

8 WAYS TO ACHIEVE *FASTER,*
EASIER, BETTER RESULTS

LEVERAGE CHANGE



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Bestselling author of *Real Time Strategic Change*

LEVERAGE CHANGE

OTHER BOOKS BY ROBERT W. JAKE JACOBS

Real Time Strategic Change

You Don't Have to Do It Alone



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Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Leverage Change

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1333 Broadway, Suite 1000

Oakland, CA 94612-1921



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www.bkconnection.com

Ordering information for print editions

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Individual sales. Berrett-Koehler publications are available through most bookstores. They can also be ordered directly from Berrett-Koehler: Tel: (800) 929-2929; Fax: (802) 864-7626; www.bkconnection.com

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Distributed to the U.S. trade and internationally by Penguin Random House Publisher Services.

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First Edition

Paperback print edition ISBN 978-1-5230-9224-6

PDF e-book ISBN 978-1-5230-9225-3

IDPF e-book ISBN 978-1-5230-9226-0

Digital audio ISBN 978-1-5230-9227-7

2021-1

Production manager: Susan Geraghty; Cover design: Rob Johnson, Topotype, Inc.; Interior design, illustrations, and composition: Westchester Publishing Services; Copyeditor: Michele D. Jones; Proofreader: Cathy Mallon; Indexer: Carolyn Thibault; Author photo: Michael Nemeth

**To Mom, from whom I learned
the importance of helping others.**

**To Dad, who taught me that optimism
can be a way of life.**

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PREFACE	ix
INTRODUCTION: How to Gain the Most from Leverage Change	1
1: Pay Attention to Continuity	14
2: Think and Act as If the Future Were Now!	28
3: Design It Yourself	42
4: Create a Common Database	61
5: Start with Impact, Follow the Energy	73
6: Develop a Future People Want to Call Their Own	86
7: Find Opportunities for People to Make a Meaningful Difference.	99
8: Make Change Work Part of Daily Work.	112
9: The Power and Possibilities of Leverage Change	124
10: Taking Leverage into Your Own Hands	137

NOTES 149

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 151

INDEX 153

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 165

DISCUSSION GUIDE: APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED 167



PREFACE

The purpose of *Leverage Change* is to make great things happen with change for individuals, teams, and organizations. You'll do this by seeing your work with a fresh lens. I call it Leverage Change. It is a new kind of change, one where using leverage will result in greater returns with fewer problems on your part. There are three ways to win with the levers. Each makes using leverage valuable with any change work, any time, any place made by anyone.

The first way to use the levers is to improve the approach you're already using. Stories in the following pages describe the levers being applied to large and small changes, simple or complex projects, newly launched efforts or those an organization has been tackling for some time. Each of these kinds of situations provides an excellent opportunity to use the levers to enhance your work.

Apply these levers, and you'll accelerate and sustain any and all change work you are doing. There's no need to radically change course, no requirement to stop doing what you've been doing. Just supplement your current work with some or all of these eight tried-and-true strategies, and you too can find your way to a world of faster, easier, better results. The 8 Levers are the counterargument to the one-best-way school of thought. They are designed to play well with others.

Currently, change methods vie for attention and a loyal following. There need be no debate about whether your current approach or the 8 Levers are

a smarter path for you to pursue. The answer to this question is a resounding *yes!* Stay on the trusted path you've been traveling. Add the levers to the work you already have under way and make even more progress. Find a place where your projects and initiatives will benefit from greater speed, ease, and effectiveness, and you've found a home for the levers.

The second way you can use the 8 Levers is to apply them to achieve organization-wide change without a formal effort by applying one lever. As soon as you use a lever, change begins. Automatically, you begin the journey toward your preferred future. Choose to apply a lever sitting alone in your office, in conversation with a colleague, or in a team meeting. Use one or more of the levers to guide your thinking or your approach to a situation. Pay attention as they point you toward a small, strategic action. Watch how leverage starts moving you closer to your desired results.

Think of the 8 Levers as having a coach running alongside you as you make your way through a marathon. Open your mind to adapting how you compete in the race. Add a few straightforward strategies that lead to your running faster and better for the rest of the race, similar to adding a lever or two to your current work. No need to lose momentum or take time off the course to learn a whole newfangled way to run. Keep steaming along but with leverage, small adjustments leading to big changes. Move your arms a bit less. Lean forward as you follow the runner in front of you. In this case, doing less—but the right bit of less—improves your performance. In the case of the 8 Levers, smart changes in thought and action lead to big improvements in accomplishing the results you are seeking.

A third way to use the levers is to improve your own work, however you define it. If you're interested in getting a job done faster, more easily, and better, the levers can help you on that journey. Because the levers are scalable, what works for an organization or team can work for you too. Whether you are in the C suite or on the front line, you have tasks you need to complete. You can do them more efficiently and effectively by bringing the levers to bear on the work at hand. Know what success looks like, define the work needed to get there, apply the levers, and reap the benefits.

Who This Book Is For

This book is for CEOs, business unit leaders, functional heads, supervisors, and anyone leading a team or wanting to make changes in their own work.

