

Business Leaders Praise...

Turning Change Into Triumph

“Ralph reveals the very same truths that have guided me, and his legions of followers, to success beyond anyone’s imagination. As you read, you will be in the company of a true, wise friend, expert guide and caring coach. I believe you will find yourself, as I did, underlining virtually every page as lights flash on in your mind that here, at last, are the words of an authentic master of change.”

-Jim Cecil, Author and Entrepreneur

“A must read book for people confronting change in business or life. Ralph Bruksos leads us through the eight stages of change and shows us how we can positively influence the outcome.”

**-H. James Fitzgerald, President,
Weyerhaeuser Asia (Retired)**

“I was once told ‘you have the rest of your life to become the person you REALLY want to be, or to DEFEND the person you are.’ *Turning Change Into Triumph* represents a how-to approach that goes beyond catch-phrases. It includes the reader in a thoughtful exploration of how to overcome the barriers—mostly self-imposed—to practical, positive change.”

**-Joshua D. Williams, VP Seattle Business Banking Group, Wells
Fargo Bank, N.A.**

“Your ideas will make a difference in how our contractors deal with the changes we are experiencing.”

**-Maynard Sundt, Executive Director,
National Electric Contractors Association**

“...a captivating, inspirational, and memorable speaker.”

-Rich Nelson, CEO, Regence Blue Shield

“Please accept our thanks for a job well done. Your leadership, your diplomacy, and your dignity as our facilitator for this retreat was exceptional.”

**-James R. Johnson, President and CEO,
Washington Athletic Club**

TURNING CHANGE INTO TRIUMPH

*Reinventing Yourself
and Accelerate Your Success
Through the 8 Stages
of Change*

RALPH BRUKSOS

A **Possibility Press** Book

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RALPH BRUKSOS

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Dedication

When I addressed the 1975 annual meeting of Carrier heating and air conditioning dealers, sponsored by AIREFCO, Inc., Jerry Rochford sat in the audience. A Carrier dealer himself, Jerry hired me as a consultant and introduced me to other Carrier dealers, who became my clients. Countless related introductions from Jerry followed. It was Jerry who introduced me to a large public utility that retained me for 25 years. The great success of my career as a consultant and trainer is largely a result of Jerry Rochford's belief in me. In this book I discuss the importance of associating with those who inspire, teach and empathize with us. I am eternally grateful for Jerry's generosity and most of all, his caring. It is with this sense of gratitude that I dedicate this book to Jerry Rochford.

Acknowledgment

I am indebted to those who influenced me positively with encouragement and helpful suggestions on making this book better. I especially want to thank Ralph Palmen, Gary D'Angelo, PhD, Michael Grove, Doug Merlino, Cassandra Miller, Francine Viola, and Paul C. Tumey. Your belief in this book helped make it possible.

I also want to thank the staff at Possibility Press for their dedicated work in making this book the best it can be.

Last and surely not least, thank you God for planting the seed in my heart to write this book, for without you, nothing is possible.

“**W**hen
you
choose to change,
to grow, someone
or something will
come into your
life to help you.”

—Ralph Bruksos

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A Most Generous Gift—a Rich Collection of Wisdom

Ralph Bruksos was the first person to shed the light of truth to me, quietly, yet powerfully, pointing out the enormous difference between simply helping people buy my products, and that of actually helping them succeed. Ralph’s teachings altered the course of my life and applying them gave me wealth and happiness beyond my wildest dreams. Here, Ralph reveals the same truths that have guided me, and his legions of followers, to success beyond anyone’s imagination.

Ralph Waldo Emerson perhaps said it best when he penned: “The poet brings his poem, the shepherd his lamb, the farmer, corn, the miner, a gem, the sailor, coral and shells, the painter, his picture, the girl, a handkerchief of her own making.” So, one might say, the teacher brings teachings. This book is a most generous gift; a rich collection of wisdom from the depths of Ralph’s mind and heart.

Every page is illuminated by Ralph’s sustaining kindness and immortal truth, revealing who he is and the tremendous lessons he’s learned. You’re placing yourself in the company of a truly wise friend, experienced guide, and caring coach. You’ll find yourself highlighting virtually every page as lights flash on in your mind that here, at last, are the words of an authentic master of change.

Everyone who reads this book will be forever changed and most thankful.

You are in for a rare and precious treat.

Jim Cecil

Look for the Good

I arrived at my Seattle office at 6:20 that morning. As I was making coffee, the phone rang. “Have you heard about Ralph?” my friend George asked.

