

# DEEP CHANGE

*Discovering  
the Leader  
Within*

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ROBERT E. QUINN



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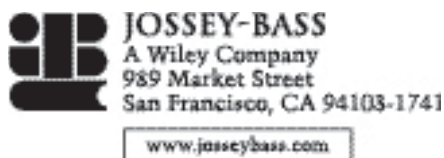
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*This book is dedicated to Reed H. Bradford, Marion D. Hanks,  
and Orin R. Woodbury, three internally driven people who  
understood excellence, modeled integrity, and helped me, at an  
early point in my life, understand the process of deep change.  
Those early investments are deeply appreciated.*

# Preface

Many years ago, I was walking home from high school basketball practice when I spotted a *Time* magazine in the local drugstore window. On the cover was Oscar Robertson, who, after a spectacular basketball career at the University of Cincinnati, was in his first year in the National Basketball Association. I had read a lot about the “Big O” and considered him a bit of a hero. Lured into the store, I bought a copy of the magazine and quickly read the article.

The article described Robertson as the first complete player, the perfect athlete who excelled at every part of the game. The article argued that Robertson’s presence and his excellence in the National Basketball Association were changing the nature of the NBA. It was not the first time I had read about his changing the context in which he operated. In college, he had received extensive coverage in the media, and he was often deeply resented when his team arrived on southern campuses. There was almost always taunting and catcalls. The most frequent was “Skycap,” a slightly veiled way of saying, “Nigger, you don’t belong here.” Robertson, of course, did belong, and his athletic excellence was so potent that even the most bigoted audience had to appreciate the beauty and brilliance of his performance. In that sense, Oscar was not only a great athlete, he was also a social change agent.

What I remember most from the *Time* article, however, was the description of a very small incident that occurred as Robertson’s

college team was leaving a game. A university publicity person was casually dribbling a basketball on the cement pavement. Robertson was appalled and approached him, saying, “You’ll ruin that ball. You’ll rub off the grain and throw it off balance.”

The article went on to explain Robertson’s background. His family could not afford to buy him a basketball, so he collected rocks and cans and spent hours shooting these objects at a bent rim in the local playground. This vivid picture occupies a special place in my teenage memories. Though I never had any of Robertson’s talents, I shared his dream. More than anything else, I wanted to be a great basketball player, and I spent much of my youth shooting lopsided balls at bent rims. At fourteen, I earned the money to buy a good ball that would not go lopsided. I slept with that ball and washed it every time I used it. People made fun of me, but they truly did not understand about basketballs, not really, not deeply.

Oscar and I shared a common understanding. We both had reverence for the same object because we both understood its potential. When a basketball is placed in the hands of a master, like Oscar, magical things can happen. The talented master has the ability to become a leader who induces change. The leader can transform separate individuals into cohesive teams. So linked, these individuals can communicate without words. They can capture the imagination of larger communities, enticing them to dream new dreams. Even the most tightly held prejudice, in some populations, can be muted. In the end, excellence is infectious.

## Purpose of the Book

*Deep Change* assumes that one person can change the larger system or organization in which he or she exists. In this sense, each of us is a potential Oscar Robertson. This book, however, is not about basketballs or other specific tools. It is about the process of transformation or deep change. Confronting and experiencing a deep personal or organizational change is a difficult decision. When we

have successfully experienced a deep change, it inspires us to encourage others to undergo a similar experience.

We are all potential change agents. As we discipline our talents, we deepen our perceptions about what is possible. We develop a reverence for the tools and the relationships that surround us. We then bring a discipline to our visions and grow in integrity. Life becomes more meaningful. We become empowered and empowering to our context. Having experienced deep change in ourselves, we are able to bring deep change to the systems around us.

We live in a tumultuous time. Change is everywhere, and we are surrounded by circumstances that seem to demand more than we can deliver. We are all regularly lured into playing the role of the powerless victim or the passive observer. In such roles, we become detached, and our sense of meaning decays. We look at everything in a superficial way. We see little potential and have little reverence. To choose to play either of these roles is to choose meaninglessness or the slow death of the self.

We have always been embedded in a dilemma. We have always had to agonize over the choice between making deep change or accepting slow death. Today, however, the dilemma is more blatant. As soon as we find meaning and equilibrium, it is distorted. We must continually choose between deep change or slow death. This book is about confronting that dilemma.

## **Who Should Read This Book**

All of us, at some point in life, get overwhelmed and disconnected and feel that our life lacks meaning. We realize that we need to do something to alter our present situation but lack the motivation and inspiration to do so. We also recognize that we want to influence and change the behavior of others. If you must face up to the need to change and do not quite know how to get through the process, this book is for you.

