HENRY F. DE SIO, JR.

"Changemaker Playbook offers a new game plan on leadership that everyone needs for a world in which change is the only constant."

—Pete Souza, #I New York Times best-selling author



CHANGEMAKER PLAYBOOK

The New Physics of Leadership in A World of Explosive Change

Praise for

CHANGEMAKER PLAYBOOK

"Changemaker Playbook is filled with stories of everyday changemakers who have the courage to act on their empathy. This book is a true blueprint for how we rise above our differences, come together, and fix real problems."

—Van Jones, CNN political contributor, host of

The Van Jones Show, and best-selling author

"The game has changed, so how do you respond? *Changemaker Playbook* offers a new game plan on leadership that everyone needs for a world in which change is the only constant."

—Pete Souza, #1 New York Times best-selling author, former director of the White House Photography Office, Chief Official White House Photographer for President Obama, and Official White House Photographer for President Reagan

"In today's world of rapid change, our systems and institutions must be continuously renewed and reinvented to ensure peace and sustainability. De Sio's examination of leading and emerging innovators in business, civil society, education, media, and other fields offers both a framework of understanding and invaluable advice to thrive in this world—and change it for the better."

—David Bornstein, best-selling author of *How to Change* the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas, New York Times columnist, and founder of Solutions Journalism

"This book confirms all I have seen during my years growing and nurturing a network of thousands of entrepreneurs: that empathy and courage, combined with proximity to urgent challenges, can fuel solutions that address persistent community needs. As we consider our rapidly changing world of work, it is more important than ever that we equip individuals and institutions to shift culture, policy, and resources to the changemakers who are making lives better in their communities. This book offers the models and stories we need to build an inclusive, flourishing future."

—Alfa Demmellash, co-founder and CEO at Rising Tide
 Capital, co-founder at Future Tide Partners, and World
 Economic Forum Young Global Leader

"Changemaker Playbook is a powerful new leadership framework and organizational model for working in teams of teams, powered by the idea that when we put ourselves in the shoes of those who are struggling or are on the margins—if we can genuinely understand the world from their perspective—then we can take care of business and solve society's most urgent and pressing issues."

—Jostein Solheim, former CEO of Ben & Jerry's and senior business executive at Unilever

"As a student leader, ours is the generation that will lead us into the new, complex, ever-changing game. *Changemaker Playbook* is an essential tool that every student leader needs to read in order to thrive and excel in this elaborate world we live in today."

 —Anna Counihan, student body vice president at University of Minnesota Duluth and student leader at the National Campus Leadership Council

"If ever there was a time in which strengthening our communities, supporting fresh leadership approaches, building trust, and taking care of each other were paramount, it's now. *Changemaker Playbook* shows us that when everyday people channel our creative energies to issues we are passionate about that affect our lives and then galvanize others who share those passions, we can truly make better communities for everyone."

—David Simas, former Assistant to the President in the Obama White House

"Changemaker Playbook is hopeful and bound to inspire. We all need a guiding light. And in this book Henry shows us so many guiding lights. For all of us who strive for the world as it should be, this is a roadmap for how we can make it happen."

—Johanna Maska, host of *Pod is a Woman* and CEO at The Global Situation Room, Inc.

"Because entrepreneurship is an important driver for improving livelihoods, *Changemaker Playbook* is the case for why every young person must be equipped and supported as a changemaker. Recognizing the power of young changemakers is the way forward for global development."

—Per Heggenes, CEO at IKEA Foundation

"Change and disruption define our present and foreseeable business operating climate. *Changemaker Playbook* offers readers a leadership-paradigm-shifting and thought-provoking way forward to achieving successful business engagement."

—Ertharin Cousin, former US Ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture, *Forbes*' The World's 100 Most Powerful Women, and *TIME*'s 100 Most Influential People in the World

"Henry De Sio understands and unearths an essential truth in his latest book: empowering everyone as a leader is what the modern workforce demands and what solving the big problems of the day requires. This is a must-read for anyone thinking about how to build flourishing teams and leaders."