He was calling to tell me that Ralph Palmen, my friend and multi-faceted mentor, had been shot in Los Angeles the night before. Ralph was, and remains, one of the great people in my life—a generous man with an extraordinary sense of humor. He was also an avid golfer, and we played together regularly.

Shocked, I asked George, “Is he still alive?”

He replied, “I don’t know.”

I immediately called the hospital and talked to the receptionist. I asked to speak to someone at the nursing station for a patient named Ralph Palmen. To my surprise, instead of a nurse, Ralph answered the phone. Flooded with relief that he was alive, I asked, “What happened?”

In a weak voice, my old friend described how he had gone to Los Angeles the day before to make a presentation. As was his custom when out of town, he went to a baseball game.

On his way back from the game, Ralph parked some distance from the motel lobby. As he was making his way from his rental car across the well-lit parking lot, he noticed a man coming up to him on his left.

The man said, “Excuse me, sir. Do you have a minute?”

Ralph then looked to his right to see another man closing in on him. He said, “Just a minute, sir. Let me ask you something.”

Ralph made an instant decision and ran for the lobby. What he didn't see was behind him—a third man who raised a shotgun and fired, hitting Ralph in the back.

Even though he was wounded, Ralph kept on running. He managed to make it to the lobby, where he fell and lay bleeding on the floor. People walked around him, probably assuming he was drunk or high. There is a bit of irony here. Ralph, being the spiritual man he is, was then president of his church board, taught Sunday school, and never drank or used drugs.

After about ten minutes, someone finally noticed he was bleeding and called 9-1-1. The medics rushed him to the hospital, where he was immediately taken into surgery.

**When change happens,
provided there's nothing we can do about
it, we need to accept it.**

He survived the surgery, came out of anesthesia, and was lying there in a hospital bed, sorting out the details of his experience, when I called. He explained that he had been contemplating his good fortune—at least he was still alive.

Then he said something that has resonated with me ever since: “You know, in all of our years together, you and I have always looked for the good in everything that has happened to us. After thinking about it for three hours in somewhat of a haze, I finally figured out that this is probably going to slow down my back swing and improve my game.”

I was impressed and grateful for his remarkable attitude. Even with this traumatic, life-threatening experience, undergoing surgery, being alone in a distant city, he was *still* looking for the good.

Ralph's prediction was right on the money. His injury slowed down his back swing and his golf game has improved. He has also continued to forge a marvelously successful career as a speaker, author, business executive, and spiritual leader.

What Ralph did for himself inspired me to write this book so others can better handle change. When change happens, traumatic or not, find the good, study it, experience it, and be grateful for it. No matter what changes, we can enrich our lives when we search for the good in it. This is key to mastering change. It may not be easy and it requires courage, discipline, and self-knowledge, but it's incredibly worthwhile.

Most of us are taught to fear change at an early age, and this stays with us as long as we allow it to. This book will empower you to free yourself from that fear by helping you better understand what change is, how it works, and how to master it.

When you understand the concept of change, you will not fear it, no matter what shape it may take.

Understanding Change—*What It Will Do for You*

View change as an opportunity for triumph. By triumph, I don't mean only monetary rewards, although managing change effectively can certainly be good for the income or bottom line. At the same time, change can lead you to learn new skills, improve your fitness, open yourself to new experiences, or become closer to your loved ones. The rewards of mastering change usually benefit both your financial *and* emotional health.

Change comes in many forms. It can arrive as a shift in management at work, an unexpected layoff, an injury, a death in the family, or trouble in a close relationship. Much in our lives may seem uncertain; we live with volatility in the stock market, ups and downs in the economy, even the threat of terrorism. Change itself seems to be accelerating.

We can also instigate change when we decide to take charge and make a positive transformation, improve our relationships, continue learning, set higher goals, or face our fears and commit ourselves to growth.

Over the last four decades, I've worked with a diverse array of people and businesses—from small companies to large corpora-

tions, and focused on giving them tools to successfully manage change. It's been a privilege and a fantastic educational experience.

I began formally studying change in 1960, after two friends each sent me a copy of the same article from the *Harvard Business Review* ("Marketing Myopia," by Ted Levitt, July/August 1960). It examined the impact of change on the railroad industry. Surprisingly, it said that the reason railroads were going bankrupt was not due to competition from long-haul trucks or other forms of transportation. Instead, they had failed to see the challenges to their prosperity and *change* accordingly.

