



Difficult Cheese

The world's most popular book on organisational change is called 'Who Moved My Cheese'. It has sold (an amazing) 24 million copies.

It's basically a motivational work that explores change by looking at the reactions of two mice and two miniature humans during their hunt for cheese in a maze.

Allegorically the 'maze' is where we work and what we want is the 'cheese'. Along the way we learn that change happens (the cheese keeps moving), that we should anticipate change (get ready for the cheese to move), monitor change (smell the cheese often so that you know when it is getting old) and so on.

It's actually a rather charming story. But it also gives the illusion that change is simple to understand and to cope with. It isn't. It's complicated and messy.

Some managers - and I know of at least one - hand out copies of the book in advance of a change initiative. Perhaps in an attempt to label resistant employees as not being prepared to 'move with the cheese' or 'enjoy the taste of a new cheese!'

I suspect you can see where I'm going: management parables are fine but communicating the need for change requires something rather more subtle. And the worst thing you can do is to be patronising, or cheesy for that matter.

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'Who Moved My Cheese' was written by Spencer Johnson and is published by Putnam Adult.