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Cover photo: a representation of a closer look at a community undergoing change.

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Introduction

Resilient towns or ghost towns?

Change. Natural resource-dependent communities. The words bring to mind images of ghost towns. When a community faces change, the myth of the ghost town and the fear that the community will “blow away” often are present, especially in the first stage of transition.

In fact, however, most communities come through change intact... albeit in a new form. The key to success is to strengthen ourselves and our communities as we anticipate continuing change.

Natural resource-dependent communities have a lot in common when dealing with change. The video and materials in this program provide a glimpse at how three communities are managing change and practical information that can help your own community deal with change.
1

How to use this study guide

This study guide is organized as follows:

- Part 2 (page 8) provides a synopsis of the video.
- Part 3 (pages 9–17) describes how individuals and communities cope with change and the resulting transitions.
- Part 4 (pages 18–28) shares some suggestions on ways to use what you learn. If used in a group setting, this section also will help the facilitator design specific meeting outcomes and bring closure to the session.
- Part 5 (page 29) gives references related to parts 1–4 in the study guide.
- Part 6 (pages 30–35) includes suggestions for facilitating discussion groups, a community inventory, and a participant evaluation.
- Part 7 (pages 36–39) provides a list and brief description of additional resources.

This stand-alone educational program can be used by an individual or in a group setting. If you view the video individually, you will find it helpful to review this study guide first. After viewing the video, you can decide what your next step might be in relation to personal and community action.
The program also can form the basis of a community/group discussion. It can be modified to fit your group’s time and desires. The meeting’s facilitator, possibly with the help of a planning committee, should determine the appropriate length and specific desired outcomes of the meeting. The meeting design may vary from community to community and group to group.

A brief, sample agenda is shown on page 7.
## Agenda

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>Helping the group get comfortable working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Expectations of the training</td>
<td>Defining group goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Watch case studies video</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Review study guide</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Review community inventory</td>
<td>Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>Determine next step, adjourn</td>
<td>Planning and organizing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The video—a preview

The accompanying video reveals the experiences of three communities in transition. They generally reflect the three key stages of a transition: the endings, the neutral zone, and the new beginnings (Bridges, 1980). Tulelake, CA is experiencing relatively recent change due to proposed limits on irrigation and pesticide use in agriculture (endings). Forks, WA has been dealing with changes in the timber industry for several years (neutral zone). Astoria, OR has been managing changes in the fishing industry for a couple of decades (new beginnings).

Clearly, communities undergo change and manage transitions at different rates, and no town is properly labeled as being entirely in “this” or “that” stage. The purpose of featuring these communities as reflecting certain stages is to help viewers “see themselves” in the experiences of others. These towns serve as examples from which we all can learn.

As you move between these printed materials and the video, you will hear language that reflects “endings,” or recognize efforts that suggest “new beginnings.” The main objective is to learn to recognize what you and your neighbors are experiencing, to understand it as a normal part of an unpleasant process, and to work your way through the stages without getting stuck.
3

Change—how does it happen?

Most folks agree that change can be painful. The good part is that change happens to everyone—it's a natural part of life. As a result, there are a lot of good and bad examples of how to cope with change.

Robert Theobald, in his book The Rapids of Change, states that these days we are being swept downstream by a torrent of change. When we look around, we see friends, families, counties, states, and other communities going through change every day.

Theobald suggests that to survive we must go with the flow rather than fight against it. Going with the flow doesn't mean giving up. The key is to keep a firm grasp on our core beliefs and values while we adapt to the changing scenery and circumstances of our lives. New skills and tools can help us manage these changes. Each community member (leaders, businesses, parents, youth, aged, new- and old-timers, etc.) plays a role—either consciously or unconsciously—in the smoothness of the transition.
Helpful definitions

Words like community, change, and transition can have a variety of meanings, depending on the context in which they are used. Below are some brief descriptions of how these terms are used in this study guide and the case studies video.

*Community* can be defined by city or county lines or some other geographic boundary. Or it can be a group of people with something in common, such as a belief system or interest. Or it can be a combination of both—such as a church youth group that is addressing the crime issue in its city.