At the time, I was the executive vice president and chief operating officer of a firm with twenty-three branches in the United States and Canada. I was also a speaker and consultant on the then popular discipline of time management. I had trained thousands of people in top companies and even produced a vinyl record (remember those?) on the subject.

Soon after I received the *Harvard Business Review* article from my friends, I read about a fishing boat disaster in Alaska and its amazingly resilient captain. Something clicked. As involved as I was in time management, I suddenly found a new love. I began a life-long quest exploring the topic of change.

But change was not just something I studied.

In fact, more often than I would have wished, it became a way of life. The path I've traveled to where I am today has taken me through more than enough sudden turns that induced whiplash.

I've gone from being incarcerated, to being the president of a nationwide company, a millionaire, and later so broke I had to borrow money from my teenage daughter. Well into my forties, with a family to support, I had to rebuild a successful career almost from scratch. I literally went back to square one! As I've worked to help my clients, I've also battled the unexpected twists and turns of my own life.

I've done many things to cope with my own demons. To overcome my fear of heights, I parachuted from an airplane and climbed

mountains. To test my endurance, I began running marathons when I was almost fifty.

Effectively deal with change by viewing it as an opportunity to triumph. This book will help you recognize change and deal with it head on. It will help you grow through challenging times, and *turn change into triumph*.

From “Change Victim” to “Change Master”

I’ve observed that people deal with change in one of three ways:

1. Some people barely cope. They are always off balance. They resist, complain, and cast blame. They believe they are change *victims*.
2. Others get back to normal after awhile and return to the way life was before the change occurred. They plod along. Regardless of what happens, no matter how traumatic it may be, they put one foot in front of the other and continue trudging forward. They are change *neutrals*.
3. Then there are those who use change to form a column of steel, reinforcing their backbones, earning a “Ph.D.” in life. They never seem to have bad luck. They learn, grow, and achieve their goals. To them, change is an opportunity. They are change *masters*.

When you have learned how to recognize, adapt, grow, and become through change—even change that happens so quickly and dramatically you are unable to prepare for it—you become a change master. You accept and embrace change, converting it into something positive. You find a way, no matter what, to turn change into triumph.

Getting Started

Change can be complex, and everyone reacts or responds to it differently, at their own pace.

People tend to experience change in eight stages. While this is by no means ironclad, most people seem to go through some ver-

sion of each stage. As you read about each one, think about your own change experiences and how they may relate to each stage.

There's no doubt about it; change can be challenging. But by better understanding the process, finding the good in it, and realizing we have the power to handle it, we can turn change into triumph.

—Stage One—

Hypothermia

“Hell begins the day God grants us a vision of all that we might have become, done, and accomplished, but we don’t change to make it so.”

—Ralph Bruksos—

At this stage of change, we are unaware that change is occurring. Some may feel everything is okay and even experience mild euphoria, regardless of the fact that they may be “frozen” in important parts of their lives.

Years ago, I read an incredible story about a crab boat fishing in Alaska. It led me to a new way of thinking about the process of change, specifically when we are “frozen.”

It was a cold January evening in Kodiak. The boat was loaded with crab that was safely tied down. It was snowing, with a strong wind blowing across the bay.

At around 8 p.m., the captain decided to go over to a cannery pier a few miles away, perhaps to be the first in line to unload in the morning. Along with his two crewmen, he untied the boat and headed out into the open water. With darkness, wind, and snow, visibility was very limited. As they entered the small cove where the cannery was located, they slammed into a rock.

The captain realized the seriousness of the situation and radioed the U.S. Coast Guard in Kodiak. After sounding, “Mayday! Mayday!” he gave their exact location and described what had happened. Unfortu-

nately, in the chaos of the moment, it was unclear to him whether the Coast Guard had received the transmission.

Within minutes, the vessel capsized, sending the three men into the dark, freezing water. One crewman, a Yugoslav, did not surface. The captain and remaining crewman swam to the shore, a short distance away, and climbed onto the slippery rocks at the base of a cliff.

They were soaking wet and extremely cold. Their bodies had lost more heat than they could generate, causing them to slip into hypothermia. Their breathing slowed, they felt drowsy. But despite being so cold, they were not shivering and they had ceased to feel any discomfort or pain. After a few minutes, the surviving crewman relaxed his grip on the rocks and quietly slipped into the water.

A bit later, several Coast Guard boats arrived, formed a grid pattern, and began a search. Shining strong spotlights, they crossed and re-crossed the area where the boat had gone down. All they found was debris floating in the icy waters.