 Eric Waldo, executive director at Michelle Obama's Reach Higher initiative

"De Sio reveals the new paradigm of leadership and teams that are operating, now, in front of our eyes. As he states with clarity, spirit, momentum, and affirmation, the new game of everyone a changemaker only requires of us that we abandon the former, hierarchical relationships of the past and build impact and innovation that taps into everyone's insight and potential."

—Torey Malatia, radio executive and co-creator of the long-running radio program *This American Life*

"Changemaker Playbook is the perfect guide for people who want to better their communities and themselves in today's fast-changing world by fostering empathy, following our creative passions, and solving problems through teamwork."

-Mimi Goss, author of What Is Your One Sentence?

"The pace of change in our world is accelerating, and regardless of your profession, you need to adjust your approach to face the challenges of this new terrain. Drawing on his transformative work leading a winning presidential campaign and later, working with remarkable social entrepreneurs across the globe, Henry De Sio shows us how everyday people can come together to do extraordinary things. *Changemaker Playbook* is the new leadership handbook for today's world."

—Chris Lu, political commentator and former Deputy Secretary of Labor "This is the story only Henry can tell. For more than a decade, he has been the global ambassador for changemakers, bringing this powerful framework to leaders across sectors all over the world. This is the definitive playbook for the new game of living in complexity, with a clear roadmap for preparing our children to thrive and for lifting each other above the challenges before us."

-Maja Frankel, secretary-general at Friends: United Against Bullying

"Audacious visions of BIGness, innovation, and 'change on steroids' have crowded my imagination since being exposed to the ideas in this book. In this fast-changing world, today's young people are trying to make sense of the new reality of careers and the economy. Henry gives original language and insights to help us understand a dramatic new world."

—Amy Morrill Bijeau, director of Experiential Education at American University

"Henry De Sio captures beautifully how technology has democratized leadership, and he provides a compelling framework for unleashing a generation of distributed change agents who can chart a new course for our society... from anywhere. His focus on empathy, agency, and innovating for the good of community will be core to rebuilding the American fabric and provides a key strategy for bridging the rural-urban divide our nation is facing."

—Matt Dunne, founder of the Center on Rural Innovation and former Googler

"Changemaker Playbook offers a clear picture and a powerful vision for commanding today's world. This is a must read for business and social-sector professionals advancing mission-led organizations."

—Christoffer Omberg, CEO and co-founder of Oslo Business Forum

"As the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Obama for America, Henry was an indispensable member of the management team that built the campaign from a startup in the earliest days into the impressive organization that was the foundation for our candidate's success. His management approach, interpersonal skills, and ability to think strategically were integral to the establishment of the foundation of the Obama White House. Having worked closely with Henry as he performed in both roles, I rate him as one of the best managers of a large organization I have had the privilege of observing an action."

—Peter Rouse, former Counselor to President Barack Obama and Chief White House Aide

CHANGEMAKER PLAYBOOK

The New Physics of Leadership in a World of Explosive Change

HENRY F. DE SIO, JR.



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To the strong, courageous women who have shaped me and the boys:

Grandma Giovanna modeled bravery, leaving her home to make America our home;

Grandma Fireman passed on to us the gift of our faith, and the opportunity for a life's walk with Christ;
My mother taught me to care about what others care about;

Farmor, Grandma Darlene, Aunt Mary, Mother Mary—always there for us;

And my wife, Sine, the blessing in my life.

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SECTION ONE

The New Game

CHAPTER ONE

The New Nature of Change

T'S GAME TIME.

Alone in the locker room, the football player is making his final preparations before heading out onto the field for the big game. He sits on the bench, head down. His breathing is deep and steady, evidence of his purposeful focus.