According to William Bridges, preeminent educator and scholar in the field of personal and organizational transition, change is something that happens on a calendar date or at some specific time.

Bridges describes transition as the psychological reorientation folks go through when coming to terms with change. Transition goes on inside of us and typically takes much longer than the actual event of change.

Understanding the change process

Change happens for individuals, organizations, and communities. The transition they all go through is similar. Theobald suggests that as the past's familiarity vanishes, so does the effectiveness of our old ways of making decisions—as individuals, families, groups, and communities.
Organizational change differs from individual change by the fact that interactions among people are added to the picture. In a community, more and different types of people, interests, and ways of coping exist.

The most productive and effective approach to coping with change might be the following:

1. Recognize the transition you are going through as an individual.
2. Realize that your family, friends, other community members, and the community as a whole are going through a similar process.

According to Bridges, transition has three stages. It is critical to recognize that no stage is any better than any other; they're just different. Although they don't always occur in exactly the same order, these stages are overlapping and ongoing, as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog)

Figure 1.—The change process is a continuous cycle of overlapping stages. (Adapted from: W. Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change.*)
Stage 1—Endings

Every transition begins with an ending. However, we often confuse endings with finality. As individuals and community members, how we recognize endings is the key to managing change more effectively. Resistance to letting go of the old will keep you from beginning and successfully making it through the transition.

Bridges maintains that often it isn’t change that people resist. Rather, we fear losses or endings and the transition we must go through. For example, the community that was captured in the endings stage of transition in the video is Tulelake, CA (see facing page).

The feelings and behaviors shared in Tulelake as captured in the case studies video are typical of this stage. Nevertheless, chances are good that Tulelake will not "dry up and blow away."

To learn how you can best manage this stage of the transition process, see Part 4, beginning on page 18.
Tulelake, California

In 1992, policy changes related to water use in the region and the Endangered Species Act created some changes that resulted in widespread, unprecedented community concern. Then in 1994, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service disapproved the use of many pesticides on federal lease lands, severely impacting growers' ability to grow high-value crops. Since these lands are leased primarily by younger, family farms, and these farms are the sole source of income for these young families, this change resulted in a major transition for the entire community.
Stage 2—The neutral zone

Bridges maintains that after “ endings” comes a stage of transition called the neutral zone. The neutral zone occurs for individuals, organizations, communities, and nations. This can be a very difficult time, characterized by:

- A rise in anxiety and a fall in motivation
- Reemergence of old weaknesses
- Confused priorities and mixed signals
- Polarization among citizens (some want to rush forward; others want to go back) and a rise in the level of dialogue

If this stage lasted only a short time, we might just wait for it to pass. However, some community changes are so deep and far-reaching that the time between the old and the new can stretch for months or years.

The neutral zone often is described as a seemingly unproductive time-out when we feel disconnected from people and things in both the past and the present. In actuality, it is a time of figuring out where we are going and how to get there. As such, we are making progress in our transition; we just tend to lose sight of our progress periodically.

For example, the community that was captured in this stage of transition in the video is Forks, WA (see facing page). This community clearly illustrates that the neutral zone can be a creative time when new ideas are encouraged. The real question is, how do we make the most of this period? For ideas, see Part 4.
Forks, Washington

The late 1970s were the “glory days of logging” on the Olympic Peninsula. In the mid 1980s, the forest products export market decreased dramatically. In the late 1980s, the northern spotted owl was listed on the Endangered Species list. The resulting logging restrictions had a big impact on mills. Workers and families expressed a lot of anger during that time. When the video was filmed, many people in Forks expressed the opinion that the “glory days” of logging are over and new things are starting to happen. A Japanese specialty mill is operating, a University of Washington Forest Research Facility is in the works, and there’s a timber museum and other activities for tourism. But folks in Forks still say they are unsure of exactly where they are going and what the “new Forks” will look like.
Stage 3—New beginnings

As Bridges so appropriately says, we come to beginnings only at the end. The "new beginnings" stage is when we launch new activities. Beginnings take place only when we come through the "wilderness" and are ready to make the emotional commitment to do things the new way and see ourselves as new people—with new understandings, values, attitudes, and identities.

