

# Keller Center Research Report

September 2021 (Volume 14, Issue 3)



## Why Saying “Thank You” Is Better than “Sorry”

*Yanfen You, PhD, Xiaojing Yang, PhD, Lili Wang, PhD, and Xiaoyan Deng, PhD*

## Aligning Motivation for a Value-Based Sales Strategy

*Ryan Mullins, PhD, Bulent Menguc, PhD, and Nikolaos G. Panagopoulos, PhD*

## How to Communicate During Organizational Change

*Linjuan Rita Men, PhD, APR, Marlene Neill, PhD, APR, and Cen April Yue, PhD*

## Consumer-to-Brand Sharing: Will Your Clients Share the Bad News?

*Chris Hydock, PhD, Zoey Chen, PhD, and Kurt Carlson, PhD*

## Advertising in 360 Degrees

*Yang Feng, PhD, Quan Xie, PhD, and Chen Lou, PhD*

## INSIDER: Virtual Selling: A Quick-Start Guide

*Kayla Wilson, MBA*

## INSIDER: The Catalyst: How to Change Anyone’s Mind

*Kristen Koehler, MBA Candidate*



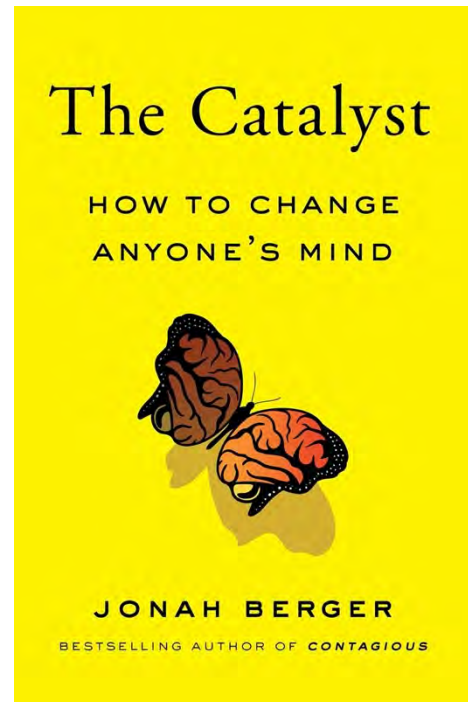
Baylor University

HANKAMER SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

# **INSIDER: The Catalyst: How to Change Anyone’s Mind**

*Kristen Koehler, MBA Candidate*

Change is hard. People often tackle change by attacking the problem head on and pushing through obstacles no matter the amount of resistance. In *The Catalyst*, Jonah Berger explains why roadblock elimination is the most effective way to pursue change in your organization. In order to become someone who facilitates change, known as a change catalyst, one must seek to reduce the amount of energy required to enact change. This can be done by locating the “parking brakes” that are prohibiting your organization from moving forward. There are five ways a catalyst can reduce roadblocks: reactance, endowment, distance, uncertainty, and by finding corroborating evidence. Implementing change by reducing roadblocks is especially important to organizational success in industries that are in constant fluctuation, such as real estate.



## **THINK POINT #1: Reactance**

People value their freedom. When people’s freedom is hindered, they push back. This phenomenon is known as the anti-persuasion theory. If you are going to be a successful facilitator of change, you will need to fly under their anti-persuasion radar. In order to do, so you must get people to persuade themselves. This can be done with the following four-step approach.

1. Provide a Menu: Let people decide which path they would like to choose.
2. Ask, Don’t Tell: Ask people questions instead of making statement.
3. Highlight a Gap: Help people understand that their thoughts don’t always align with their actions.
4. Start with Understanding: When people are understood, trust is built.

This four-step approach provides the change catalyst with a benchmark to get people to convince themselves. If managed successfully, change catalysts can eliminate reactance and reduce the amount of work required to change someone’s mind.

## **THINK POINT #2: Endowment**

People prefer the status quo. Whether we are talking about your company’s current software system or your old, stained coffee cup, people like what they know. To get people to change from the old to the new, the advantages of the new have to greatly outweigh the disadvantages of the old.