Internal and external consultants and coaches charged with supporting these leaders in making change happen will also benefit from *Leverage Change*. Readers should also include trainers and educators focused on better ways to change.

Finally, anyone wanting to improve the way they work will find useful, practical counsel in these pages.

Organization of the Book and How to Read It

Chapters 1 through 8 explain the levers. Each describes a common problem with change and how that chapter's lever addresses it. This is followed by a section on how applying that particular lever leads to faster, easier, better results. This answers the question, "Why bother using the lever in the first place?" Next, you will see a list of success criteria for the lever. What do you need to have put in place to effectively use the lever? You'll also find a segment on how you know you've applied the lever well. What evidence do you have that you gained the benefits you deserve from using the lever?

There are forty-four true stories and cases included throughout the book. These introduce examples from all sorts of organizations addressing change challenges. Some involve just one person. Others tell the tale of tens of thousands of people. You'll read about organizations trying to build on a track record of success and those fighting their way out of a death spiral. These stories are meant to spark your own thinking about how you might apply the levers to advance change in your own situation.

Chapter 9 takes a step back, explaining the basics of *Leverage Change*—what it is, how it works, how to do it well, and what I mean by faster, easier, better results. Chapter 10 focuses on how to put the levers to work in your world. How do you select the lever with the highest likelihood of helping you toward your future? It discusses how you can pull multiple levers at the same time, both those that are more familiar and others that might be new to you. It also includes a summary of tips and advice for applying each lever.

You can either read the book from cover to cover or pick out chapters on specific levers that interest you the most. You may prefer to review the common problems at the beginning of the lever chapters and identify those getting in the way of your progress. I invite you to read the same way that you'll ultimately use the levers—the way that works best for you.

Because we're dealing with leverage, taking away even one small "aha!" from the book holds the potential of making an enormous difference in your work. My goal is for you to possess the means to tackle any tough problem you're having with change, to know which lever to use, how, and when. My colleagues and I have applied these levers in our work with organizations for more than thirty-five years. I've seen how leverage has served so many so well. Employ the levers. Expand your impact. Move your world.

LEVERAGE CHANGE

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INTRODUCTION

HOW TO GAIN THE MOST FROM LEVERAGE CHANGE

People struggle with change. They complain that it's hard. It takes too long. Costs too much. And, at the end of the day, is all too often ineffective. Don't take my word for it. Look at your own experience. Wouldn't you jump at the chance to achieve faster, easier, and better results?

What kind of changes am I talking about? Everything from

- Developing and implementing new strategies and cultures
- Achieving successful mergers and acquisitions
- Launching teams charged with challenging roles and responsibilities
- Resolving conflicts between different parts of your organization
- Redesigning work
- Partnering in original ways with stakeholders
- Making any change needed for you to realize your preferred future

Whether we're talking about Fortune 500 conglomerates or start-up operations, change is the challenge of the day. Leaders want to create more competitive businesses. Nonprofits and NGOs yearn for ways to increase their impact with limited resources. People want to create safer, more livable cities. Governments would love to get more done with less. Individuals strive to realize more of their potential.

Efficient and effective change is a goal we all find appealing. The number, pace, and complexity of changes bombarding us continue to rise. Increasingly integrated social networks, innovative technologies, virtual working arrangements, and multiplying customer needs all add to the demands faced by change leaders. This is also true for coaches and consultants to executives, entrepreneurs, and educators.

Wouldn't it be great if there were a systematic way to achieve faster, easier, better results?

There is. It's called Leverage Change.

Why Leverage?

Archimedes was an ancient Greek mathematician, born in 287 BC. He is credited with many inventions, including explaining how and why levers work the way they do. A lever is a beam and a fixed hinge that acts as a fulcrum. Archimedes could move even the heaviest objects by putting one end of a tree branch (the lever) under the heavy object, moving a smaller rock (the fulcrum) under the beam, and finally, at the other end, pushing down on the beam (see Figure I.1).

If Archimedes ever joined a contest for moving heavy objects, he would win. The lever was his secret weapon, one that gave him superhuman strength. The strongest man in the world could push the heavy object with all the power he had, but never budge it. Archimedes, however, could walk up to the object, put his lever in place, push down on it, and, like magic, the object would move. The competition was over, Archimedes the victor.

Here's a quick physics lesson. Leverage is the compounding force gained by the use of a lever rotating on a fulcrum. Archimedes gained an extraordinary increase in power with relatively little investment needed. Despite having fewer resources to invest (his lesser strength), he succeeded where others failed. The leverage he gained from using the right tools made the impossible



FIGURE I.1. “Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.”—Archimedes

possible. The closer to the boulder he put the pivot, the more leverage he gained. The more leverage he gained, the easier the weight was to move.

Archimedes found an alternative to sheer manpower, and because of his insight, he was able to accomplish what others could not. Fortunately, we can take advantage of Archimedes’s insight today. We can apply the concept of leverage to the world of change.

