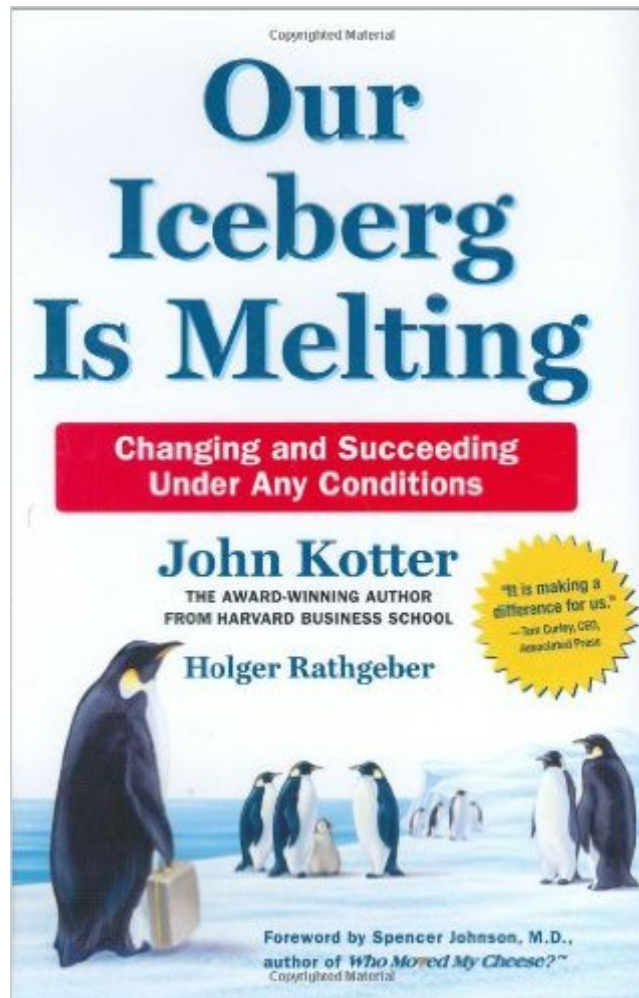


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Our Iceberg Is Melting



Synopsis

Most of the denizens of the Antarctic penguin colony sneer at Fred, the quiet but observant scout who detects worrying signs that their home, an iceberg, is melting. Fred must cleverly convince and enlist key players, such as Louis, the head penguin; Alice, the number two bird; the intractable NoNo the weather expert; and a passle of school-age penguins if he is to save the colony. Their delightfully told journey illuminates in an unforgettable way how to manage the necessary change that surrounds us all. Simple explanatory material following the fable enhances the lasting value of these lessons. Our Iceberg Is Melting is at once charming, accessible and profound; a treat for virtually any reader.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *Our Iceberg Is Melting*, Harvard professor John Kotter and co-author Holger Rathgeber tell the story of a colony of penguins who are facing change. The story is written in fable format similar to *Who Moved My Cheese* by Spencer Johnson. An astute penguin named Fred observes that the iceberg the colony lives on is melting and that they will face potential disaster if it breaks apart in the middle of winter. He proceeds to present his findings to Alice, a member of the leadership council. Once the need for action is realized, there is no small amount of squabbling amongst the council as to next steps. They eventually determine to let the rest of the colony know of the great risks and solicit ideas for solutions. After arriving at a creative solution through interactions with a seagull, they implement a migratory initiative to seek out new icebergs. The change is not without detractors

who question the findings and argue for maintaining the status quo without addressing the risks of the melting iceberg. However, through strong leadership of the head penguin and a small action team, the penguins drove efforts to eventually relocate to a safer home. The story has multiple examples of personalities seen commonly in organizations. There are those who are interested in arguing for the sake of arguing, the cautious, the hard driving but consensus building leaders, the creative but sometimes ignored penguins, the naysayers, those being academic in mindset but who ask tough questions, and those who just want everyone to be happy, among others. Kotter and Rathgeber use the story to demonstrate an eight step process of successful change which includes: 1. Create a Sense of Urgency 2. Pull Together a Guiding Team 3.

Although fables have been written and shared for many centuries dating back at least to Aesop (said to have lived as a slave in Samos around 550 B.C.), it has been only in recent years that the business narrative in the form of a fable has become popular, notably with the publication of *Who Moved My Cheese?* By Spencer Johnson who wrote the Foreword to this volume, co-authored by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber. I was amused when noting its subtitle, "Changing and Succeeding Under Any Conditions," having seen the Luc Jacquet's documentary film *March of the Penguins*, co-produced by Bonne Pioche and the National Geographic Society, in which the Emperor Penguins and those who filmed them endured (and most of the penguins survived) temperatures around the French scientific base of Dumont d'Urville in Antarctica that fell to -80° Fahrenheit. How many human enterprises could function under such conditions? Kotter and Rathgeber offer a fable in which the central character, an Emperor Penguin named Fred, struggles without much success to convince his colony's Leadership Council that his research statistics indicate "the shrinking of the size of their home, the canals, the caves filled with water, the number of fissures, causing by [their iceberg's] melting." If they do not relocate to another iceberg soon.... What happens next is best revealed by Kotter and Rathgeber within their narrative. They are brilliant storytellers who first introduce their lead characters, and create a situation, then identify conflicts that build tension as the plot develops, until its conclusion (sort of). As with George Orwell in *Animal Farm*, their primary purpose, however, is not to entertain but to instruct.

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