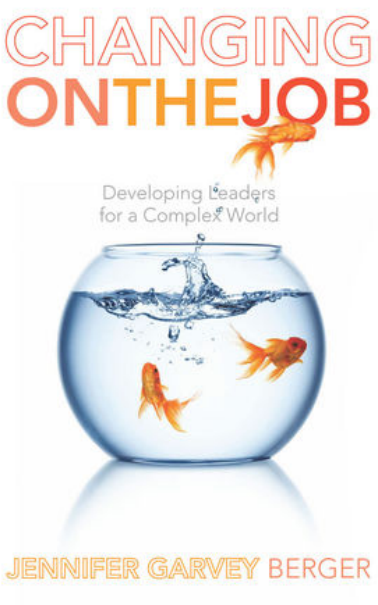

Changing on the Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World

Jennifer Garvey Berger

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Changing on the Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World Jennifer Garvey Berger
Listen to people in every field and you'll hear a call for more sophisticated leadership—for leaders who can solve more complex problems than the human race has ever faced. But these leaders won't simply come to the fore; we have to *develop* them, and we must cultivate them as quickly as is humanly possible. *Changing on the Job* is a means to this end.

As opposed to showing readers how to play the role of a leader in a "paint by numbers" fashion, *Changing on the Job* builds on theories of adult growth and development to help readers become more thoughtful individuals, capable of leading in any scenario. Moving from the theoretical to the practical, and employing real-world examples, author Jennifer Garvey Berger offers a set of building blocks to help cultivate an agile workforce while improving performance.

Coaches, HR professionals, thoughtful leaders, and anyone who wants to flourish on the job will find this book a vital resource for developing their own capacities and those of the talent that they support.

Changing on the Job: Developing Leaders for a Complex World Details

Date	:	Published November 30th 2011 by Stanford Business Books
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Nicolas says

I give the book a four-star-rating. Contentwise it is right on the spot – relying on the well-known developmental theory of Robert Kegan, illustrated with a lot of examples from the business-context and clearly structured throughout.

Bergers main focus are five different „forms of mind“, that each deal differently with complex issues in the business field. She explains those forms of mind quite detailed, drawing on years of experience as a coach and cunsultant. It is quite astounding, how many different, well-known phenomena in everyday job interactions, that produce conflict and tend to be seen as personality flaws, can be explained in terms of stages in cognitive development. Berger definetly delivers a powerful framework for fostering change in people and organizations.

However, there are some things that lower the reading experience a little:
- the examples each show some persons form of mind, but they do not really put us in a scene and therefore in their shoes.
- Secondly, the structure of the chapters is somewhat repetetive, exposing the five forms of mind over and over again. That might make sense in a longer course, but in a book it is not very exiting to read through – and for some readers even a little confusing.
- And thirdly, even though the vocabulary is non-technical, the sentences tend to be longer and the expressions more complicated than necessary.

So, the topic and the approach of the book can be very inspiring for someone with some background knowledge already, but for a novice reader it is probably less gripping. So while maybe not the best choice for a wider audience, it suerly can be a valuable workbook for coaches, trainers and others working in the field.

Kristin Alford says

I was lucky to be able to take a course with Jennifer a couple of weeks ago, and that alongside this book has provided a useful model to adult development and a practical guide to leadership, relationships and making sense of myself. Will need another reading to fully incorporate the ideas into better questions, but much to draw upon.

Aaron Terrazas says

A handful of good stories, but for the most part felt too in the weeds for the typical reader (like me).

James Dalziel says

Again, complexity made practical. Makes so many connections with our work as educators. hat tipped back to David Snodden and the Cynefin framework.

Joey says

The best and also the most accessible book in adult development theory, as well as leadership development

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Jules says

Perhaps this book just came along at the right time of my life working in organizational development, but I just loved it. I'd never before read about adult development, so learning about the journey through different forms of mind and sense-making that individuals go through during their lives was eye-opening. It's one of those frameworks for looking at human experience that makes intuitive sense as you consider the journey of your own life -- the broadening of your perspective over time and sense of growing responsibility for your own actions and life events.

Looking at leadership development from an adult development lens, given the work I do, was also pretty darn interesting. Understanding the patterns enables one to identify -- and ultimately change -- patterns that don't contribute to success and happiness. In leadership coaching and partnership, this is a powerful thing. How do you find someone's growth edge -- the very limit of their understanding and capability, and try to help them meet their personal goals while also broadening their understanding?

Garvey Berger has a knack for treating all these concepts simply enough to be digestible, but complex enough to reflect the reality of our lives. I also love how she articulates her own values and how she makes sense of why these matter in both an organizational and personal context:
"We adults need to think about our own change contexts, and we need to support ourselves and others through these changes. We need to grow our own human potential, and growing wisdom is as important as making cars or delivering the mail. The first step is just believing that's our job."

This book left me really excited -- along with a better understanding of myself and the own mysteries and complexity I, and each of us, contain.

Jane says

This is really 4.5 starts. The author lays out several clear mindsets/stages in adult development, implications for how we view efficacy, others, change, etc. More importantly, though, the book goes on to implications of these stages for learning, leadership, coaching, organizational development, and overall good of humanity! I don't want to summarize a framework that needs to be pondered in depth. However, I will be integrating this model with others that I use, including psychological type and polarity thinking.

My two reasons for not giving it five stars: she uses polarities in a way inconsistent with Barry Johnson's model of polarity thinking. She's describing either/or when polarities are both/and. Minor, but there's been a good deal written about polarity thinking in recent years that would I think better enhance what her model provides. And, she is so apologetic about her model not describing or solving everything about adults. I got it. Stick with the wealth of ideas you're adding to the conversation about human growth and change!