One thing is clear: beginnings should be carefully designed; they don't just happen. An excellent example is the third case study in the video—Astoria, OR (see facing page).

In order for new beginnings to be successful, communities must do more than persevere. People must understand the signs and signals, coming from within and without of the community and themselves as individuals, that point the way to the future. Regular, clear communication also must exist. To learn about some ways to best manage this stage of the transition process, check out the next section (Part 4, beginning on page 18).
Astoria, Oregon

Commercial fishing and fish processing have been part of this coastal Oregon town for decades. However, in 1979, the largest processing plant, Bumble Bee Seafoods, closed. This loss created several of the feelings and emotions seen in the preceding two communities. What is clearly evident is that Astoria has worked hard over the past 17 years to diversify its economy and attitudes. People are clear about what the “new” will look like. They are building on community strengths by greatly expanding their tourism industry and by adding value to fish and fish products, and they have been very successful in developing a reputation in the film/video industry (The Goonies, Kindergarten Cop).
Making the best of change

Everyone in the community is affected by change, and every person will go through an emotional transition from the "old way" to the "new way." Community members must become aware of both their own transition and the community's transition. As they gain understanding of the transition process, they will begin to see how important it is to work as individuals to help the community as a whole.

Many books have been written recently about the changing workplace (see "References," page 29). In one of them, We Are All Self-Employed, the author dedicates an entire chapter to the process of individual change. Hakim talks about "personal redeveloping"—the process of harnessing our creativity, beliefs, and abilities to reshape our lives in the face of change.

The goal of an individual's transition is to end up getting more satisfaction out of life. It is a natural step to extrapolate this process from self and work to self and community.

If we can imagine how we want the future to look, we can go a long way toward getting what we want. As Theobald says, only by
anticipating future changes can we achieve our desired future.

Alan Lakein states in *How To Get Control of Your Time and Life* that planning is bringing the future into the present so we can do something about it now. This book deals with individual changes, such as having less free time in your life or becoming self-employed, but these approaches toward dealing with change are helpful for communities as well.

In his book *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, Bridges talks about managing transitions in organizations. The points are so well said that it seems appropriate to share them as they are stated and imagine them in a community context.

Remember that these suggestions are not prescriptions; they do not provide detailed plans, nor do they all apply to every community. Think of how you can use these general ideas in specific ways in your own community.

Remember too that community leaders come in many forms. They can be elected officials, education or agency partners, natural helpers in the community, and common citizens. Especially in times of transition, new leaders may emerge.

Not only leaders, but also ordinary citizens, play an important role in the progress of the community. The strategies below may trigger ideas for specific things your own community can do. The time, skills, and energies of many people will be needed to make them successful. Think about how each member of your
community, not just identified “leaders,” can use these suggestions to move the community forward.

Listed below are some of the things community leaders and members can do in each stage of the transition process.

Endings

- Identify who’s losing what. What is actually ending and who’s affected? Think about and describe the ending in as much detail as possible. What are the secondary changes that this change has caused or will cause in the community? What will be different in the community when this happens?

- Accept the reality and importance of the personal losses. Deal with people sensitively, and pay attention to the people part of the change and transition. Don’t argue with what you hear. You’ll need every community member’s commitment to make it through, and you won’t get it unless you understand what folks are going through and make decisions based on their feelings. Don’t be surprised at overreaction. As Fisher and Ury discuss in their book, Getting To Yes, people see the world from their own “personal vantage point” and often confuse their perceptions with reality.

- Acknowledge the losses openly and sympathetically.
→ Expect and accept the signs of grieving.

Denial—the natural first stage. This stage doesn't demand much action on the leaders' part.

Anger—everything from grumbling to rage. Listen, and acknowledge anger. Distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable acting-out behavior.

Bargaining—unrealistic attempts to get out of the situation. Distinguish these efforts from real problem solving; keep realistic.

Anxiety—a natural fear (silent or expressed) of an unknown or difficult future. Don't make community members feel stupid for feeling anxious. Just keep feeding them information as it comes, and commiserate with them when it doesn't.

