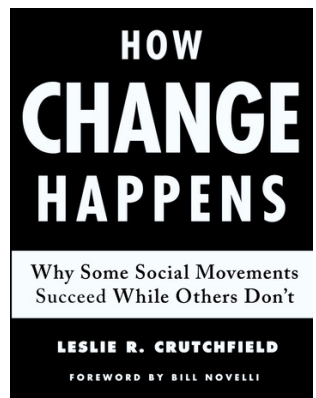




Highlights

ROLES OF BUSINESS



- Corporations and business leaders have often been drivers of social change. Businesses can provide management, marketing, and finance skills, and will often respond to pressure faster than government, which is slow and often ineffective.
- Businesses can develop new products and services that advance change.
- Businesses are subject to pressure by public exposure of their wrongdoing, and often they respond to prevent boycotts.
- Important roles business can play in how change happens:
 1. **Policy first movers.** While government policymaking is painstaking and time-consuming, private companies can make or switch policies more nimbly. Private-sector organizations can quickly respond to the interests of their various stakeholders, which include customers and investors along with employees and community members. By modifying or introducing policies that advance social and environmental goals in the workplace as well as investor and consumer levels, businesses have achieved both immediate and more far-reaching ripple effects.
 2. **Allies in advocacy and education.** Businesses can contribute a lot more than money to advance a cause. While trust in all U.S. institutions has declined, corporate leaders still maintain clout, connections, and know-how in areas like innovation, management, marketing, and finance that can be leveraged to influence change. All of these assets — financial and non-financial — can be deployed to impact causes.
 3. **Product innovators.** The items businesses manufacture and sell, the services delivered, and the practices employed can also contribute to how societal change happens. Business leaders see profit potential in making technical products and designing new services that can help advance social and environmental goals, from electric cars and interlock ignition breathalyzer devices, to “smart” guns and Nicorette™. They rarely are “silver bullets,” but they contribute to the larger ecosystem of change through their presence in the marketplace.
 4. **Hyper-exposed targets.** The traditional role of businesses as the “enemy” has come into sharper focus in recent decades as bolder, more sophisticated, and extreme activists take their crusades to the front lines of industry operations. These actions expose wrongdoing by companies ranging from coal-fueled utilities to whaling, forestry, and tobacco enterprises, and they amplify the message through all forms of media — print, television, and social. The result: greater awareness of certain industries' roles in fueling societal problems, with the aim to shame businesses into stopping or curtailing practices that harm people and the planet.

Creating a strong business and creating a better world are not conflicting goals — they are both essential ingredients for long-term success.

— William Ford Jr.,
Executive Chair, Ford Motor Company