

PURPOSE- DRIVEN INNOVATION

**LESSONS FROM
MANAGING CHANGE IN
THE UNITED NATIONS**

**JENS P. FLANDING
GENEVIEVE M. GRABMAN**

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Lessons from Managing Change in
the United Nations

By

Jens P. Flanding
Genevieve M. Grabman



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PREFACE

Idea In Brief

The United Nations (UN) manages change to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, overcome digital era dislocations, and address pandemic disruptions. You can do the same by learning how to deploy the most recent UN lessons, models, and cases.

Why Read This Book

For the UN, reform and managing change have often proved challenging. New UN research and case studies show managers how to account for evolving social norms, digital era dislocations, and pandemic-disrupted ways of working. A purposive theory of change helps managers to innovate by matching their intentions to meet societal objectives with precedents from successful change campaigns.

Purpose-driven Innovation provides a unique, inside look at case studies from the UN Laboratory for Organizational Change and Knowledge. Cases are presented together, arranged according to the UN change framework, and analyzed within the innovative perspective of management as a design-oriented professional discipline. Relevant to all managerial efforts to transform organizations, *Purpose-driven Innovation* shows how the UN accelerated a shift to practical solutions not problems, actions not contemplation, and innovation rather than introspection.

Readers learn how to be modern effective managers who contribute consequentially to societal goals. Any manager, if able to adapt rather than copy what was done before, can achieve a meaningful purpose for herself, her managerial practice, and her organization. *Purpose-driven Innovation* is for anyone interested in management, especially change management, for good.

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The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of the authors' past or present employers or affiliations. Examples of frameworks, models, and case materials within this book are examples based on limited and clearly referenced sources in the public domain. Nevertheless, we have sought and received permission from the United Nations System Staff College to use all frameworks, models, change graphics, and cases cited. The United Nations (UN) kindly provided us permission to reference and use the graphics of the sustainable development goals. Assumptions made within the book are our own and not reflective of the position of any of the sources cited. The content of this publication has not been

approved by the UN and does not reflect the views of the UN or its officials or Member States.

Jens Flanding thanks his family members for their support and patience with yet another academic project during these trying times of global health challenges and upheavals.

Genevieve Grabman thanks her family members, who are even more exhausted than she is with the writing of this work.

ENDORSEMENTS

“From two authors with first-hand experience comes the most innovative answer to the formidable challenge of managing change in a complex organization. A must read for anyone interested in the United Nations and in change management.”

– *Francesco Mancini, Associate Professor in Practice and Vice Dean, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore*

“Besides providing access to valuable UN data and experiences, the authors’ unique analysis gives organizations a timely set of lessons and tools to better navigate these turbulent times.”

– *Toni Castro-Cosío, PhD, Senior Behavioral Researcher, Center for Advanced Hindsight, Duke University*

“It’s great to see a very tangible and timely outcome from the UN Lab on Organizational Change and Knowledge (UNLOCK). A case based approach to organizational change makes this book a must read for everyone interested in understanding and navigating organizational change in the context of the SDG’s, the UN and other large international organizations.”

– *Joel Nielsen, Chief Of Leadership Development in UNHCR*

“Though not everyone has yet realized (or accepted it), we are long past the days when organizations could treat their decision making as purely technical exercises aimed at generating success by narrow definitions (like profit or shareholder value). Resilience, societal concerns and objectives, the actions of governments and NGOs, and the views of all stakeholder must increasingly be considered. This book provides lessons from the worldwide organization that has confronted this reality most directly – the United Nations. The authors were there, on the front lines. Open-minded leaders will find much here to think seriously about.”

– *Robert D. Austin, Author and Professor, Ivey Business School*

“This is a valuable reference for change management in multi-cultural organizations with a global presence.”

– *Dr. Jingbo Huang, with 20 years of experience working in the UN system*