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**Fearless Change:  
Patterns for Introducing  
New Ideas**

**Mary Lynn Manns and  
Linda Rising**

**Addison-Wesley, 2005  
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by Paul Harmon

Over the years, one of the most persistent complaints I've heard from process change practitioners and managers, is the redesigned process didn't take hold. The team created a vastly improved process, but for some reason, two months after it was rolled out, the employees were doing just what they had been doing before the new process was introduced. One version is that the employees rejected it. The other version is that managers didn't push hard enough. Whatever the details, clearly the redesign team put more effort into the redesign than they did in the rollout, and that's usually a serious mistake.

It's a common place to say that people don't like to change. We learn how to do things and then it's easier to keep doing them that way than to learn new ways. It's true of employees and it's equally true of managers who have to oversee the process. Put a different way, assuring that change actually takes place requires planning and follow through.

There are lots of different things to cover when you are preparing to change a process. You need senior management support. You need to assure that partners, and others that touch your process understand that you are making a change, and that they understand its importance. Similarly, you need to communicate with employees and, in complex systems, set up monitoring and incentive systems to assure that the change is tracked and that deviations are caught quickly and dealt with decisively.

Most managers know these things. The devil, however, is in the details. So, if you are going to be responsible for change, or responsible on selling others on the idea that they should support a change that you hope to introduce, you owe it to yourself to review your options carefully and do everything you can to assure your success.

Mary Lynn Manns is a professor in the Department of Management and accountancy at the University of North Carolina. Linda Rising is an independent consultant. Both are interested in organizational change, and both have been involved in the software movement that is generally referred to as "patterns." The original work in patterns involved identifying and documenting ways of handling specific programming problems. The idea was that an expert programmer worked quickly because he or she considered a problem, and then recognized that the solution would involve the use of several familiar patterns. Today the idea has been extended in several ways. In addition to coding patterns, there are analysis and design patterns, and there are management patterns. (There are 2-3 annual conferences on how to document patterns to assure that they are easy to communicate.)

Fearless Change is a book that documents 48 patterns that managers can use to drive and sustain change in their organizations. Before describing the patterns however, Manns and Rising offer a good summary of all the things one ought to consider in approaching a major change project. They also summarize some major change projects to illustrate the problems and the opportunities. Finally, they list the 48 patterns. They give the actual patterns cute names. I rather wish



they had given them names that made it easier to quickly understand what the pattern is about, but that's probably just me wanting to be a little too make it a bit more like engineering. I suspect that most managers won't mind patterns with names like: Big Jolt, Bridge-Builder and Brown Bag. In any case, each pattern is only 2-4 pages long and begins with a clear statement of the aim of the activity, and the specific advice on how to use the pattern.

If you aren't faced with a change project, it would be easy to dismiss many of these patterns as common sense. On the other hand, if you need to assure that a change takes place, this book becomes a handbook with lots of very practical ideas. You can work through it quickly, identifying ideas that you can implement in your organization. The ideas are explained with just enough detail that you will feel that you could actually do something very similar. With some planning, a single change project can use several different patterns and you can significantly increase the likelihood of success.

This is a very practical book and I'd recommend any manager facing a change project take a look at it.