Yvonne says

The first few chapters were a wow! Then the real gem for me as a coach, trainer and facilitator came at the last few chapters (they were packed with tips on coaching and workshop design to enhance vertical development)

Don says

Content is solid; the book is geared towards executive coaches. Somewhat helpful to leaders, and in some way a necessary precursor to her valuable "Simple Habits for Complex Times," this is really more about adult development theory and less about how to move organizations forward.

Five stars if you are an executive coach. If you are looking for organization change (which I was), three stars - helpful but not essential.

Erika RS says

This book applies concepts from adult development theory to developing individuals, especially leaders, within a work context. The motivation is two-fold. First, by using a lens of adult development theory, it helps ground different development needs in a useful framework. Second, by placing development within a work context, it is possible to create sustainable change rather than the sort of change that happens in a class but is forgotten when someone goes back to the pressures and habits of their day-to-day environment.

Chapter 1 introduces adult development theory and the four forms of mind: self-sovereign, socialized, self-authored, and self-transforming. As we grow, how we make sense of the world changes. The theory presented in this book, taking largely from the work of Robert Kegan, identifies adult development stages with respect to perspective taking and beliefs about the origin of authority. Although I will not go into the four stages in depth, I do want to cover them briefly since they are so central to understanding the book.

The *self-sovereign* form of mind can only take on perspective, their own. Authority is externalized in rules and power relationships. About 13% of adults are in this stage of mind. It is often seen as immature.

The *socialized* form of mind is marked by adherence to an ideology. A person can take a wider perspective and is able to see things from the perspective of groups or ideologies they adhere to even when those perspectives differ from their own. Authority is found in the values of the group or ideology. This is the most common adult form of mind. About 46% of adults are in this form of mind.

The *self-authored* form of mind is marked by the creation of an internal belief system. A person can take the

perspectives of others, those they agree with and disagree with (although disagreeable perspectives are often used to strengthen one's own perspectives). Authority is found in the internal system they have built. This is the second most common form of mind, about 41% of adults. This is the most common form of mind among leaders since their roles often demand the broader perspective taking that characterizes this form of mind.

The *self-transforming* form of mind is marked by a sense that no single perspective can hold the full truth. A person in this form of mind almost automatically considers the perspectives of others and uses them to influence their own. Authority is fluid and shared. One's own value system may not always be best.

Chapter 2 contains a more detailed discussion of the forms of mind, including delving into the strengths, blind spots, and areas of growth for each form of mind. Chapter 3 is one of the most useful chapters in the book. It gives a high-level view of how researchers and theorists assess forms of mind and provides tools for helping to start probe for forms of mind yourself. It comes with the important caveat that really assessing these requires extensive training.

Chapter 4 starts part 2 of the book, "Helping Others Grow." It mostly discusses coaching tips for coachees at different forms of mind. Some elements are applicable to anyone who has coaching as part of their role. Other parts are not. Chapter 5 explores how to make group learning situations more open to multiple forms of mind. This chapter is more applicable to those working in professional development than to leaders.

Chapter 6 is a chapter that is useful to anyone who helps develop people. It defines the key habits of mind to generate curiosity and support development: ask different questions, take multiple perspectives, and see the system. It provides examples of what this looks like at each form of mind.

Part 3 consists of two chapters about helping people change within the context of work. Chapter 7 describes the three key elements of a leader's job: set vision, inspire and motivate people, and connect tasks to people and purpose. As a leader's scope and scale increases, each of these areas shifts in nature. Also describes the paradoxes of leadership: leaders need to both set direction and be open to change. They feel like they have less control as they are seen as having more control. The chapter looks through these elements through the lens of each form of mind. The chapter then shares some specific ways to help leaders grow.

Chapter 8 expands the ideas about growth in the workplace from leaders to everyone in a company and sets forth a vision where companies are just as much about human development as produces, services, or shareholder value. It also contains some really solid advice about good meetings.

Overall, this book was a worthwhile use of my time. The adult development theory presented is a valuable lens for thinking about ways to help people grow. The primary downside of the book is that the structure is rather repetitive. By the end of the book, I almost didn't need to read how each concept applied to different forms of mind. This made actually reading it tedious at times. Despite this, the book had enough good ideas and substance to be worth reading the whole thing, and not a summary for those who are responsible for developing others.

Willa says

Really excellent and practical guide to constructive developmental theory. Very good to read alongside Robert Kegan's work - this is much easier to read but completely in line - it just really helps to read the same material from very different angles.

Alena says

Probably the most insightful book I read in 2018, mostly because of the introduction to the adult development theory (I first listened to her interview with Shane Parrish on the Knowledge Project). The book is mostly written for coaches so some parts of it were fairly irrelevant to my life but I still found it quite enlightening. It wasn’t an easy read but it was worth the time investment.

Herve Tunga says

At first, I had a different expectations from the titles; something more related to job crafting. Rather than that I got a richer, to me, book about leaders development around world view and mental model. I super cool read for Coach development.

Julia McBride says

This book has significantly impacted my thinking about my role as a school development coach. Adults can continue to grow in their ability to make sense of a complex world...

Kathleen Rainwater says

This book is written for people who are interested in understanding the developmental stages of adult growth. Part 1 will help you to understand adult developmental growth. Part two discusses how to support the growth of people in your organization. Part three takes the theory into the workplace, and offers practical ideas for implementing change

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