His is a sport for gladiators, requiring heavy protective gear. He begins to stir. His movements are slow and decisive. The muscular athlete lifts a large set of pads into the air with both hands and slides them over his head to fit them perfectly on his shoulders. Next, he grabs the oversized jersey with large numbers and lettering, and he pulls it over the bulky armor that frames him. Finally, he places a gleaming, thickly padded helmet onto his head and carefully fastens the strap across his chin. Now ready, the competitor gives the hard, protective shell a slap with both hands, leaps to his feet, and charges out of the locker room to join his teammates out on the field.

His stride is steady as he glides through the dark tunnel toward the light at the end. As he nears it, the hum of the fans grows. It escalates to a loud buzz. His pace quickens. Then he bursts through to the other side of the tunnel and he charges into the stadium at full speed. Spotting the other players, he quickly adjusts his course toward the deep green playing field that is awash in the warm glow of a bright spotlight. Adrenaline is pumping. He is excited.

This is the moment for which he has prepared his whole life.

Then, suddenly, his pace starts to slow. Something is clearly wrong. He grows more uncertain with every step. The steel spires that typically mark each end of the field are gone. In their places are two large nets. The brown pigskin football he knows—uniquely designed to cut through the air when thrown—has been replaced with a round ball that spins out a black-and-white pattern as it skips across the ground. The players warming up on the field are unfamiliar. They don't sport the same heavy gear he does. Instead, their hair flies freely in the wind, and they are wearing shorts and light clothing that supports their nimble movement.

The game has changed.

What do you do when the game for which you've prepared your whole life has changed? There are three likely reactions we can expect from our athlete in this situation. The first would be to freeze in place, watching in fear and confusion as this strange new activity plays out before him. It is a helpless feeling that will force him to the sidelines, where he will feel dismissed and irrelevant. This might cause great distress and perhaps trigger unruly behavior on the part of the young man. After all, he has been wired to play.

The second possibility is for the athlete to dig in stubbornly and double down on what he knows. This is a familiar response to uncertainty. In this particular instance, it might compel the football player to lower his helmet and run full steam into those unsuspecting players in the light clothing and flowing hair, tackling them to the ground. Of course, that would make him dangerous and worrisome, forcing a response from the others—and he would again be pushed to the sidelines.

The third option would be for the athlete to see differently and then respond differently. Playing in the new game must begin with a personal recalibration based on one's environment or circumstance. In this case, the daunting prospect is made less intimidating once it's understood that the new game demands new skills, the use of new muscles, new methods of training, and a fresh new outlook. The old rules don't apply, and a wholly different playbook is required.

The old playbook will not work in the new game.

It's a New Game

The game has changed for us, too. The world is undergoing a dramatic shift socially, politically, and culturally. The difference for us—unlike our athlete—is that making sense of the exact change before us isn't as clear. To fully comprehend the stark shift that has occurred, it is important to focus on one key element: the new nature of change. This isn't simply the kind of disruptive change made by advances in technology or innovations in science, though we do see those developments all around us. Nor is this about the increasing pace of change, a complaint that sounds increasingly cliché. Even King Henry VIII grumbled about the speed of change in his sixteenth-century world. Besides, isn't human-kind wired to evolve and change?

I am talking about a full societal transition to the era we are in, which is characterized by:

- rising individual agency;
- powerful technology at the fingertips of the many that was once available to the few; and
- the democratization of leadership.

Today, nearly everyone can make and lead change. The capacity for specialized problem solving and access to mass communications, once the domain of a few elite leaders, are now the domain of the many. This has enabled more of us to contribute and play more fully in virtually every aspect of society, and it is changing everything we know about change.

This new reality is a stark departure from our history. For millennia, society fiercely pursued the perfection of efficiency through organized repetition. Work was largely clustered by skills and specialties governed by hierarchies that were powered with a centuries-old, one-leader-at-a-time mindset. It was a way of working that reached its zenith with the advent of the assembly line in the early 1900s, and the rise of the white-collar professional in the mid-twentieth century, who enforced the bureaucratic systems meant to maintain order and production through repetitive processes.

