



# **HANGE ENTHUSIASM**

How to Harness the Power  
of Emotion for Leadership  
and Success

**Cassandra Worthy**

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# INTRODUCTION

According to McKinsey & Company, 70 percent of major change initiatives fail. But why?

Businesses small and large are going through unprecedented change as our world and those who inhabit it continue to evolve making change—and effective change response—a business imperative. Yet leading change effectively and efficiently, nurturing strong organizational resiliency, and quickly responding to market disruption or shifts in customer demand is much easier said than done.

Generally speaking, businesses exist to meet the needs of their customers and clients. Business growth is the result of change: a growth metric (profit, number of customers, market share, etc.) changing to a larger version of itself. And it's in the process of that change that instability often resides, instability that can stall or thwart the desired change or growth. That instability is created through behavior. People choose how they will behave based on their beliefs. In times of high-stress change, those beliefs are often fueled by the most important tool of successful change adoption: emotion. This is where Change Enthusiasm becomes powerfully relevant.

*Change Enthusiasm (noun): (1) the practice of harnessing the power of emotion to grow through change; (2) a growth mindset*

Too often leaders overlook the role emotion—the natural gifts of our species—plays in change. When going through change, we tend to hold within any negative feelings regarding the change as we interact with management, peers, and direct reports so as not to seem resistant or a troublemaker.

So we are left to manage our emotions in oftentimes unproductive ways, such as venting with others at any chance we get or numbing them with excess food or alcohol. The truth of change is that it is *people* who make it possible—people and their willingness to embrace and make change a reality. The undercurrent fueling that willingness is emotion. Emotion is a powerful energy that either stirs up organizational instability and unrest through change, or fuels a cohesive and determined organization that is focused on ensuring change is adopted efficiently and sustainably. The difference is both the degree of intention and action that leaders use to acknowledge individual emotional energy as well as the tools they provide their people to harness the power of emotion to fuel growth *through* the change.

I wrote this book to improve the 70 percent change adoption failure rate. I wrote this book to drive meaningful change in the number of organizations getting change right, enabling the people within those organizations to truly grow through the change. This book is for my 27-year-old self when I was in the throes of a billion-dollar acquisition, a young engineer tasked with influencing culture change while struggling to go into the office every day. This book is for my 34-year-old self striving to remain sober, when I was a midlevel executive leading an organization through a complex acquisition while building her own company. This book is for *yesterday's* self, a full-time entrepreneur in the grind, working to grow and expand the global footprint of her consulting firm. I wrote this book for those past selves because they represent the individuals, leaders, executives, and entrepreneurs leading and experiencing change today. They represent that individual who is struggling to see any good within their changing circumstance. They represent that person looking for a ray of light in the darkness of change, transformation, transition, and disruption.

*Change Enthusiast (noun): (1) one who is inspired to grow by harnessing the power of emotion; (2) one who trusts the fear, anxiety, frustration, anger, and/or grief that change brings to be signals directing them to their greatest growth opportunities; (3) one who practices Change Enthusiasm*

I am proud to be a Change Enthusiast. I am proud to be a living example of what I've presented in this book—that when the mindset of Change Enthusiasm is embraced and practiced consistently, it will light a path toward lasting and fulfilled growth through even the most life-shattering changes.

## MY STORY

As I felt the cuffs clamp around my wrists and a slight tug as the officer escorted me to the curb, the world as I knew it was slowly crumbling.

My relationship with change hasn't always been . . . *healthy*. Where to begin? I guess as all things must: the beginning. For as long as I can remember I've had an insatiable curiosity. As a child my mind was constantly humming with questions: What is fog? Why does pool water smell weird? Where does the sun go when it vanishes below the horizon? What do adults use protractors for? Why do I see lightning before I hear the thunder? The list went on and on. This made the relationship between science, math, and me the healthiest threesome one could ever imagine. I quickly discovered that these disciplines armed me with the tools to explore and understand these mysteries of life. They also guided my career aspirations.

Early career goals of becoming a meteorologist (I was terrified of storms and thought meteorology would enable me to stay one step ahead) quickly turned to pediatric neurosurgery after seeing Ben Carson receive accolades for being the first to

successfully separate twins conjoined at the head. This was a dream I held from the fourth grade until sophomore year of university. In that nine-plus-year span, my curiosity for the world around me ran rampant in my classwork, friendships, travels, and athletics. But it wasn't until sophomore year in college—when I began questioning this long-held career vision—that I decided to turn that curiosity toward myself. One day, I sat with that little fourth grader within and asked her why. Why did she want to become a pediatric neurosurgeon? She responded quickly and assuredly:

I want to be highly paid and want for nothing.

