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Book Review

Rocking the Boat: How to Effect Change Without Making Trouble
Debra E. Meyerson (2008), Boston: Harvard Business Press. 225 pages, Price US\$14.95 (paper back)

Meyerson's book *Rocking The Boat* is a worthy reference book for managers and those who want to initiate change in the organizations. Introducing change in organizations is possible at various levels and through various measures but initiators need to look into the pros and cons of the situation and also take care of leverages being brought forward.

The book clearly focuses on three aspects: first, who are tempered radicals. Second, who brings change into the system as a leader by adapting different ways like-spectrum of strategies. Third, challenges faced by tempered radicals.

Meyerson has used beautiful quotes in the starting of each chapter which are apt to the context and add more meaning to the content (chapter-four the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands during challenge and controversy. – Martin Luther King, Jr.) The language is simple and flow is maintained from starting to end.

Rocking the boat leads towards an effort of influencing change without leaving footprints. The book is divided into three parts, the first part- deals with how tempered radicals make a difference and they lead to change.

In chapter one, the author explains who are tempered radicals and how they function in organizations. The main characters like Martha Wiley and Sheila Johnson are introduced as tempered radicals.

The chapter two adds few more characters and focuses upon social identity as a source of difference and treatment in organizations. Taking cue from this the author is able to differentiate them from majority.

The second part- throws light on how tempered radicals face the challenges in life by adopting some strategies like:-psychological resistance, empathy, channeling information etc. Later, the author adopts SWOT analysis to see the marginal difference taking place.

Chapter three focuses on the strategy used by tempered radicals i.e. resisting quietly and staying true to one's self. The author explains the psychological aspects related to resistance and also the actions that make difference.

In chapter four, the attention of the reader is caught on how personal threats can turn into opportunities. How people recognize responses and make choice is beautifully

tuned with the help of strategies which are drawn from the book *The Shadow Negotiation* by Deborah and Williams.

In chapter five, Negotiation is used to bridge the gaps while approaching difficult situations. For example: avoidance, collaboration, compromise, accommodation and third party strategies are used by tempered radicals.

Leveraging Small Wins the title of chapter six focuses on various aspects that people deal with when change is introduced in bits and pieces. People try to look at the brightest objectives like, focusing on small wins. Here the author describes small win as opportunities. The main character Martha Wiley uses the five principles of Senge's Learning organization principles to bring change in the organization gradually.

Chapter seven, Organizing Collective Action, highlights the issues which underlie behind workforce diversity i.e. race, gender, identity. The author tries to convey the message that opportunities and threats if concerned before initiating some structural change in organization helps in meeting the upcoming challenges.

In brief part two categorically describes how *tempered radicals* introduce change in organizations through individual effort.

The third part - explains that while introducing silent changes tempered radicals face certain challenges. The author focuses on four types of challenges i.e. anxiety, guilt, loneliness etc. due to intolerance and also incremental lures of co-optation which worked as psychological pressure and the other two as after effects, fear of spoiling reputation and frustration and also burnout. Facing difficulties is possible with the help of three factors, the first – cultural and subcultural support, the second – demographic composition and the third – cultural legitimacy.

Chapter eight highlights above mentioned facts and also helps the author in carrying the meaning of tempered radicals as change agents and their respective roles played in the organizations.

In chapter nine these tempered radicals clearly carry the message that they also exhibit the qualities of “everyday leaders”. They are not charismatic leaders but are transformational leaders who contribute in change. Patience, humility, flexibility, idealism, and commitment are qualities which add value to the personality of tempered radicals.

In a nut shell, the author is successful in highlighting the positive aspects related to tempered radicals or modern change agents. No matter the change is vast or small it leads to success once the goal is accomplished. ‘Time and tide wait for none’ but tempered radicals live by their choices and pride without thinking about the time being spent. They have the ability, make efforts, and utilize their time in turning personal threats into opportunities to bring change in given situations.

Reviewed by: Prof. Prachee Mishra [School of Management, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar]