

MAKING CHANGE STICK

**THE PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR CONQUERING PERSONAL
CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

OCTAVIAN PANTIŞ

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FIRST EDITION

*To those who lost weight, gained it back, lost it again,
and maybe gained some of it back. To those who have
gone through similar roller coasters with other changes.*

You've got this.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1:	The Overview.	1
2:	When Is It Necessary to Change?	7
3:	How Do You Change Something about Yourself? Part I	21
4:	How Do You Change Something about Yourself? Part II	35
5:	How Do You React to the Changes around You?	45
6:	How Do You Sell Your Idea for Change Upwards?.	63
7:	How Do You Motivate Your People?	79
8:	How Do You Change Others?	95
	<i>Conclusion: In a Nutshell.</i>	102
	<i>Let's Continue The Conversation.</i>	104
	<i>About The Author</i>	109

6

HOW DO YOU SELL YOUR IDEA FOR CHANGE UPWARDS?

It is important to learn how to handle the situations in which you have an idea to change something. To be able to get on with it, you have to get some signatures first. You need your idea to be approved, you need money, people, time, or other resources to be made available to you. Let's say it's an interesting project for your company, or that you have an initiative to improve life in your community and you need the consent of the owners' association, or that you're a young entrepreneur who has the idea but doesn't have the money.

There is a lot to be done. Here are the main ingredients for success. Without them, it's hard to get anything done—with the exception, of course, of the unique situation where the director of the company happens to be your mother and she'll gladly put all kinds of resources at your disposal.

With these ingredients, you have a good chance to impress those who can greenlight your project.

The first ingredient: clarity about the essence of the change.

Make sure that before you talk to others to get approvals, you know exactly what you want to do. Build a precise outline of your desired change. What helps here is not to get too excited about your idea. Overly excited people usually talk a lot, share a lot of information, jump from one thing to another, or go off on a tangent not actually useful at this stage. If they prepare a presentation, then they either make it too pompous or insufficiently coherent. The result in the minds of

the people they present to is usually a combination of confusion and distrust, of surprise and disappointment. Maybe you have been in such situations, on one side of the table or the other. The experience is not very pleasant, no matter where you sit.

Drink some cold water and be very critical of your idea. Eliminate what is not important now. Identify the danger that your project avoids or the opportunity upon which it capitalizes. Describe as clearly as you can what it is about, what you want from those people, why now, why this way and not otherwise, and why you.

Therefore, the first requirement is to make clarity a priority. Make sure that you have formulated your idea well, that you have captured its essence. Before presenting it to key people, present it to those inclined to support you. Start with your friends and colleagues. Ask them to be ruthless with questions, to be skeptical about every point. Go through this process patiently and carefully, concerned about identifying the points you didn't



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think about, the perspectives you didn't take into account. Don't scold your colleagues for asking inappropriate questions or for not knowing as much about the topic as you do. Answer calmly, give relevant explanations, write down the ideas that come to you during this stage.

After that, go through the description of your change again and give it a form that is easy to understand and to accept.

The second ingredient: provide a variety of arguments.

The first ingredient ensures that you attract people's attention, that you make them think that there might actually be something interesting here. Don't bombard them with information. Give them enough to make them want more, to see how your idea might fit into their plans.

We can draw a parallel here with the way you get a job. The first ingredient is a well-written CV.

You don't get hired through a CV, but you can lose a job because of a puffed up or poorly prepared CV. The objective of a CV is to help you move to the next stage, which is an interview of some kind.

This second ingredient is the interview. It is the stage in which the "approvers" analyze your idea. If the first ingredient is missing, you don't even get here; the story ends before it begins.

Beware, their spotlights are now on you and in a short time there will be questions upon questions, some more friendly, others more challenging. Now is the time when you have to master the subject very well.

It's essential to have explored many arguments beforehand, because some are valid only in your head. These people, who know a little more than you do about how things work, might quickly dismantle some of them for you.



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Variety of arguments is essential because different people are looking for different things. Some will approve of your project because it puts them in a better light. Others will approve of your change because it is well documented but, if things are not strongly anchored in facts and analysis, for them, it will have no value. Others will approve your change because it is a good piece that helps put together the puzzle of new economic realities. It helps a lot to know people, to know what arguments they are looking for, and to serve them exactly what suits them.

In this process of preparing arguments, try and think with their minds, from their perspectives. What is important to them? What would they think? What gives them headaches and insomnia and how could you be of use to them with your idea? What is the danger for them that your idea solves? What is the opportunity for them that your idea helps materialize? This is what you have to do.

The third ingredient: it matters in which order you approach people.

If you have to get the approval of several people to go ahead with your idea, the order in which you talk to them should not be random. Avoid presenting the idea directly in a meeting. It's hard to anticipate everyone's reactions and the dynamics of the group, and it's likely to cause some damage to the change that you won't be able to repair. Approach them one at a time. For the masters of influence, the meeting is just a formality, taking place at the end of the persuasion process.