I want to help people.

And I want to wear scrubs to work.

Though the goals still resonated with my 19-year-old self (perhaps with the exception of wanting to wearing scrubs), I could envision dozens of paths to achieving them that wouldn't require the 15 to 16 years of additional schooling and residency necessary to become a neurosurgeon. After much second-guessing and hesitation, I decided to change my major from biology/premed to chemical engineering. Upon making the decision, I assured that little fourth grader I could still land a very well-paying job. The fruit of turning that curiosity within was the first major inflection point in my life. Granting myself a bit of grace, I released my childhood dream of becoming a pediatric neurosurgeon. I had adopted a major change in my career path in a healthy way. Knowing I was capable of doing so would later serve as a bed-rock foundation that navigating through significant change, though difficult, was possible.

Around the same time as I was shifting gears in my professional pursuits, I kicked off a brand-new career I hadn't exactly dreamed of: drinking. At first my drinking was the relatively "normal" college drinking at parties and celebrations. But as I struggled with being comfortable in my own skin and

moving into adulthood, it became a frequently indulged and well-mastered hobby with growing importance in my life. This growth continued for many, many years, surprisingly enough, running in parallel to my professional growth.

Following graduation, I spent the next decade-plus working in corporate America, learning and growing in my professional career at a rapid pace. I excelled in every endeavor, thirsty to learn how to successfully navigate corporate culture, my insatiable curiosity fully unleashed. I learned how to apply foundational engineering principles to scale consumer packaged goods from lab scale to manufacturing scale. I traveled the world. I indulged in new cultures. I developed meaningful and lasting relationships. I learned the nuances of influencing up, down, and across an organization. I learned how to recognize and unleash the strengths of others to accelerate business growth. I created and honed my leadership brand. And though I experienced steep learning curves with early advancements and role changes, my relationship with growth and ultimately change didn't become truly challenged until I had been working for several years.

This challenge came during my first billion-dollar acquisition experience. I was originally employed by the parent company and transferred into the billion-dollar business it had acquired, charged with continuing to lead breakthrough innovation while integrating the parent company's tools and processes. To this day, it remains the most challenging experience in my professional life.

In those early weeks, I remember feeling tension up and down the hallways, in meeting rooms, in break rooms, in labs, and on the manufacturing floor. This tension was being created by an "us versus them" mentality harbored by a critical mass of the organization. Seemingly every attempt I made to improve and grow the business was met with doubt and judgment. Though I originally stepped into the organization

ready to embrace working together as one team, that powerful and contagious us versus them mentality slowly began taking hold of my heart and mind. I was so frustrated at the end of nearly every day that I began actively looking for ways to transfer out of the business and even quit the company—a company I had not long before loved and envisioned contributing to for decades to come.

My drinking career had become just as advanced as my professional career. Wrought with frustration and anger, every evening I numbed out with beer, wine, mixed cocktails, shots . . . being picky has no place in a world of dedicated drinking. My attempts to cope with this major change in my work life were leading to increasingly unhealthy choices outside of work.

Gratefully, my intuition somehow managed to blast through the sea of vodka, Red Bull, whiskey, and beer, and encouraged me to seek perspective from one of my senior-level mentors. I sat with her and expressed all my grievances, how tough of a time I was having, and how seriously I was considering quitting the company. During that chat I said everything short of recommending she terminate my manager and a few others in the organization to enable me to have a better work experience. She let me vent for a while and then looked at me, her eyes filled with such compassion and sincerity, and said, “Cassandra, I want to offer you some advice. You can either get *bitter* or you can get *better*. It’s *your* choice.”

That pissed me off. Her words initially led me to believe she had no concern for me or any desire to put effort into keeping me in the company. I had no choice in the matter. I wasn’t in a position of power or influence, *she* was. But over the next several days, as I repeated “*bitter* or *better*” over and over in my mind, I began developing a different perspective. Those two words inspired me into this idea that I had control and power over how I *chose* to experience life, including the



time spent at work. It was after embracing this idea that I was compelled to cultivate a growth mindset. It was a mindset grounded in trust that my emotions signaled an opportunity to choose my *better*. I trusted that for every negative emotion experienced, I could choose a course correction, that course leading me into my best self. By striving to practice this mindset on a daily basis, I managed to excel in that position, and because of it I landed an opportunity to move closer to my hometown while remaining with the company.