During this time, the captain stood on the shore watching the Coast Guard's search. The radio speakers on the boats broadcast the searchers' conversation. It was clear to the captain that no one had thought to look along the shoreline.

He considered swimming the few hundred yards to the boats, but he could barely move. His chilling body began shutting down. He was so weak he couldn't shout loud enough to be heard. All he could do was stand there, hoping to be found.

The search went on for over four hours. But sometime after midnight, the Coast Guard had decided it was enough. The captain heard the radio transmission through the speakers, and he listened as the man in charge announced that there were apparently no survivors.

"I knew that for me, it was over; my life, as I knew it, was about to come to an end," the captain later said.

At about this time, a Kodiak policeman who was sent out to help in the search was walking along the edge of the cliff above the captain. He was shining a strong handheld flashlight on the rocks

below. As the beam approached the captain, it caught him directly in the face, and he was rescued.

He was rushed to a hospital in Kodiak, where it was determined that he was suffering from hypothermia. A person is said to be hypothermic when his or her body temperature falls from the normal 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit to 95 degrees or below. The captain's had dropped to 72 degrees, one of the lowest body temperatures ever recorded in medical history.

When the captain was later interviewed, he said that even though he had been very cold on the rocks, most of the discomfort had left him by the time the hypothermia had set in. As his body temperature dropped, he had to bite and pinch himself and *create discomfort* in order to stay awake. His survival depended on staying conscious; if he had drifted off, he would have slipped into the water just as the crewman had.

Ironically, the captain said he had entered a state of euphoria. A warm fuzzy feeling started to overtake him and everything seemed to be okay.

When I read the captain's story, I realized that, on a mental and emotional level, many of us experience some type of hypothermia in life. As we engage in our individual lives at work, with our families and in our communities, we may enter a mild state of euphoria. If someone asks us how we are doing, we sincerely say, "Just fine."

I have observed and experienced that, even though we think we're "doing just fine," we actually have not done anything significantly different to improve our lives for quite awhile. We're in lock step, going through our lives in a numb state of passive indifference. We may think we're doing okay, but we could actually be feeling the deceptive, and potentially deadly effects of hypothermia—numbed out to life.

Are We Thriving or Just Surviving?

Many of us deal with change in the same way as someone who's exposed to extreme cold: We go into a protective mode and shut down the system. It's a natural way of coping with change and

with life. The problem is, we don't extend ourselves or take chances. We remain in place and don't grow.

A few months after reading about the captain, I read about a self-help group that sent people out into the wilderness to build confidence through a survival experience. Two of their students had frozen to death during a snowstorm while on a mountain outing.

The tragedy was compounded by the fact that there were down-insulated parkas on a log near where they died. If they had only put the parkas on, they might have lived. Instead, as hypothermia set in, euphoria took over and they simply froze to death.

Over the years, people have asked me the same two questions:

- 1) How do you build confidence?
- 2) How do you gain security?

I've noticed that our usual methods for achieving those two things often lead to hypothermic living. Historically, we thought we received our security from wealth, the government, jobs, marriage, or something else outside ourselves.

After four decades of observing human development, I'm convinced that we only become secure is by taking action—moving toward something. Moving toward our goals, objectives, and vision is the only way to achieve security. I've talked to countless people who were confident and secure even though they didn't have the money, the home, the wealth, or the prosperity. They were most secure when progressing toward their goals.

The best example I know of this is the story of Reginald. When I first met him, he was a security guard, barely making more than minimum wage. His wife also worked a low-income job. Reginald worked hard, sometimes putting in 110 hours a week! He and his wife planned it so at least one of them was always home with their children after school and on weekends. Reginald's goal was to retire with great wealth, which is hard to do on minimum wage.

When I first starting talking to Reginald, he and his wife had built a business on the side, and the last time we talked, it had practically doubled. Reginald and his wife demonstrated what people

can do once they determine a goal and build confidence by moving toward it. They moved on from the numbing euphoria of hypothermia, as exemplified by maintainers of the status-quo.

If we sense hypothermia setting in, it's time to stretch. It's time to set new objectives. It's time to expand our horizons, to push beyond where we are now.

Progress always involves risks. You can't steal second base while keeping one foot on first.

The best way to grow is not only to be concerned about what we feed ourselves physically, our food, but more importantly, what we feed ourselves *mentally*—what we read, listen to, the people with whom we associate, and the dreams we create in our minds.

There are many who believe that by the time we are twenty-five it's all over. What we are going to become and what we are has all been formed; we then live out the remainder of our lives based on what we have learned and experienced up to that age. Others, including me, believe that we need to continue experiencing, growing, and becoming for as long as we live.