With a long-enough lever and a fulcrum on which to pivot it, anyone can move their world. That is the essence of leverage: take smart, strategic actions and generate large, positive impact. Your change efforts will achieve faster, easier, and better results than you imagined when you apply the power of leverage to your work.

What Is Leverage Change?

Leverage Change is a new way to look at the age-old challenge of how to succeed in organization change. At its core, this approach asks a simple yet profound question: How can you make changes taking full advantage of the power and possibilities that come with the concept of leverage? Leverage accelerates the pace at which you move into your future. It lightens your load along the way. Your change work becomes more successful. How do you do this?

Consider four elements. The first is the levers. These are akin to Archimedes’s log. Their length is commensurate with their impact. High-impact

levers are long ones. I offer eight of these in this book. They are proven ways to gain faster, easier, better results on any kind of change, any place, at any time made by anyone. They act as turbochargers to your efforts, improving the good work you're already doing. They also help shore up areas where you're coming up short of the mark.

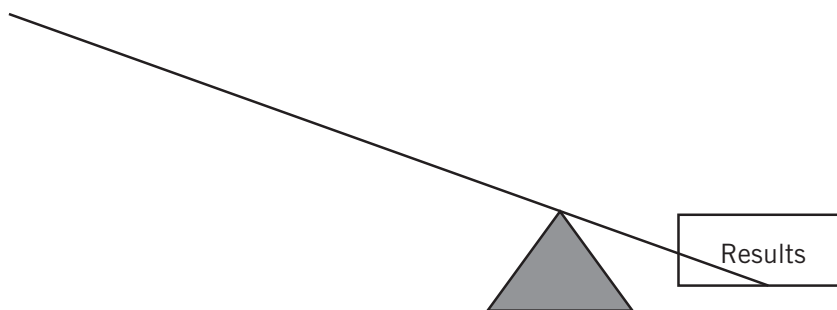
The second element is the resources you allocate. Resources can be any combination of time, money, energy, and talent you devote to your change work. For example, they could be political capital, leadership competencies, or funds to invest in new technology. The more leverage you gain, the fewer hassles, headaches, and problems you experience.

The third element, the pivot point in the world of Leverage Change, is set based on how clear you are about the results you desire. The more clarity you have about your desired results, the closer the fulcrum sits to the object (see Figure I.2). More clarity equals greater leverage working for you. Greater leverage means more power to do the work you desire.

The less clear you are about the results you desire, the further away your fulcrum point sits from these results. In this situation, leverage works against you (see Figure I.3). It would be much harder for Archimedes to lift his heavy object, or for you to achieve your desired results, with the fulcrum further away from your preferred end state.

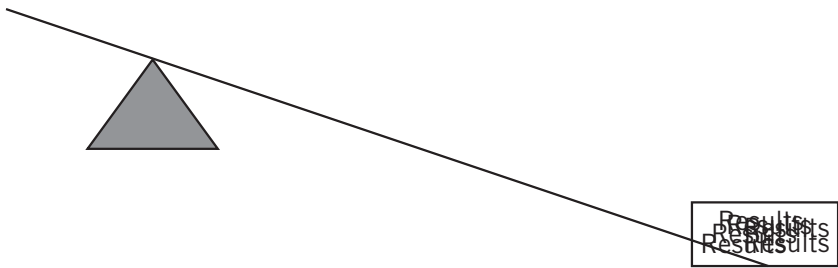
The fourth element is making sure that you're moving the *right* heavy object. The "rightness" of your desired results matters. A lot. Changing in ways that are faster, easier, and better toward the wrong results will only sink your ship sooner, with less effort and more effectively.

Remember that you are applying the power of a simple machine, the lever, to the complexity inherent in organizations. Do so well, and you can get the



The clearer the desired results, the closer you are to achieving them

FIGURE I.2. Leverage Working for You



The fuzzier and more confusing the desired results, the further away you are to achieving them

FIGURE I.3 Leverage Working against You

energy in your organization working for you instead of against you. There are so many variables involved in organization change that trying to keep track of them all is a tall order. Here's a new goal: leverage the wisdom, experience, and people in your organization to achieve results that you desire.

Stuart Kauffman, a leading voice in the field of complexity science, has stated that you get “order for free” in the universe.¹ He argues that there is an underlying order to life itself. We don't have to work to cause the world and the organizations in it to make sense. With careful observation, we can recognize that they already do. There are patterns that can be understood and used to guide your change work. The levers work in much the same way. Use them and you get “leverage for free.” Enhanced speed, ease, and success come with applying the levers to your change efforts. You don't have to work extra hard for them to serve you well. They already will. You just have to commit to using them.

What Are the 8 Levers?

A lever is both a mindset and a guide for action. Once you begin thinking differently, you'll find it much easier to apply the levers. They'll pay dividends for you, whether you're leading a formal change effort or using them to get your job done on a daily basis. Some of the levers may be familiar to you. Perhaps you already use them to your advantage. Others could be approaches you've never imagined before. Try them all. Experiment with them in different situations and with different people. They are incredibly flexible.

The more needed levers you apply, the faster, easier, and better your change work occurs. Think of keeping the lever or levers that will make the