Over the next several years following this transfer, though my drinking and professional careers continued to flourish, it was the drinking that really picked up speed. It was leading me to become somewhat complacent in my career. Though I did faintly hear the voice of intuition telling me there was something bigger out there for me, that there was a better way for me to share my natural gifts and abilities with the world, I didn't stay sober and clearheaded long enough to really listen and explore it. Well whomever or whatever that voice was working with, unbeknownst to me they were devising a way of getting me to listen whether I liked it or not.

On a beautiful fall evening, I went out drinking as I had done so many nights before in search of that kind of joy that always manages to slip right through your fingers as night vanishes and morning appears. In the wee hours of the morning, less than a quarter mile from my house, I saw the blue lights flashing. Minutes later, I found myself handcuffed in the back of a squad car. I didn't understand its magnitude at the time, but the night I was arrested for DUI was to be one of the most critical moments in my entire life.

That first night in jail passed. My day in court passed. The reduction from DUI to reckless driving passed. The additional court-ordered 24 hours in jail passed. I stayed sober through it all. With the love, support, and inspiration from my parents, both recovering alcoholics themselves, I made

the decision to once again turn the power of my insatiable curiosity within, just as I had done before. In doing so, I was better able to understand my drinking, grant forgiveness to myself for how it had become the rule instead of the exception, and fully embrace sobriety. As soon as I did all of this, I was free. Literally and figurately. Free to transform. Free to change from the inside out. Free to let my truest self blossom. Free to begin consciously enrolling in the life I most desired. And that's exactly what I did.

That night, before I was arrested, I met a gentleman at the bar. He and I engaged in one of the most provocative conversations on life and its many mysteries I had ever had. We discussed the power of belief, the difference between religion and spirituality, and whether or not coincidence truly exists. It was the conversation I kept coming back to in the wake of my arrest, our shared words serving as a guiding light on my new path. After several months of sobriety, I decided to reach out to that gentleman, and I did so with my whole heart in pure gratitude. I'm sharing what I wrote (names have been changed to maintain anonymity) to put this slice of my life's journey into perspective:

*"Hey Tim!*

*Hopefully you remember me. We met at a bar in Buckhead nearly a year ago. Well, that night changed my life and you played an integral part in the transformation. This serves as my thanks to you for the part you played in completely turning my life around. So, I'll get right into it . . .*

*About two hours after I met you, I found myself sitting in jail after being arrested for DUI. Now I'll tell you I've never had any major trouble with the law. First arrest. First time in jail. But I had had several 'fortunate' run-ins with the law as a result of my drinking:*

*Pulled over for driving the wrong way down a one-way while drunk (and let go)*

*Pulled over while drunk on the interstate (and let go)*

*Approached by the police the morning after blacking out behind the wheel and hitting two mailboxes in my neighborhood (ticketed for hitting an object)*

*All of these incidents only fueled my 'invincibility.' I never, ever thought I would get a DUI because I believed I could control my drinking. Only alcoholics or people with real drinking problems got DUIs and I wasn't an alcoholic.*

*Well after getting home from jail I was rocked. I couldn't sleep. After being awake for nearly 72 hours filled with worry, guilt, and shame . . . then finally shutting off the TV and lying in silence with my spirit . . . with my thoughts . . . I had an awakening.*

*Something willed me out of bed to 'write it.' I literally heard a voice inside me repeating over and over 'Write it. Write it. Write it.' My mind suddenly drifted to you and our encounter. You had told me there were no coincidences. And that message just kept repeating over and over again as I wrote. It was then, at 4:30 in the morning, I was compelled to pull up your interview on YouTube for your book. And in listening to your words, it was as if divinity was speaking DIRECTLY to me through you. Here are a few excerpts from my journal as I was living this vivid spiritual experience:*

*'Utterly amazing. Amazing Grace. I just listened to Tim's interview on his book and his thoughts about life, God, and Spirit and it was the exact message that I needed to hear right now. And I'm weeping thinking about how much love God must have for me to have put him in my life just before giving me this life lesson. Utterly amazing. It's all true. It's all real.*

*Tim talked about living a righteous life. How by living an unrighteous life you find it difficult to hear God. Just take the root of that word: RIGHT. Live right. When you're living right you feel it. You're connected. Before now I believe I was aware but I clouded it. I numbed it.*