Many of the stories in this volume come from the world of

business. This book, however, is not just for people who work in business organizations. It is for all who want to make a difference and yearn to be internally driven leaders who encourage and motivate the people around them.

## Relationship to *Beyond Rational Management*

Some of you may be familiar with my book *Beyond Rational Management* or my other works featuring the competing values model. If so, you may feel that this book is not connected with that line of work, but actually it is. The competing values model offers four competing ways to see the world. It helps people understand that many of the most perplexing issues are not trade-offs between bad and bad but between good and good.

The model helps increase awareness and provides a wider range of choices. The model does not, however, provide a right answer. For people with responsibility in the world, the most important questions do not have simple solutions. How, then, does someone make a decision? Our capacity to face uncertainty and function in times of stress and anxiety is linked with our self-confidence, and our level of confidence is linked with our sense of increasing integrity. We are all affected by technical competence or political acumen, but we are more deeply influenced by moral power. In the end, the latter is the ultimate source of power. This book is about the process of becoming an internally driven leader who is able to draw on his or her own ultimate source of power.

## Organization of the Book

This book explores the process of deep change and the development of internally driven leadership. Part One defines deep change and explains what it means to “walk naked into the land of uncertainty.” It helps us understand how the “deep change or slow death dilemma” affects every part of our lives. Part Two focuses on the



confrontation of the deep change or slow death dilemma and the necessity for first transforming self. A number of insights provide guidance for finding the alignment of self within the surrounding environment. Part Three suggests that an internally driven leader views the world differently. Here insight is gained into how to take the transformational perspective, a position of reverence for the moral core of the community. Finally, Part Four focuses on vision, risk, and the creation of excellence. This part will challenge you to find, develop, evaluate, and communicate a vision that will move others to their highest levels of excellence.

This book should be used as a tool to help you change yourself and others. At the end of each chapter, you will find a “Reflection and Discussion” section with questions designed to stimulate contemplation and application. This section is divided into two parts, “Personal Steps to Change” and “Organizational Steps to Change.” The personal questions are designed to help you grow. The organizational questions are designed to help you understand and alter the organization in which you work. I suggest that you keep a journal as you read this book. Read a chapter, and then write the answers to the questions in your journal.

The chapters in this book can be used as tools for change. Most of the chapters are very short and can stand alone. You may want to use them to influence the thinking of others. The organizational questions at the end of each chapter might be used as thinking tools for an individual, to hold discussions in a personal discussion group, to expand the awareness of a work group within your organization, or to teach in a classroom situation. Feel free to alter the questions to obtain the impact you desire.

## **Learning from Harvey**

The ideas and experiences for this book have been inside me for a long time. Three times I tried unsuccessfully to write this book. Something wasn’t right. Conveying the messages I felt so strongly

about seemed difficult. I was internally blocked, and it took me quite a while to discover why.

The challenge I faced was how to communicate the relevance of initiating deep change within individuals or organizations. I wanted to help people develop the courage to step outside their old roles and to evaluate and establish new ones. However, I was unwilling to model the process for the reader. It was easier for me to remain a distant and analytical academic than to venture into new, unexplored territory. Consequently, each time I attempted to write this book, my efforts ground to a halt, and I couldn't understand why. Then I read Harvey Penick.

Penick was not a university scholar, but he was a great teacher. He spent his life teaching people how to swing a golf club. A few years ago, he wrote a short book, *Harvey Penick's Little Red Book*, that immediately became a best-seller. As I read his book, I knew he was a kindred spirit. He was a teacher whose job it was to improve the knowledge and performance of other people. Overall, he was a change agent who loved both what he was doing and the students who wanted to learn.

Yet there was something more. What was so special about Penick's book? Many professional teachers have written books about golf, but few of them ever become instant best-sellers. His book did not read like most golf self-help books. It was not a list of rules and procedures. It was actually his journal. Each time he had an important learning or teaching moment, a stimulating conversation, or an important insight, he recorded it in his journal. It contained rich, riveting stories that captured the imagination and interest of readers, tempted them to think differently, and motivated them to try new ideas. He loved golf, and by sharing his most cherished stories, he exposed himself to his audience. I know he built a relationship with me. He shared his passion and captured my attention.

Given Penick's example, I decided that to meet my objective, I needed to write from both my head and my heart. This book had to model what I was asking others to do. The idea was daunting, but I

had to step out of my old role and try something new, to abandon my safe academic role for a time and risk the criticism of my university colleagues. Despite my initial discomfort, I persevered, and the blocked feeling soon disappeared.

