



## Book Review - *People Before Things*

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## 1

*People Before Things* delivers an entertaining and informative overview of factors that impact why some organizations fail when implementing new technologies and others succeed. The author, Chris Laping, has more than 25 years of experience in information technology and business transformation. All leaders of technology have experienced push back when implementing new technologies, and this book provides insight on assisting leaders in making “change” more transformative. This book is an excellent resource not only for technology leaders and enthusiasts, but it is beneficial for all leaders of any organization. In reviewing this book, the principal criteria included advice, content, organization, and reference sources. Laping discusses his own real-world experiences that consist of failures and successes of leading IT change efforts while providing support and advice to assist readers in becoming *change leaders*.

### Overview of Book

Chapter 1 is centered on Patrick Lencioni’s framework, which proposes that team members must feel prepared, nurtured, and supported for a change to be successful. Stemming from this belief, the author shares that failure is not a choice people make, and that failure is a positive step in the process of reaching success.

Chapter 2 is focused on change leaders as it opens up stating that change leaders are different than everyday leaders, as they not only provide communication and vision, but they are patient as their team builds their new knowledge base. This is where three terms discussed frequently; *alignment, design, and capacity* are brought to

light. Laping mentions that these three terms have more influence on success than any others. Alignment means that leaders must inform their team of why a change is happening and needed. At the same time, design refers to making sure the process in the transition is easy for individuals to comprehend.

Lastly, capacity implies that leaders grant their members the time needed to master the change, which may mean taking some tasks from their roles and responsibilities. When these three terms (alignment, design, and capacity) are carried out during change, people are activated during the process and become more loyal and engaged.

Capacity Chapter 3 is titled "*Absence Doesn't Make the Heart Grow Fonder*," which reminds leaders that they must be present during change and provide consistent support to their team. Chapter 4 goes back to alignment, as the author encourages the reader to understand that when team members know the "why" for the change, the change then becomes transformative as individuals will want to make a difference for the organization. If there is misalignment, the leader should take the initiative to pause and clean up the mess before continuing to the next step, which is design. "Design" is the focus of Chapter 5 as the author restates that leaders must be present during this process to provide clarity when confusion may arise. When leaders are present, this fosters the implementation to stay on track. Human-centered design is also a considerable focus of chapter 5 as Laping reemphasizes that leaders must demonstrate patience and communication during change. The author encourages leaders to listen to people's needs rather than force-feed them during implementation. When leaders show their team members that they are genuinely interested in making their lives easier, this indicates that their leadership style enables them to put people before things.

Multitasking is a popular exercise of today's generation, as they think this leads to more success, however, Laping points out that research supports that this activity is limiting individuals as our brains are not capable of multitasking. This leads to the discussion of capacity in chapter 5, as the author encourages leaders to give team members ample time to learn the new technology being implemented fully. When decks are not cleared, employees resist the change and hate coming to work.

Chapter 6 is all about the Vital Few, which speaks volumes to the success of a new initiative, as this implies that leaders must make sure those employees, are only bothered with the critical elements of the business while learning the change. Individuals who are bothered by unnecessary tasks in the workplace become exhausted when trying to uphold these responsibilities while managing a transition. Laping points out that laziness is often confused by exhaustion when change is taking place in an organization.

Chapters 7 and 8 lead the reader through factors affecting why some people fail at change. Leaders must foster communication during transitions, and communication must be present to activate people for change and offered in different formats to meet employees where they are. For example, while millennials may prefer texting or face time for support, other generations may appreciate a face-to-face conversation or a phone call. This method creates effective communication, which eliminates noise and disengagement during a change adoption.

Chapter 9 ties back into chapter 1, reemphasizing that failure is learning. The author encourages leaders to embrace failure in an organization as this will assist them in being change leaders. Change leaders also foster a culture of peer coaching, modeling, and support as team members like to learn from others and share their knowledge. Chapters 10 and 11 wraps up the focus of the book as Laping encourages readers to offer a listening ear when change is underway, which helps leaders win the hearts of their teammates. He goes on to share that leaders must show empathy when team members struggle with technology and offer long-term support, which fosters engagement and participation.

### Implications for Leaders

Overall, this is a meaningful and informative text regarding the factors that assist organizations in the successful implementation of adopting change. Strategies such as Pat's framework and human-centered design are discussed to help leaders in the successful implementation of change. This text has the potential to broaden the knowledge of leaders and assist them in becoming change leaders. This text is accessible and an easy read for individuals wanting to enhance leadership skills and assist them in becoming transformative. It would be beneficial to add this text to college courses that focus on leadership and organizational management.