Berger explains that there are two different methods established to reduce people's attachment to the status quo—to realize the cost of inaction and to burn the ships. As a change catalyst, it is important for you to express how much inaction is costing others. People often see the status quo as costless, but in actuality there is always a cost associated with it. Revealing the cost differential between the status quo and a changed strategy will greatly decrease the desire to stick with the status quo. The other method that can be deployed to enact change in your organization is one that is rather drastic. Sometimes people are so enthralled with the status quo that there is no possible way to convince them to change. When this occurs, it is in the change catalyst's best interest to remove the possibility of going back to the old way of doing things by "burning the ships." If there are no ships to return to, it makes the goal of changing to the new the only option. While burning the ships does accomplish the goal of change, it should only be used when it is impossible for your organization to see the benefit of the change in front of them.

When asked to change, people often cling to what they know. It is your job as the change catalyst to reduce the impact of inertia by surfacing the costs of inaction and, when necessary, burning the ships.

### **THINK POINT #3: Distance**

People will listen, but only when they are close enough to the issue. The further removed from the problem at hand, the more difficult initiating change will be. It is important to remember that distance isn't always whether a person is not physically close to you or not. In this case, distance often refers to whether the information presented compares to that person's existing point of view.

Berger proposes that different people have different zones of acceptance. If the information being put forth falls within that person's zone of acceptance, they will likely process the information as being reliable and accurate, and therefore, rely on the change catalyst for more direction. However, if the information is too far removed from their zone of acceptance, they will likely deem the information as unreliable and immediately reject the idea. As a change catalyst, it is important to avoid this region of rejection by finding middle ground or a place of agreement and then explaining your idea for change in a way that fits into their zone of acceptance. When people are removed from a situation, they are unlikely to change. Reducing the distance between the catalyst and the proposed change will remove yet another parking brake on your journey toward being an effective change agent.

### **THINK POINT #4: Uncertainty**

People value what they know. To initiate change, people often require a risk-free trial before they embark on a change journey. Virtually every decision people make includes some component of uncertainty, and it is up to the change catalyst to reduce the *amount* of uncertainty people perceive.

Trialability is a proven tactic to diminish the uncertainty a person feels. There are four tools that change catalysts can deploy to increase trialability, including harnessing freemium (e.g., allowing consumers to try your product/service for free), reducing up-front costs, reinventing your brand messaging, and making it reversible. These tools decrease the observed cost of changing and let people know they are not stuck with their decisions. As a change catalyst, the more ways you can incorporate risk-free trials into your organization, the more likely people will believe that the proposed change is worth the effort.

### **THINK POINT #5: Corroborating Evidence**

People need evidence and a way to verify that the change journey will be effective. If there is no evidence to corroborate initiating change, people are unlikely to do so. First, the change catalyst must determine whether they are dealing with a large or a small change process. If it is a large change, also known as a boulder, people are going to require more evidence that the new will be significantly better than the old. Whereas if it is a small change, or a pebble, people will generally need less proof. Determining whether the change you are initiating is a boulder or a pebble is the first step to providing the proper amount of evidence. It is equally as important to provide similar evidence from multiple sources, regardless of whether you are dealing with a boulder or pebble. The more sources that deliver closely related findings, the more likely the individual will use that evidence to enact change. A change catalyst is able to reduce barriers to change by deciphering the type and amount of evidence required to begin the change process.

### **Conclusion**

Change is hard, but a change catalyst's ability to reduce these roadblocks will help change anyone's mind. In industries under constant change, such as real estate, a change catalyst can deploy techniques to enact change in their organization. Whether it is directly within their organization or with their clients, real estate organizations should implement change by looking at what people value and know before



introducing means and reasons for them to change. Overall, anyone can be a change catalyst. The key is to refrain from using brute force to push through issues. Rather, locate and release the parking brakes to reduce roadblocks and create opportunities for growth in your organization.

## **Recommended Reading**

Berger, Jonah (2020), *The Catalyst: How to Change Anyone's Mind*, Simon & Schuster.

## **About the Author**

### **Kristen Koehler, MBA Candidate**

#### **Baylor University**

Kristen Koehler is a graduate student from El Paso, Texas. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Medical Humanities with minors in Biology and Business Administration from Baylor University in December 2019. Kristen is currently seeking an MBA with a concentration in Healthcare Administration and plans to pursue a career in the healthcare industry.



## Keller Center Research Report

Baylor University | Keller Center for Research | Hankamer School of Business  
One Bear Place #98007 | Waco, TX 76798

[www.baylor.edu/kellercenter](http://www.baylor.edu/kellercenter) | [Keller\\_Center@baylor.edu](mailto:Keller_Center@baylor.edu)

*Keller Center Research Report is a trademark owned by Baylor University  
© Baylor University All rights reserved.*