

Introduction

Our Iceberg Is Melting is a bestselling change management fable that brings John Kotter's renowned 8-step change process to life through the story of a colony of penguins facing an existential threat. This powerful parable demonstrates how to successfully navigate change under any conditions—whether in business, organizations, or personal life. The story transforms complex change management principles into memorable, actionable lessons.

The Fable

A colony of 268 emperor penguins lives on an iceberg in Antarctica—their home for generations. Fred, a curious and observant penguin, discovers that the iceberg is melting from within. Water trapped in internal caves could freeze in winter, causing the iceberg to shatter catastrophically. With only two months until winter, Fred must convince skeptical leaders and an entire colony to abandon their "permanent" home and adopt an entirely new way of life—becoming nomads who move from iceberg to iceberg. Inspired by a seagull scout, the colony ultimately transforms, learning that their identity is not tied to a piece of ice but to their values, community, and ability to adapt.

Main Characters

<p>Fred The curious observer who discovers the problem. Creative, level-headed, and persistent.</p>	<p>Alice Practical, aggressive leader who makes things happen. Impossible to intimidate.</p>	<p>Louis The Head Penguin. Wise, patient, respected. Builds consensus effectively.</p>
<p>Buddy Trusted by everyone. Excellent storyteller. No personal ambition but deeply caring.</p>	<p>Professor (Jordan) The intellectual analyst. Logical, detail-oriented, validates with data.</p>	<p>NoNo The resistor. Spreads fear and doubt. Represents obstacles to change.</p>

The 8-Step Change Process



SET THE STAGE: (1) Use the "bottle experiment" and ice model to create urgency—make the threat visible and emotional. (2) Assemble a diverse guiding coalition with complementary skills.

DECIDE WHAT TO DO: (3) Develop a compelling vision—"We are not an iceberg; we are free nomads"—inspired by the seagull scout.

MAKE IT HAPPEN: (4) Communicate everywhere with posters and talking circles. (5) Remove obstacles—neutralize NoNo, address fears. (6) Celebrate Heroes Day and scout achievements.

MAKE IT STICK: (7) Send second wave of scouts; don't slow down. (8) Institutionalize change—add scouting to curriculum, promote change agents.

Key Lessons & Practical Applications

- **Complacency is the greatest enemy:** People often don't see problems or resist acknowledging them. Make the threat visible and emotional—"show, don't just tell."
- **Build a diverse coalition:** Successful change requires different talents—observers (Fred), action-takers (Alice), leaders (Louis), communicators (Buddy), and analysts (Professor).
- **Vision must inspire, not just inform:** A 97-slide PowerPoint fails; a simple, emotional story about freedom and a better future succeeds.
- **Remove obstacles proactively:** Address resisters (NoNo), calm fears (kindergarten teacher), and empower volunteers at every level—even the youngest.
- **Celebrate wins to sustain momentum:** Heroes Day created visible success that won over skeptics and energized the colony.

Final Takeaways for Leaders

- ✓ Change is not about the "iceberg" but about who you are as an organization
- ✓ Empower everyone—heroes come from all levels
- ✓ Address emotional barriers, not just logical ones
- ✓ Create urgency before it's too late—don't wait for crisis
- ✓ Communicate relentlessly through multiple channels
- ✓ Make change part of your culture to sustain transformation

