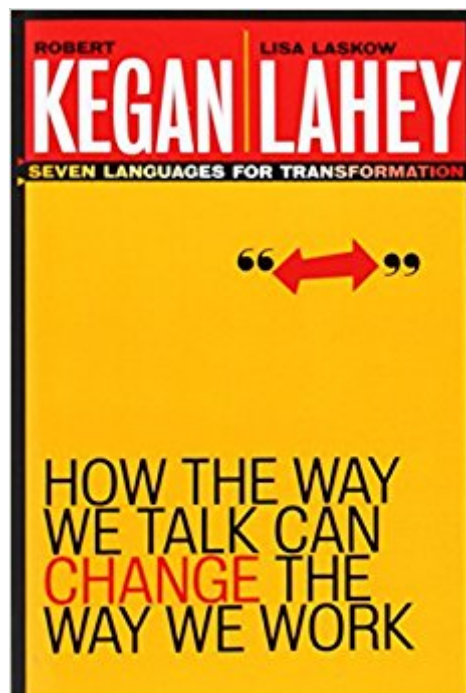




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How The Way We Talk Can Change The Way We Work: Seven Languages For Transformation



Synopsis

Why is the gap so great between our hopes, our intentions, even our decisions-and what we are actually able to bring about? Even when we are able to make important changes-in our own lives or the groups we lead at work-why are the changes are so frequently short-lived and we are soon back to business as usual? What can we do to transform this troubling reality? In this intensely practical book, Harvard psychologists Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey take us on a carefully guided journey designed to help us answer these very questions. And not just generally, or in the abstract. They help each of us arrive at our own particular answers that can solve the puzzling gap between what we intend and what we are able to accomplish. *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work* provides you with the tools to create a powerful new build-it-yourself mental technology.

Book Information

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Kegan and Lahey explain that their book "is about the possibility of extraordinary change in individuals and organizations. It locates an unexpected source of boundless energy to bring these changes into being" and then assert that "if we want deeper understanding of the prospect of change, we must pay closer attention to our own powerful inclinations not [italics] to change. This attention may help us discover within ourselves the force and beauty of a hidden immune system, the dynamic process by which we tend to prevent change, by which we manufacture continuously the antigens of change." I am convinced that most human limits are self-imposed...that in Pogo's words, "We have met the enemy and he is us." The authors do indeed focus on what they call "an unexpected source of boundless energy" which significant change requires. Throughout the book,

they examine what they call "Seven Languages for Transformation" and suggest how to gain fluency in each. Four are Internal Languages: Commitment, Personal Responsibility, Competing Commitments ("Diagnosing the Immunity to Change"), and Assumptions We Hold ("Disturbing the Immunity to Change"). Fluency in these four enables us to build "The New Machine." There are also three Social Languages: Ongoing Regard, Public Agreement, and Deconstructive Criticism. Fluency in these three enables us to maintain and upgrade "The New Machine." It is important to keep in mind that we communicate with others as well as with ourselves in three primary ways: body language, tone of voice, and content (ie what we verbalize). Decades of scientific research reveals that, in face-to-face contact, body language has the greatest impact, followed (at a significant distance) by tone of voice and then content.

Did you ever hear of something called "secondary gain"? "Secondary gain" is the "hidden", possibly unconscious, reason why a person acts in a way that may, to an external observer, appear to be self-defeating. For example, Joe Bloggs frequently, and apparently sincerely, expresses a desire to lose weight - but he never does. Why? Because Joe has an unspoken belief that he will be safe from mugging so long as he looks big enough to wrestle a bull. This isn't exactly rocket science. The genius of this book is that Kegan and Lahey have taken the "secondary gain" principle and repackaged it (without the usual psycho-babble) in a way that, hopefully, will appeal to the business community at large. To this end they have developed a means by which people can quickly and easily - if they are willing - uncover what the authors call the "competing commitment" that undermines a person's declared commitment in a given situation. For example, manager Fred Katz has the declared commitment of empowering his subordinates. Yet he briefs his people on a strictly "need to know" basis (and of course only Fred knows what his people "need" to know). Using Kegan and Lahey's approach, described in detail in this book, Fred might discover that he has a competing commitment to gain promotion by demonstrating his indispensability. This he can only achieve, as he sees it, by keeping his people dependent on him as the one person in the department who has access to the "big picture". Will this self-knowledge guarantee that Fred changes his behaviour? Not necessarily. But at least he has a better understanding of his situation and is in a position to look for ways of achieving *both* commitments (empowerment AND promotion) in a constructive and non-conflicting manner.

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