



The Practicing Change Series Four Books in Total

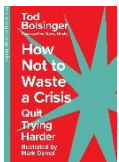
August 13, 2024 | \$16, 112 pages, casebound

"The Practicing Change Series is compelling and immediately applicable. Each book weaves us through story, illustration, and discussion to contextualize paradigm-shifting frameworks for thinking. Your leadership, but more importantly the impact through your leadership, will experience a trajectory change through the words penned. Today's era of leadership calls for continual, on-the-go growth, and this series offers solutions to today's demands."

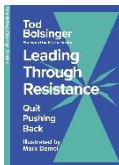
Wendy Nolasco, general supervisor and vice president of US Mission for the Foursquare Church

New Leadership Series from the Award-Winning Author of *Canoeing the Mountains*

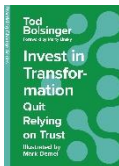
The **Practicing Change Series** offers the latest leadership wisdom from Tod Bolsinger, founder and principal at AE Sloan Leadership, Inc., executive director of the DePree Center Church Leadership Institute, and associate professor of leadership formation at Fuller Seminary. In this new series, Tod takes the adaptive leadership principles outlined in his previous award-winning books, *Canoeing the Mountains* and *Tempered Resilience*, to the next level. Change is inevitable. The four books in this series teach Christian leaders how to lead well through it, especially if and when you are in the midst of it.



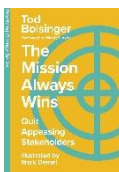
How Not to Waste a Crisis: Quit Trying Harder—Crisis is an opportunity to stop trying harder and begin embracing adaptability. In this first volume in the Practicing Change Series, Tod Bolsinger explores how the upheaval you find yourself in can reframe your leadership and revive your team. When your church or nonprofit needs fresh vision, take these steps to learn how to lead anew.



Leading Through Resistance: Quit Pushing Back—People don't resist change—they resist loss. Leading people who struggle to see the future feels impossible. As hesitancy overwhelms, we can't eliminate change, but we can chart a steady course through it. In this volume in the Practicing Change Series, Tod Bolsinger teaches courage and empathy for communities stuck in the loss of the past.



Invest in Transformation: Quit Relying on Trust—We must invest trust to experience transformation. Groups that have become skeptical need leadership to refuel a sense of community and continuity if change is going to happen. But trust can be easily hoarded or squandered. In this volume in the Practicing Change Series, Tod Bolsinger outlines steps to envision trust for the sake of growth.

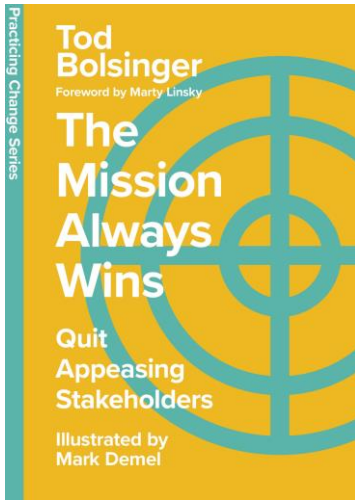


The Mission Always Wins: Quit Appeasing Stakeholders—Change requires tough decisions. But when the focus is blurred, how can we stay on track? It's time to further the mission—not the boss, not the team, not the stakeholders. In this volume in the Practicing Change Series, Tod Bolsinger guides us through naming competing values and realigning the driving purpose with missional clarity.



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EXCERPT



The Mission Always Wins Quit Appeasing Stakeholders

August 13, 2024 | \$16, 112 pages, casebound | 978-1-5140-0868-3

Change requires tough decisions. But when the focus is blurred, how can we stay on track? It's time to further the mission—not the boss, not the team, not the stakeholders. In this volume in the Practicing Change Series, Tod Bolsinger guides us through naming competing values and realigning the driving purpose with missional clarity.

Be Laser Focused on the Mission

As faith leaders, most of us became leaders because there is a God that we love, and there are people that we love, and we want to introduce the people we love to the God we love by building a church, a ministry, a school, or an organization that they would love.

