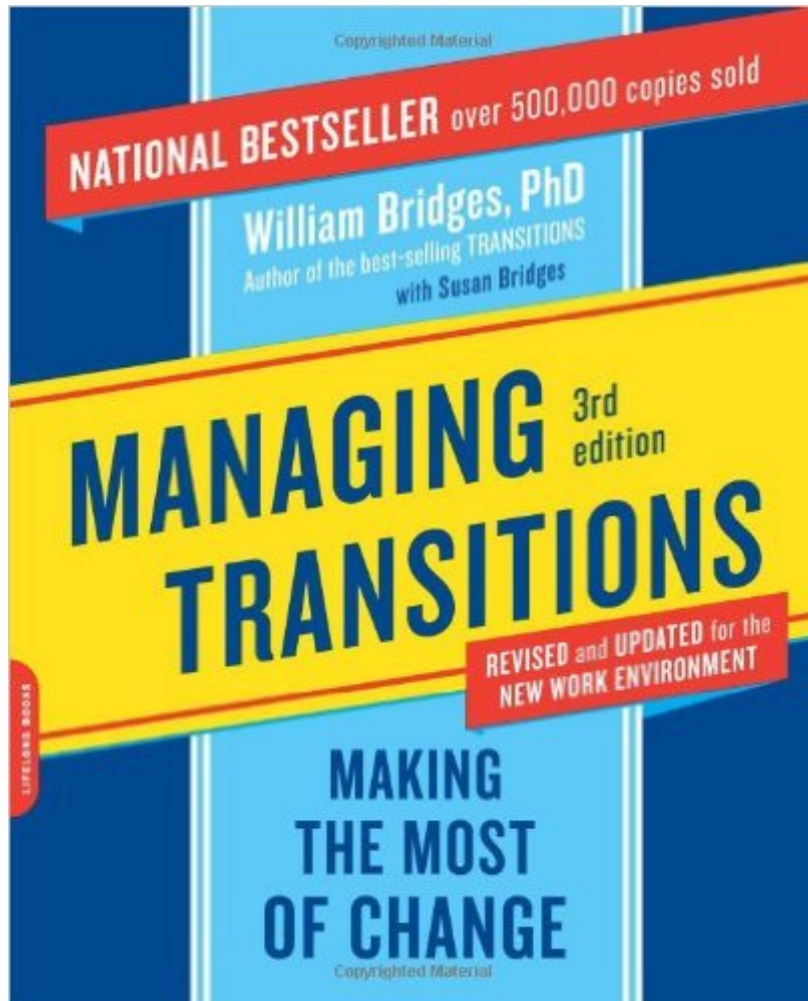


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Managing Transitions: Making The Most Of Change



Synopsis

The business world is transforming. Stories of layoffs, bankruptcy, mergers, and restructuring appear in the news every day. When these changes hit the workplace, the actual situational shifts are often not as difficult for employees and managers to work through as the psychological components that accompany them. Indeed, organizational transitions affect people; it is always people who have to embrace a new situation and carry out the corresponding change. The job of managing workplace change can be difficult; managed poorly, the result can be disastrous to the morale and stability of the staff. As veteran business consultant William Bridges explains, successful organizational change takes place when employees have a clear purpose, a plan for, and a part to play in their changing surroundings. Directed at managers on all rungs of the proverbial corporate ladder, this expanded edition of the classic bestseller provides practical, step-by-step strategies for minimizing the disruptions caused by workplace change. It is an invaluable managerial tool for navigating these tumultuous, uncertain times.

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Customer Reviews

William Bridges is one of the world's leading experts in the area of managing the human side of change. Bridges originally introduced the notion of "transition" in his first book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (1980), which was a primer on coping with the tumultuous life changes we all face on a personal level. In *Managing Transitions*, Bridges applies the concept of transition within the context of organizational change. Bridges asserts that transition is not synonymous with

"change." A change occurs when something in the external environment is altered. In an organizational setting this would include changes in management, organizational structure, job design, systems, processes, etc. These changes trigger an internal psychological reorientation process in those who are expected to carry out or respond to the change. Transition is this internal process that people must go through in order to come to terms with a new situation. Unless transition occurs, change will not work. Bridges believes that the failure to identify and prepare for the inevitable human psychological adjustments that change produces is the largest single problem that organizations encounter when they implement major change initiatives. Unfortunately, many managers, when confronted with predictable change-induced resistance by those charged with implementing a change, respond in punitive and inappropriate ways that only serve to undermine the change effort. Due to their lack of understanding of transition, they do not possess the skills to facilitate it effectively. Leaders and managers often assume that when necessary changes are decided upon and well planned, they will just happen.

I read this book when it was first published (1991) and recently re-read it, curious to see how well Bridges' ideas have held up since then. They remain rock-solid. His objective is to suggest how to "make the most of change" and heaven knows there have been so many major changes, both global and local, in recent years. I expect the nature and number of such turmoil to increase significantly, and, to occur at an ever-accelerating velocity. I also expect Bridges' observations and suggestions to remain valid. Perhaps at some point he will revise this book to accommodate certain changes such as the emergence of what Pink calls "the free agent nation." The book's material is carefully organized within four Parts: The Problem [Bridges provides "a new and useful perspective on the difficulties ahead" and then a test case which illustrates that perspective] The Solutions [Bridges suggests all manner of ways to apply what is learned from the previous Part] Dealing with Nonstop Change in the Organization and Your Life [Bridges suggests a number of strategies by which to cope with rapid change, both organizationally and personally] In 1991, Bridges was convinced that it is impossible to achieve any desired objectives without getting to "the personal stuff"; the challenge is to get people to stop doing whatever "the old way" and that cannot be accomplished impersonally. He was also convinced that transition management requires experience and abilities we already possess as when we struggle, for example, to "figure out a tactful response in a difficult situation." However, the strategies of transition management he suggests may require mastery of certain techniques which we "can easily learn.

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