Imagine that you first present your idea to everyone during a meeting. If you gave them such a presentation right now, people would have one of the following three possible attitudes, which you can anticipate:

One – they might agree, jump out of their chair, shake your hand, ask you where to sign, and wish you good luck. Very good.

Two – they would send you for a ride. “It’s not possible; not now; not you; leave us alone; we have more important work to do; you do what you were told to do and stop coming up with these inappropriate ideas.”

Three – they would hesitate. “I don’t know; maybe, not now; there might be something there, but we have other priorities; let’s think a little more.”

Hoping that, in a meeting, you’ll have many people who agree, very few who don’t, and that you’ll be able to convince the naysayers as well as the undecided—well, this is not realistic. Usually, it’s the “no’s” that speak first. Why? Because in the danger/opportunity discussion earlier, danger usually reveals itself first. As great as your idea may be, don’t kid yourself; it’s not perfect. It has some downsides to it. People see those first, and they react.

The meeting will most likely finish way before everyone—if not, in fact, anyone—will get to see the meaningful opportunities your idea helps uncover.

The first step is to think about who would be in which category. Then the work of persuading begins. With which of them would you start? Some brave people would start with those who are against the project, telling themselves that if they convince them, the rest of the people they have to convince will follow suit. This approach is dangerous to the success of your idea. You may not have thought out enough arguments and, for sure, you don't yet have any influential allies who could help. It is risky to start your work of persuasion with those who are against you.

It's like being on vacation on a tropical island; you build a raft like they do in the movies and, instead of testing it on the small and quiet lake near the hotel to see how stable or maneuverable it is, you go with it directly into the big waves of the ocean. It might be fun for a short while, but you won't get very far and the raft will likely fall apart.

An additional risk of starting by trying to convince those against you is that they will be the first to find out about your idea and, if they feel

threatened in any way, they might work against your idea. Then, when you reach those whom you considered neutral, you find that they are against it, and when you go to those you were convinced you could rely on, you find out that they are a bit indecisive. The braver the idea, the more likely it is that there will be people who will not only oppose it, but actively work to kill it.

Start with the “pros.” Get their consent. Ask for their support. Ask them how you could present the idea better, how you could make it even more valuable. What could they do to help you?

Continue by approaching the ones who are undecided. Show them the urgency to act, mobilize them to analyze the idea now, rather than putting it aside. Ask little of them, find a responsibility that they can easily accept. Ask them what should happen in the first stage so they offer you greater support along the way. Respect their position and win their trust step by step.



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Only now, after you have the support of many influential people, after your idea has become even better through their contribution, only now should you approach those who you anticipated would be against your idea. It's unrealistic to expect them to give you a standing ovation for ten minutes. There is no point in asking them for anything close to that. It is enough if you manage to cast some doubt in their minds regarding the current situation, and on their arguments that your idea is not needed. Are they really so convinced that things are going perfectly well without your idea? Are they really so convinced that your idea not only does not bring anything good into the environment but also may harm things? Hmm. Leave them alone. Come back in a few days.

All these ingredients above increase your chances of selling your idea. However, they do not guarantee your success. Note this disclaimer. We know from life that many ideas that could bring good and necessary changes actually go out before they light up, because the process of obtaining support and resources is conducted chaotically.

Make sure that when you want to change something and need people to approve it first, you put in the effort to convince them with an amount of energy equal to that invested in identifying and planning the actual change.

A final word here: if you are on the other side of the table, if you are one of those who are presented with changes for approval and they are not described as nicely as you would expect, still, give people a chance. Try to see beyond their veil of nervousness and inexperience. Maybe you'll see exactly the change you're looking for.

LET'S CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

I would love to know about how you're doing with the changes you decided to make, as well as how you're using any of the ideas covered in this book. The easiest ways to find me are:

- at octavian.pantis@qualians.com
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Other Books by Octavian

Dark Cockpit: How to Communicate, Lead, and Be in Control at All Times Like an Airline Captain. Co-authored with Captain Emil Dobrovolschi.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Octavian Pantiș is the co-founder and managing partner of Qualians, an international training and consulting company. His firm is dedicated to helping organizations thrive by developing outstanding leadership pipelines and building strong and healthy cultures. Qualians was named “Training Company of the Year” several times in Romania, and “Partner Country of the Year” in the Tack TMI international network.

Octavian is also a bestselling author. His book on productivity and work-life balance, as well as

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He was named “Speaker of the Year” and “Trainer of the Year” twice for his inspiring, friendly, and action-oriented style. He was recognized in 2012 with a special media award “for the high standards and passion brought to the training industry over the last 10 years.”

His speaking and consultant work includes workshops with senior management teams and speeches for large groups, in person and online, usually on subjects such as leadership, mindset change, and productivity. Octavian is a professional member of the USA National Speakers Association and holds a number of certifications in change management and behavioral assessments.

At the time of writing, he is studying for a Master's Degree at the University of Oxford, Saïd Business School, in Major Programme Management.

Octavian spends his time outside work with his wife and three children. Whatever time remains is dedicated to skiing, squash, and studying and collecting old maps.