What we soon found out was that to bring the changes necessary for any organization to accomplish the goals put before us (including helping people we love experience the love of God in a tangible way) requires renovating an organization that previous generations have already loved—and continue to love just as it is!

Even if it is a school that is struggling with lower enrollment, a nonprofit that has lost donors, a congregation that is aging, or a business that is fighting to recover from a disruptive world event, there are always stakeholders who are deeply committed to keeping things the way they have always been.

Unconsciously, we who are stakeholders have expectations for the leader to make our lives better, easier, more productive, and more successful. Stakeholders expect leaders to solve all of the problems, to balance the budgets, to raise money, to bring a compelling vision, and to energize the team for good, hard work. We stakeholders expect the leader to “turn the ship around,” without causing any seasickness—with the least amount of pain possible.

In other words, we stakeholders generally expect that a good leader will make things better for, well, . . . us.

There are always stakeholders who are deeply committed to keeping things the way they have always been.

But when changes are needed to help our beloved organization thrive or even survive in a changing world, leaders are required to make hard decisions and tough choices that often cause pain and howls of protest. Oh, we know we need things to change; we just don't want to have to change.

But why? Why is change so hard?

Certainly, some of it can be associated with needing to learn better change processes, but the biggest enduring challenge is our personal resistance to it. Heifetz and Linsky explain it in terms that all of us can understand, “It's not that people resist change, per se. People resist loss.”

Loss.

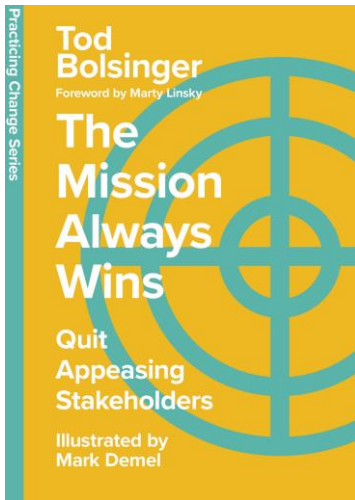


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"Tod Bolsinger skillfully conveys the power of being clear about mission—or purpose as I like to say. And he brings to life how often a multitude of other things—our desire for approval, comfort, or safety—actually becomes our focus more than our so-called mission. You can't exercise leadership without passionate clarity around purpose."

Ed O'Malley, CEO of the Kansas Health Foundation and coauthor of *When Everyone Leads*

That is what is at stake for the stakeholders. Because in a changing world where "what got you here won't take you there," leaders often have to help their people let go of the very program, tradition, strategy, or resource that made the biggest difference in their lives. The people who have the most personal resonance with and commitment to an organization experience the loss of having to let go of what has made the organization so meaningful to them. Facing losses and taking stakeholders through those losses to a new, fruitful expression of the organizational mission is at the top of the leadership job description.

This is especially true in what is called "adaptive change." Adaptive change is, by definition, organizational change that requires the organization itself and the people who are part of it to adapt or change themselves.

Adaptive change does not come about because a great leader solves a hard problem with resolve and a clear plan. Adaptive change comes because a group *takes responsibility for their own transformation and begins to change their own behaviors, attitudes, and sometimes even cherished values*. They cast off old, beloved programs, they set new priorities, they embrace a new strategy that will further the mission while de-prioritizing parts of the organizational legacy.

"Changing hearts and behaviors" captures perfectly the crux of adaptive leadership. Adaptive challenges require us to bring change at the intersection of personal and organizational life—at the overlap of personal transformation and shared mission. Like a Venn diagram that captures with utter clarity the necessity of change and the urgency of mission, adaptive change requires a laser focus on the challenges facing an organization and how the necessary shifts of behaviors, attitudes, and values enable the group to face their biggest challenges and thrive.

For the adaptive change leader, the goal can never be pleasing stakeholders by solving their problems but leading the organization through personal and shared transformation in order to accomplish its mission in a changing and often disruptive world. What an adaptive change leader must do without fail, then, is to help the organization make necessary adaptations that bring transformation for the sake of the mission. The mission is the ultimate "trump card" that always wins the hand.

