a coach and organizational effectiveness consultant, I help people and organizations create their desired change. And as a lifelong learner, I always love to read and learn about new ways to help my clients master change. So when I come across a great resource, I’m happy to pass it on.

In ***Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard***, brothers Chip and Dan Heath, paint a wonderful, simplified picture of three “must do” tips to make change happen. The authors say that for things to change, “somebody somewhere has to start acting differently. Maybe it’s *you*, maybe it’s your team.” But, the Heaths say, if you can focus on three simple things, your desired change has a chance for success.

What are those three things?

### ***THE RIDER AND THE ELEPHANT AND A CLEAR PATH FORWARD***

Psychologists who study the brain have noted that each of us has two independent systems at work at all times. Those two systems are emotional and rational. The authors, borrowing from an analogy first used by psychologist Jonathan Haidt, describe our emotional side as an Elephant and our rational side as its Rider.

Imagine this scene: “Perched atop the Elephant, the Rider holds the reins and seems to be the leader. But the Rider’s control is precarious because the Rider (rational) is so small relative to the Elephant (emotional). Anytime the six-ton Elephant and the Rider disagree about which direction to go, the Rider is going to lose. He’s completely overmatched.”

What a fantastic analogy. Think about that when you lose your cool (emotional) at a meeting or give in to willpower (rational) and have just one more cookie.

So for real change to occur, you’ve got to reach both the Rider and the Elephant (i.e. the head and the heart.) The Rider provides the planning and direction and the Elephant provides the energy.

The third piece of the puzzle is that you’ve got to clear a path for them to succeed. The Elephant and the Rider must have crystal clear direction. The authors state that “what looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity.”



Below are three things and some tips to address them.

### ***The Three Things***

#### 1. Direct the Rider (the rational one)

- Investigate what's working and clone it. (Think best practices.)
- Script the specific behaviors that you want to change.
- Know where you're going and why it's worth it. (Think the logical, rational business case approach.)

A recent coaching client was overwhelmed with certain emotional aspects of her career. We worked together to tap into her emotional energy and focus on specific steps and strategies she chose to take to change her circumstances. Providing the rational framework around her emotions helped her create a new opportunity for herself.

#### 2. Motivate the Elephant (the emotional one)

- You must see and FEEL the change. Just *knowing* intellectually isn't enough.
- Break down the change into small manageable bites.
- Tap into the mindset of growth and envisioning "what's possible."

A business case and rational thought only go so far. In each coaching engagement, I utilize my client's vision for their desired future along with their core values. This helps them FEEL the benefits and create alignment with their action steps for their desired change.

#### 3. Shape the Path

- Tweak the environment to enable the change
- Build the habits through practice
- Make the behavior contagious

Learning new behaviors happens through practice and ongoing support. That's why coaching is a valuable tool to facilitate change and make it stick. Change doesn't happen overnight but rather through repeated practice and the steady building of new habits.



The concepts above over-simplify the complexities of making change happen. For certain, there are other more complex models for creating change. But if you're an individual wanting to change a behavior or a leader of a team or organization looking for success that requires change in others, **Switch** provides a simplified yet straightforward approach.

The tips referred to above are all integral to the work I do in my coaching and consulting engagements. I too have found a winning combination in focusing on both the head AND the heart and helping my clients create a clear path forward. **Switch** provides an excellent visual of both the Elephant and the Rider and their clear path forward. It brings the change conversation to life.

***About the Author: Mary C. Werner, CPA, MOD*** is the founder of *Werner Coaching and Consulting, Inc.*, a firm that builds on her more than 25 years of accounting, business and financial consulting experience. Mary is a certified executive coach and provides coaching to individuals and teams as well as organizational development consulting to facilitate organizational change efforts. For more information, visit [www.wernercoaching.com](http://www.wernercoaching.com) or contact Mary directly at [Mary@wernercoaching.com](mailto:Mary@wernercoaching.com)