Sadness—the heart of the grieving process. Encourage community members to share what they're feeling, and don't reassure them with unrealistic suggestions of hope.

Disorientation—feelings of being lost and insecure. Give extra support and opportunities for community members to get things off their chests. Reassure them that these feelings are natural.

Depression—feelings of hopelessness and being tired all the time. Recognize that you can't make the depression go away. Everyone has to go through it (not around it), and life still needs to go on.
→ **Compensate for the losses.** Be creative about little ways to help community members feel more in control of their future, more competent, etc.

→ **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** Sharing information over and over again will do a lot to keep the community together during times of change and transition.

→ **Define what’s over and what isn’t.** Be as clear about what you still have as you are about what has changed.

→ **Mark the endings.** Don’t just talk about them—create actions or activities that dramatize them.

→ **Treat the past with respect.** In urging community members to go forward, be careful that you don’t drive them away from you or belittle the past. Honor the past for its accomplishments. Let community members take a piece of it with them.

Show how endings ensure continuity of what really matters. Many endings represent the only way to protect the continuity of something bigger. The “good ole days” is a concept that often reflects selective memory. Yesterday’s ending launches today’s success.
The neutral zone

Normalize the neutral zone. Although most people expect to move straight from the old to the new, this journey will take time as the community moves from one identity to the other. It’s natural to feel scared in this “no man’s land,” but this period isn’t meaningless waiting. It is a time of reorientation and redefinition.

Continually clarify the neutral zone. Do this by creating metaphors, both in language and in doing. Translate words into actions that community members can see and benefit from.

Create temporary systems for the neutral zone. Try to do the following:

- Protect community members from further changes while they are regaining their balance.
- Review community policies and procedures to make sure they are adequate to deal with the confusing fluidity of the neutral zone.

Make use of task forces and short-range goals for community members to aim for, reach, and celebrate.

- Be careful to not show preferences among people or groups.
→ Rebuild a sense of identification and connectedness. The neutral zone can feel like a lonely and isolated place. Communications can help overcome this isolation. Be creative in devising ways to communicate: gatherings, events, newsletters, letters to the editor, radio talk shows, etc.

→ Use a community-based transition monitoring team. This team can be a group of 7–12 people, chosen from as wide a cross-section of the community as possible, who can meet on a regular basis to take the pulse of the community. This group has no decision-making power and is not intended to suggest courses of action. Instead, it will:
  * Facilitate communication to leaders
  * Demonstrate that the community cares how things are going for its citizens
  * Act as a focus group to review plans or communications before they are announced
  * Provide access to the community grapevine, therefore helping to control rumors and correct miscommunication before it starts

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Use the neutral zone creatively. Make the most of the opportunity to do things differently and better. Restraints on new ideas are the weakest during this time. Innovation will take place automatically if you provide community members with enough stability through “temporary structures” and encourage them to find new ways to do things.

- **Step back and question the “usual,”** including your own role. Provide opportunities for others to do the same.
- **Encourage people to try new things;** acknowledge that losses/setbacks can be entry points for new solutions.
- **Avoid pushing prematurely for certainty and closure.**

New beginnings

- **Recognize** that people want beginnings to happen, but fear them at the same time. After the neutral zone, most folks are relieved to arrive at “the promised land,” yet beginnings can feel scary. They can:
  - **Retrigger old anxieties** that originally were triggered by the ending
  - **Seem like a gamble**
  - **Trigger failures of the past** for some community members
Beginnings cannot be forced. The timing has to be right. You can’t turn the key or flip the switch, but you can enlist the help of all community members to help create the vision and how to get there by:

- Giving each citizen a part to play in shaping both the plan and the outcome
- Explaining the purpose behind the outcome
- Together painting a picture of how the outcome will look and feel
- Laying out a step-by-step plan for phasing in the outcome

Don’t expect people to visualize the new before they have made an ending and have let go of the past. It’s sort of like one of those giant marathon races. Some runners are almost finishing as others are just beginning. Don’t overwhelm community members with a picture that is so hard to identify with that it intimidates rather than excites them.
Create a plan. Plans can reassure community members that somebody is looking out for them, taking their needs seriously, and watching out so folks don't get lost along the way. Your plan doesn't have to be super detailed. Rather, it should outline the steps, information sharing, and support to help everyone make the transition. For example:

- **List the nature and timing of key events.** Select, design, and schedule events, actions, and projects.