As I reduced my own hypocrisy gap, my sense of integrity increased, as did my energy for this project. Drawing on my encounter with Penick's book, I wanted to write a book that interwove my poignant personal experiences as a change agent with my academic background. I wanted to write a book that would be both relevant and interesting and help us approach the ever-changing global environment with a sense of enlightenment and adventure.

This book is written with the hope that it will guide us as we strive to navigate deep change within ourselves or our organizations and that it will provide us with the strength to meet the many challenges we will face.

## Acknowledgments

Every book owes a debt to a wide array of people. Given the nature of this book, the debt extends to nearly everyone I have ever known, worked with, or read. There are many stories in this book. They reflect numerous life experiences. To respect the privacy of the many people involved, I have kept all but the most known episodes anonymous. I have intentionally distorted some of the stories to ensure confidentiality. In doing so, I have nevertheless tried to retain the integrity of the original plot.

I would like to thank my professional colleagues at the two universities at which I have toiled over the past two decades, the State University of New York, Albany, and the University of Michigan. I am particularly grateful to the following people who have provided help on parts of various drafts: Ken Anbender, Susan Ashford, Vaughn Bryson, Kim Cameron, Kathy A. Clark, Corinne Coen, Gelaye Debebe, Jane Dutton, Rachel Ebert, Marty Edwards, Michael Jibson, Deb Meyerson, Rob Passick, Bob Robb, Gretchen

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I also want to thank the people who have invited me into their organizations and their lives.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Delsa, an empowered and internally directed leader who faces deep change with courage and is gifted in helping others do the same. I appreciate her example.

*Ann Arbor, Michigan  
June 1996*

Robert E. Quinn

# The Author

Robert E. Quinn holds the M. E. Tracy Collegiate Professorship in the Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management Group at the University of Michigan School of Business. He teaches in both the MBA and Executive Education Programs and is known for innovative instructional efforts.

Quinn is particularly interested in issues concerning leadership, vision, and change and has published numerous articles on these and related topics. His two most recent books are *Beyond Rational Management* and *Becoming a Master Manager*. Another book, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture* (with Kim S. Cameron), is due for publication by Jossey-Bass shortly after the present volume.

In addition to his research and writing experience, Quinn has been involved in the design and execution of a number of large-scale change projects.



# Part I

## Deep Change or Slow Death





## Walking Naked into the Land of Uncertainty

When most of us talk about change, we typically mean incremental change. Incremental change is usually the result of a rational analysis and planning process. There is a desired goal with a specific set of steps for reaching it. Incremental change is usually limited in scope and is often reversible. If the change does not work out, we can always return to the old way. Incremental change usually does not disrupt our past patterns—it is an extension of the past. Most important, during incremental change, we feel we are in control.

This book explores a much more difficult change process, the process of deep change. Deep change differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible. The deep change effort distorts existing patterns of action and involves taking risks. Deep change means surrendering control.

Most of us build our identity around our knowledge and competence in employing certain known techniques or abilities. Making a deep change involves abandoning both and “walking naked into the land of uncertainty.” This is usually a terrifying choice, often involving a “dark night of the soul.” It is therefore natural for each of us to deny that there is any need for a deep change. Fortunately,

making a deep change is not something we need to do every day. In today's world of constant change, however, we need to do it more frequently than we have in the past.

Deep change can occur at both the organizational and the personal level. Insights into one level help us understand the other better. Here we will briefly examine the deep change process from the organizational level and then move to the personal level. Finally, we will consider the surprising relationship between the two.

## **Deep Change: The Organizational Perspective**

A colleague once told me about a group of executives in a large state government who were interested in leadership training. They were particularly interested in teaching transformational leadership. They wanted to develop public administrators who would take initiative, who would make deep change in their organizations. Given the negative stereotype of public administrators as resistant bureaucrats, they wondered if there were any transformational leaders in any agency of their government. They decided to investigate and find out.

Their analysis revealed a number of cases of people who had made dramatic transformations within their various organizations. One person took over an office renowned for long lines and offended citizens. A year later, it was the best office in the system. Another person took over a hospital where conditions had long been scandalous. Two years later, it was a nationwide model. Eventually, they decided to make a video about some of these transformational leaders. Teams went out to interview the leaders. They returned with bad news. The video could not be made. In every single case, the transformational leader had, at least once, broken a state law. To transform the ineffective organization into an effective one, required forms were not turned in, regulations were ignored and directives were violated.

Does this mean that to be a transformational leader and make