That system is now breaking apart. The top-down knowledge and leadership structures that have long supported society's dogged pursuit of efficiency in repetition are collapsing. Technology and the organized movements that have torn down the walls of society have transformed the complexion and complexity of the global strategic landscape—flattening hierarchies, bulldozing silos, and dramatically lowering barriers to citizen participation as a result. Emerging from the debris is a world that is fast, fluid, and hybrid in nature.

Everyday citizens are embracing our newfound power. We no longer need an intermediary to facilitate our civic engagement. We have a plethora of online gateways to express our opinions and activism. A well-timed hashtag on Twitter helped fuel the rise of the grassroots #MeToo movement, which trained a spotlight on the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, particularly in the workplace. After another deadly school shooting, this time in Florida, the hashtag #NeverAgain became a rallying cry both online and in youth-led public protests across the country. Within weeks, student leaders organized a march numbering in the hundreds of thousands on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. After the separate murders of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery, thousands took to the streets for weeks behind #BlackLivesMatter, and a global movement was unleashed. Today, it is commonplace to see a crowdfunding page created by a neighbor generate funds to bring relief to those displaced by fire or natural disaster, or to see food and clothing assistance mobilized using Facebook.

Our *one-leader-at-a-time* past has given way to a present reality in which everyone has the potential to lead in every aspect of our lives. Any individual with a reliable Internet connection and a computer, or a smartphone, can become his or her own news organization or entertainment broadcaster, easily creating images and video footage for distribution on Instagram and YouTube. We all have printing presses at our fingertips, which means we can be pundits and content creators, and our ideas are available to the world as soon as we hit *Send*. Where we once had to scramble to find a public phone to dial 911 and have emergency personnel dispatched to a scene, citizens are now a vital and anticipated element of the first-responder equation.

We can home in on a possible health diagnosis in advance of a visit to the doctor. We can investigate investment options and then meet with our financial advisor without ever having to leave the confines of our home, thanks to the widespread adoption of videoconferencing technology. Our kids can be schooled on Zoom. The knowledge that is immediately available to the individual will only continue to empower us further as stewards of our own well-being.

We are the first generation to navigate this reordered world. When change was a game for a few leaders, keeping up with the speed of change was a challenge for the rest of us. Now, change is a game of the many, and that is causing explosive disruption on a constant basis. There have been major societal paradigm shifts before, but what we are experiencing now is the transition from hundreds of years of repetition-making, to an everyone-empowered present in which disruptive change is the only constant. Change is no longer linear and faster. It's explosive and omnidirectional, and it's bouncing off of all the other change forces ricocheting all around us.

This decisive shift is changing the face of the global strategic landscape. It has paved the way for new patterns in social organization and behavior that are disrupting whole industries. New technology and a new mindset have made it so that our private cars can be turned into taxis, our homes into hostels, and our things into commodities for trade or sale in the online marketplace. Powerful innovations have us at the precipice of self-driving cars on our roads and robots in our homes and at work.

Forty years ago, it would have been hard to imagine the possibilities of this transformed environment. We have the ability to command and create in once-unimaginable ways and to solve problems once deemed unsolvable.

The Old Playbook Won't Work in the New Game

The promise that comes with this transformed environment also brings complex societal and institutional challenges. The continuous generalized

disruption we are experiencing increasingly affects us all, and high-tech advances will result in millions of jobs lost. A White House report in 2016 anticipated that 83 percent of workers making less than \$20 an hour would come under pressure from artificial intelligence (AI) technology. Repetition-based jobs are becoming obsolete—for example, customer kiosks in fast-food restaurants require fewer service workers to take food orders, even as algorithmic-driven lending is transforming the financial services industry—while difficult-to-automate jobs with varying tasks and responsibilities are on the rise. Self-driving automation threatens the truck-driving profession, which would impact the truck-stop employees waiting tables or perched behind mini-mart registers, as well as faraway mechanics, warehouse workers, and auto-insurance providers.