- **Start where the community is and work forward.** Lay out a step-by-step process to leave the past, get through, and profit from the neutral zone, and emerge with new attitudes, behaviors, and identities.

Recognize that plans must include a role for everyone in the community—not just in the outcome but also in the process. This can help in several ways:

- **People gain insight into the real problems faced by the community.**

- **Leaders and citizens align on one side with the problems on the other.**

- **Community members can help solve problems by bringing their firsthand knowledge to bear.**

- **Outcomes work best if they serve (or at least don't violate) the self-interest of the community members.**

- **Everyone who plays a part is connected with the outcome.**
→ Reinforce the new beginning. Refocusing needs to be reinforced if it is to keep its new shape. Otherwise, it may revert to chaos when the initial focus is confronted by the continuing stream of changes that surely will come along. Here are a few quick things to remember:

• Be consistent.

• Ensure quick successes by identifying small tasks that can be accomplished in spite of the damaged self-confidence associated with endings and the neutral zone.

• Symbolize the new identity. Convey a message that reinforces the new identity of the community.

• Celebrate the success. Get creative about an event or some other ways that let community members take something away from the transition process. This acknowledges and ends a difficult time in the community's history.

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References


Ching, Donna. 1990. *Designing Successful Meetings* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources).


Getting started

This section gives you some specific aids to get started using the video and study guide, either individually or as part of a group. It discusses the role of a facilitator in a group setting, and provides a “community inventory” form that will help individuals or group participants assess where their community currently is in the transition process.

If “Towns in Transition” is used in a group setting, a facilitator plays an important part in the group’s success. The facilitator should:

- Make room arrangements, including equipment, and prepare materials. (Preregistration might help the facilitator make preparations; a rule of thumb for video viewing is 50 inches of screen per 50 people.)
- Become familiar with the case studies video and the study guide prior to the community/group meeting.
- Facilitate a group (community) discussion. The facilitator can determine when to stop the video and what to discuss during those times.
- Help the group plan next steps if appropriate.
The Facilitator’s Role

Keep the group focused:
- Be clear about what the group wants to accomplish.
- Clarify how group participants’ expectations of the meeting relate to its outcomes.
- Provide positive reinforcement when participants contribute appropriately.
- Monitor the group’s progress in relation to where it needs to move next, and make suggestions about how to get there.
- Help the group stay on the task without getting sidetracked.

Create a safe environment:
- Protect participants from personal attack.
- Make sure everyone gets to participate.
- Deal appropriately with difficult participants.

Get commitment for follow-through and implementation:
- Be sure participants commit themselves to follow-through actions and completion dates.
- Summarize and celebrate accomplishments at the end of the meeting.
- Give participants an indication of their follow-through for the next meeting.

Maintain and improve meeting productivity:
- Evaluate the meeting and encourage participants to make necessary changes.

Source: Donna Ching, Designing Successful Meetings.
Community inventory—
assessing where we are now

Change impacts the community as a whole and the individuals that live and work there. The following “community inventory” can help you identify what stage of the transition your community and/or its members are in.

In a group meeting, to help the facilitator begin the program, each participant should complete the community inventory (either before the meeting or at the beginning of the meeting). This questionnaire will help participants think about change and how it has affected them or their community. Responses to the questions help identify the community’s current stage of transition.