—adapted from the introduction



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Q & A



The Mission Always Wins Quit Appeasing Stakeholders

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"The Practicing Change Series is like having Tod Bolsinger as a personal coach. He offers practical and powerful wisdom for anyone who is wrestling with the complex challenges of ministry leadership today."

Mike Bonem, consultant, coach, and author of *The Art of Leading Change*

A New Mindset Helps Grow a New Skillset

As you reflect on the previous books you have published, how does this new leadership series add to the previous leadership themes you have shared?

Tod Bolsinger: These little books were the direct result of over a hundred conversations and coaching sessions with leaders all over the country. When the coaching team of my company, AE Sloan Leadership, shared our notes about what we were learning, we found that really strong, skilled, experienced leaders kept making similar mistakes when leading change. Good leaders are respected and even admired because they work really hard, attune to all of the stakeholders, are firm when facing resistance, and are trustworthy. And those are really great attributes. The problem is that those strengths often become weaknesses when leading deep, adaptive change. These books help good leaders recognize and transform those old mindsets and habits into new more adaptive and effective leadership skills.

Change is inevitable. What is the number one thing you believe is necessary to lead well through it?

Tod: The most important thing necessary to lead change well is "adaptive capacity." This concept, first developed by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, is the key to both protecting what is most dear and adapting to a changing environment wisely and well. (Marty Linsky wrote the forward to the series!) Adaptive capacity is about learning how to leverage challenges to grow both people and the whole organization to face whatever challenge comes their way. The underlying principle of adaptive leadership is that it's a process of learning and adapting to fulfill a missional purpose, not to fix the immediate issues. It is about developing the capacity of a group to wisely make shifts in their values, attitudes, or behaviors to find new solutions that are consistent with their mission and organizational identity.

In Your view, why is an adaptive leadership style perhaps the single most critical survival skill of the twenty-first century?

Tod: Adaptive Leadership is so powerful because it is based on three realities:

- 1) The most important thing about your congregation or organization are your values and your mission. What is most precious about you is what you believe and your reason for existing. That must be preserved.
- 2) The most powerful reality of every congregation and organization is the environment and context where you live out your values and mission. The social environment, the historical context, the geographical location and environment, and the denominational and institutional context are so powerful that our leadership is always contextual.
- 3) Adaptive leadership is about how healthy organizations make wise, strategic decisions in order to thrive in continually disrupted and changing environments so that they will fulfill their mission and thrive.



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How Not to Waste a Crisis Quit Appeasing Stakeholders

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“Leaders who know organizational change is needed but don’t know how to go about it will find accessible, practical, and wise guidance in Tod Bolsinger’s Practicing Change Series. Bolsinger helps us apply and practice these concepts in a way that will transform our organizations and ourselves as leaders.”

Teri McDowell Ott, editor and publisher of the Presbyterian Outlook and author of *Necessary Risks: Challenges Privileged People Need to Face*

What are some of the most common problems you see good leaders making and how do the books in this series offer solutions to addressing some of those problems?

Tod: These are all leadership habits that were once strengths that have been obstacles to leading change:

- Trying harder at what has been successful in the past.
- Focusing on pleasing our historical stakeholders.
- Doing whatever you can to eliminate resistance.
- Confusing trust with transformation.

The books all follow the same format. We start by meeting a good leader in a story who is struggling with one of the challenges above. Then we reflect on that challenge by naming the old mindset most of us learned that causes this obstacle, identify three new skills that train us in new leadership muscle-memory, and then end with the “adaptive reset”—the new embodied mindset and habit that you will apply when the old obstacles arise. Finally, we return to the leadership story to bring it all together.

How do you anticipate readers will flow through the material in the series? Is there a recommended order, why or why not?

Tod: Each book addresses a different common mistake that good leaders make. I wrote the books so that a good leader who recognizes herself in one of those mistakes can jump right in, find the tools to overcome the old mindset and then take her team through the learning together. When the whole team is learning together everyone—especially the leader—becomes stronger. And then, they can move onto the next one. It’s really a choose-your-own adventure approach where you start with slaying the “dragon” that you face the most often and then keep going until the whole team has grown in their leadership capacity.



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