*. . . there are no coincidences. Everything happens for a reason and I'm sitting here feeling that overwhelming sense of reason.'*

*I didn't completely embrace that I was an alcoholic that night but it started the spiritual awakening required to get there. I haven't had a drink since the night I met you. Today I sit here writing to you as a very grateful recovering alcoholic. I now embrace my alcoholism as part of who I am and that it's completely okay. I can't tell you the level of gratitude I have for knowing that fact.*

*These past months have been some of the absolute best of my life. My consciousness is no longer drowning but thriving. I'm writing more. I experience REAL connections with people and share them through my writing. I am living more and more in line with this life's true purpose of bringing joy to all. My relationships are richer. I'm hurdling forward on my spiritual journey. I have clarity and awareness and I actually experience and FEEL real joy every single day. I now experience that awesome Divine power that runs through me and all of life in such an amazing way each and every day.*

*So, thank you. Thank you for being such a willing vessel of the soul of the Universe. Thank you for being such a major part of this soul's awakening. I beg of you to keep walking in your light. Keep listening to that God, Energy, Love, Consciousness that guides you on your path. You've probably moved more waves of consciousness than you know. But I'll tell you this wave is grateful."*

As the mystery of life would have it, during my first year of sobriety I went through my second billion-dollar acquisition, tasked with leading my organization successfully through the transition. So many emotions, now enabled to be *really* felt without the nagging and numbing accompaniment of alcohol, signaled me into opportunity after opportunity to choose my better. I not only had to manage learning how to live sober, but also how to successfully orchestrate transitioning an organization through a major acquisition. The growth mindset I had cultivated during that first acquisition experience came to my rescue. Every ripple of frustration, every heartbeat-skipping ounce of anxiety, every flame

of anger served as signals, welcoming me into opportunity to become better. The more I lived the mindset, the bigger the opportunities signaled.

Seeing and sensing frustration, anxiety, and anger among my peers, managers, and direct reports, I was inspired to find a way to package this mindset in a way that it could be shared. I was inspired to deliver that package to anyone and everyone struggling while leading or experiencing a significant shift in their career. I focused on building a consulting firm and speaker brand with this message at its core. After a couple of years juggling my full-time corporate work with building my firm, I set out to share this message full time with millions of people all over the world. This book is a part of the journey.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

*Knowledge isn't power until it is applied.*

— DALE CARNEGIE

When I set out to write *Change Enthusiasm*, I wanted it to be the kind of book that not only shared unique insights but also invited its reader to *act* upon the concepts conveyed. This book is intended to be a guide, a playbook for anyone leading, influencing, going through, or embarking upon change in their work. For example, onboarding to a new job, dealing with a new manager, leading a division through a redesign, starting up a new business venture, or navigating employment termination. But these tools and concepts can be applicable across all aspects of life, both personal and professional. Part I: The Basics, is composed of the foundational concepts and themes of the Change Enthusiasm mindset. Part II: The Practical Application, reinforces these concepts with real-life examples while inviting you to apply them in your own life.

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I've included exercises that are intended to be completed at your own pace.

Part III: The Advanced Application, focuses on those often-overlooked soft skills that are critical to leading others through change by design. I firmly believe the most important cog in any change operation is the leader or influencer of change. By arming you with both the practical *and* advanced applications of Change Enthusiasm, I will help you enable your personal growth and achieve success through any change. In final Part IV: The Integration, you will learn the tips, tricks, and guidance to successfully integrate Change Enthusiasm into your life for sustained growth and fulfillment.

This book is a journey. Expect to be challenged. Expect to be entertained. Expect to be provoked. Expect to be inspired. Stay open to the *possibility* of change happening within *you* somewhere along the way and enjoy the ride.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cassandra Worthy is founder and CEO of Change Enthusiasm Global, a boutique consulting firm, with a client base spanning the Fortune 500 and larger all over the world. Her firm's partnership is rooted in the practice and associated tools of Change Enthusiasm, invigorating, educating, and inspiring organizations, C-suite executives, and business associations alike going through significant change, disruption, and transformation. Cassandra received her B.S in Chemical Engineering from Georgia Tech and spent nearly 15 years working within the Consumer Packaged Goods industry (CPG), predominantly at Procter & Gamble, leading organizations through multi-billion dollar acquisitions prior to founding her own firm. She is now sharing the valuable lessons learned and practical strategies created to enable individuals to become self-actualized towards growth through change.

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