

Understanding Change: A Personal and Professional Management Strategy

Albert de Goias

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This thorough, well-written treatise contains keen and valuable insights on coping with change.

Albert de Goias, a practicing physician and psychotherapist, wrote *Understanding Change* for a compelling reason. "While in practice," he writes, "I noticed that there were a large number of people who suffered pain that could not be diagnosed medically but that affected their health severely. This was not physical pain but existential pain." With this as his premise, de Goias crafts a book delving deeply into what he calls "the complexities of reality, showing how new events evolve to create new stresses or impose new twists to familiar conditions to make them difficult again." The author wisely leads the reader through a "formula" designed to help reduce problems caused by external forces often out of the reader's control.

In all ten chapters, de Goias explores concepts representing one's perception of more exterior attributes, such as beauty and stamina, and more interior attributes, such as insight and understanding. He addresses the resources (such as reason and logic) an individual has for dealing with change, shows how change affects creativity, and suggests how to develop a secure identity. Most importantly, perhaps, de Goias explains the power of self-affirmation: "When, as a self-affirmed person, you learn to use the challenges the world can throw at you, you too will be invincible." Every chapter ends with a helpful section summarizing the material covered. The writing is authoritative without being pedantic, and the text is augmented by helpful illustrations that clarify concepts.

While the content is broadly applicable to anyone in any walk of life, the author's message has particular relevance to managers in businesses and organizations. The second half of the book, in fact, focuses on management skills, understanding people's reactions to change and how to motivate people. The author writes that there are three stages to relating to people: being a "competent resource," knowing that "different people have different perceptions of the common issue," and recognizing "that people have the capacity to expand their visions of the common issue and to manage it independently." This kind of keen and valuable insight is rarely expressed in traditional business books as eloquently as it is here.

In closing, de Goias makes somewhat of a startling admission: Unlike some therapists, he does not believe his job is to "fix" his clients; rather, he believes in teaching them to "fix" themselves. "Each person is so unique," writes de Goias, "that the most astute psychoanalyst or counselor does not have preexisting knowledge that can be applied to a particular person." With that belief in mind, readers expecting *Understanding Change* to be a comprehensive, step-by-step solution to coping with change will be disappointed. However, those with the ability to apply the author's intelligently structured formula for success should have a great deal to gain.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (September 19, 2013)

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