Stage 1—Endings

1. Something has ended that has long been part of the community’s way of life. A “loss” has taken place.
   yes □ no □

2. There is a sense of community change—“it isn’t like it used to be.”
   yes □ no □

3. There seems to be a high level of resistance to the change.
   yes □ no □
Stage 2—The neutral zone

4. Residents are experiencing a rise in anxiety, and/or a loss of income, security, or future.  
   yes □   no □

5. Motivation has fallen due to a lack of direction. Frustrations may influence a person's sense of helplessness.  
   yes □   no □

6. People are confused about what has happened. Some are angry.  
   yes □   no □

7. There is a general lack of focus and direction. Some people want things to be the way they were, and others want to move forward quickly.  
   yes □   no □

Stage 3—New beginnings

8. People are beginning to discuss potential new alternatives or new activities that might help replace what has been lost.  
   yes □   no □

9. There is a sense of emotional commitment to the “new way of doing things.”  
   yes □   no □

10. New values, attitudes, and identities are surfacing and being adopted.  
    yes □   no □
Participant evaluation

Location_________________________Date__________

Facilitator________________________

Technical Quality (1=Poor 2=Adequate 3=Excellent)
Video 1 2 3
Audio 1 2 3
Comments __________________________

Training Materials (1=Poor 2=Adequate 3=Excellent)
Handouts 2 3
Comments __________________________
Viewing Location
Comfortable Yes ____ No ____
Easy to find Yes ____ No ____
Able to see and hear video Yes ____ No ____
Comments ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

Overall (1=Poor 2=Adequate 3=Excellent)
Met my expectations 1 2 3
I now have a better understanding of change and how communities deal with change 1 2 3
Comments ____________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

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For further reading


This book begins with the observation that our lives are changing more and faster than ever before, yet we do not think much about how to learn from change and manage personal transitions more effectively. (Bridges views external “change” as being the instigator of our internal “transitions.”) The first three chapters address the state of being in change, the fact that we necessarily experience a lifetime of transitions, and how change and transitions occur in our work lives and love lives. The last three chapters introduce the author’s model of the transition process. These chapters are titled “Endings,” “The Neutral Zone,” and “Making a Beginning.”

The author's follow-up book takes the same model to the workplace, where many of us face major changes on an almost continuous basis. The intended audiences are corporate and institutional managers and employees. The major sections of the book address "The Problem," "The Solutions," and "Dealing with Non-Stop Change. . . ." The book is full of quotes and side bars that offer tips on how to help people work through endings, neutral zones, and new beginnings. Checklists at the end of each chapter and a practice case at the end of the book help the reader master the concepts in the text.


A workplace without jobs? Yes. Bridges observes that despite the decline in "jobs" as we have come to know them, there is an awful lot of "work" that needs to be done. This book explores how we can line up plenty of paying work if we let go of the notion of a "job for life." The paradigm shift is to focus on your work life as "You & Co." rather than an employee whose destiny is determined by someone else. Key learnings are to view everything as a market, and to survey and recycle your DATA (desires, abilities, temperament, and assets).

Similar in focus to Bridge’s Job Shift, Hakim’s book operates under the assumption that workers need to review their fundamental attitude toward work. Workers need to prepare to evolve from a dependent role as “employees” to an interdependent role as “self-employed” contractors interested in creating meaningful work for themselves. The author urges readers to explore three key questions: What do I want to do? What skills do I bring to the marketplace? What will others pay me to do? The challenge presented is to integrate your dreams with your skills and the values of the marketplace.


This classic work is best known for documenting the “stages” people go through when faced with death. The stages reflect a universal process that also reflects how many people deal with the death of their job or their community. The stages can be used as a shorthand for assessing “where people are” as they come to terms with major life changes: denial, anger, bargaining (with the devil), depression, acceptance, hope, and change. The usefulness of thinking in terms of these
stages is not simply to label people, but to help them see where they are now, and help them move through the stages so they can get on with their lives.


The focus of this book is more on improving the effectiveness of our changing society as a whole than on how individuals manage change. As such, this book provides a progressive view of the emerging world in which we experience change as individuals. The metaphorical image of the book is that of navigating your life while being swept down a river. Once we realize that "going with the flow" of the river is the most effective option, we need to adopt certain principles of personal navigation: keep your head up, look downstream, avoid boulders and snags, and use the power of the flow to help you achieve your goals. Seven sections of short essays comprise the body of the book: "The Images of Change," "Beyond the Rapids," "Leadership Patterns in the Rapids," "The Scales of Change," "The Skills of Change," "Managers of Crisis," and "Putting it All Together."
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