A good friend of mine was sitting on the deck of a cruise ship alongside a man who freely admitted he was in his early eighties. The older man was reading a thick scientific book and, by the title, it appeared to be a difficult subject. My friend asked him, "At your age, why are you reading a book like that?" The elderly man said, "Why do *you* read? Why do *you* learn?" My friend answered, "We learn to earn." The old man replied, "No, we learn to become."

As we work our way through hypothermia and whatever forms it has taken in our lives, we break through and—learn to grow and become.

**Detrimental Certainties vs. Beneficial Uncertainties—
*Why We Cling to What We Know***

Whether we like it or not, everyone experiences change. I recently attended a seminar in which the presenter, a physician,

observed, “A doctor who graduated just ten years ago cannot write 80 percent of the prescriptions necessary to practice effective medicine if, during those ten years, that doctor has not updated his or her skills.”

I’ve heard a chemist put it differently: “A chemist today has 400 percent more ‘book learning’ than one who graduated just ten years ago.”

To be most effective, we need to constantly upgrade our knowledge and skills.

A vice president of a large manufacturing firm said, “We are almost better off firing an engineer with ten years experience and hiring a recent college graduate, if the engineer with ten years of experience has not continued to learn, grow, and upgrade his skills.”

All industries are impacted by change, and they need professionals who upgrade their skills, not those who cease to learn. Yet, there’s a strong tendency for all of us who have been doing something for a long time to justify our ways. It’s tempting to say “That’s the way we’ve always done it” is the best way, even if that’s not true.

As a matter of course, given the choice to change their minds or prove they don’t have to, most people usually get busy on the proof. They’ll often stick with the familiar even though it defies all logic.

I was in a seminar with a psychiatrist from UCLA who had worked extensively with battered spouses. He was an expert on what he referred to as the “battered spouse syndrome.” When I asked him why a battered spouse would remain with an abusive partner, he said a victim of abuse is often more comfortable with what they know (a *detrimental certainty*), than with taking a chance on something unknown (a *beneficial uncertainty*).

Even if their present existence is almost unbearable, some people tend to fear making choices that will lead them into an unclear

future. They are more comfortable with detrimental certainties than with the possibility of beneficial uncertainties.

The possibility of a correct uncertainty has a tendency to unnerve most people, causing them to *Experiment* (stage five in the change process). Ultimately, they believe their experiment would change them, and that's scary. So they cling to what they know, even if it hurts their income opportunities, diminishes their chances for growth, and limits their relationships. How sad.

Recognize the Opportunity in Change

How can we make sure to answer when opportunity knocks? First, don't be so quick to dismiss new things. Be open, not defensive. Resist the temptation to blame others. When a change occurs, take time to study it, even if it seems unwelcome at first, and find the opportunity within it.

**“Too often the opportunity knocks,
but by the time we unlatch the chain, push back the bolt,
unhook the two locks, and shut off the burglar alarm, it's
too late, the opportunity has passed.”**

—Rita Coolidge, Singer

If we don't explore the potential benefits of change—even something we think we'd rather not engage in—we risk making ourselves obsolete instead of moving ahead. In 1960, the July/August issue of *Harvard Business Review* published “Marketing Myopia,” by Ted Levitt, an article on change that became a classic. Levitt wrote:

Every major industry was once a growth industry, but some that are now riding a wave of growth enthusiasm are very much in the shadow of decline. Others, which are thought of as seasoned growth industries, have actually stopped growing. In every case, the reason growth is threatened, slowed, or stopped is not because the market is saturated, it is because there has been a failure of management.

The railroads did not stop growing because the need for passenger and freight transportation declined. Railroads are in trouble

today not because others filled the need (cars, trucks, airplanes, and even telephones), but because it was not filled by the railroads themselves. They let others take customers away from them because they assumed themselves to be in the railroad business rather than in the transportation business.

**We get a bigger dream when we
accomplish a smaller one.**

Many organizations and individuals have, at some point, forgotten their purpose. Those who continue to refine and restate their vision will ultimately take advantage of the opportunities change presents.

Change is threatening when it is done *to* us, but it is exciting when it is done *by* us. We resist change because it means admitting that the way things were done in the past no longer work as well as the new way could. The way we did things in the past wasn't necessarily wrong; it may have been right at the time, but circumstances change. To take advantage of the opportunities found in change, know they are presented by changing circumstances, think about what you can do to capitalize on them, and then act.