Some are comfortable with disruptive change as the new societal norm, while others want to control it because they don't feel equipped for the amount of change we are experiencing. This is the social tension we feel between those who want to corral change versus those who want to drive into it—fear of change versus hope in change.

Just like our football player, old playbook in hand, many of us are struggling to find our way. This is contributing to an outbreak of unhappiness in a world where everyone must show up and step into our full agency and leadership. It opens a troubling, yet unnoticed, new divide in society requiring immediate attention. It isn't Red versus Blue or rich versus poor—it's the emerging gap between the few who have the mindset and capabilities to thrive in this fire hose of technology-driven social change, versus the many who don't. Our old systems and institutions that were built for repetition can't keep up. The rule-makers in our society can't respond quickly enough. The skills we were taught for an old game won't work in the new game.

Our iEverything world requires a new playbook.

If you are reading this book, then you want in. You want the new playbook because you are looking for an edge in this new game with its many dimensions—at work and at home—as a parent, as a neighbor, and as a citizen. The insights presented here will give you the corrective lens and the how-tos that you can apply to every aspect of your life so that you can clearly see and confidently play.

But this brings us to an obvious first question: If the new game is so radically different from the old game, why don't we all see it? The answer is that we see what we expect to see. We look for what we were trained to look for. Our mindsets, our behaviors, and the tools we work with are oriented to the world as it was. We have been prepared for an obsolete game using an old playbook that's been passed forward through the generations. Consider, too, that we see societal change as an evolutionary process, even if what is happening in the world right now is revolutionary. In general, there is an unconscious bias toward viewing the world through the old-game lens we have known.

By the end of this book, you'll see the new game as clearly as our football player came to see his. And like him, once you see the new game, you will know that you can't play it like the old game. You'll have to take off that heavy armor. You'll have to train differently, work new muscles, add new players, and bring your old teammates along with you into the new game using different development approaches. And yes, you'll need the new playbook.

This prospect might feel overwhelming at first. It was for me. I didn't quite see the new game. I stumbled upon it when the large sprawling organization I managed, the 2008 Obama presidential campaign, made the extraordinary transition from the traditionally hierarchical one-leader-at-a-time structure to something decisively different—what I called an everyone-leading-in-every-moment organizational system. We didn't plan it. It wasn't even all that evident to us as we went through it. And note that while it happened with a campaign as the backdrop, there isn't a political point to be made here. I made a discovery of new leader-ship that can benefit everyone.

Standing the two models side by side, I could see *one-leader-at-a-time* and *everyone-leading-in-every-moment* are polar opposites. The *one-leader-at-a-time* model was based on one person being big and everyone else being small in any given moment. The *everyone-leads* system relies on everyone being big and playing big, stepping into their full capacity. I like to say that in the new game, there is no room for small; everyone has to step into their BIGness.

In the old game, teams were fixed and organized around functional

roles. The new game is about fluid teams that form organically around a problem or opportunity. In the old hierarchical system, credibility was based on expertise and authoritative voice, while credibility in the new system is built on authenticity and the ability to learn and adapt. Where hard skills once trumped soft skills, empathy and collaborative teamwork are the new premium. You can't play the new *everyone-leads* game and the old *one-leader-at-a-time* game the same way. For us in the campaign, transitioning from the old game to the new game flipped the physics of leadership on its head; it was as if life for us had become opposite day, every day.

Initially, I thought I had a new management framework that business and other organizational executives needed. But as I reentered daily life after nearly two years in an all-absorbing presidential campaign and two-and-a-half years in the White House, I immediately recognized that the same shift that had occurred in my campaign ecosystem was happening in the world at large. Society had transitioned from a *one-leader-at-time* to an *everyone-leads* world.

It set me on a path to find the exemplars for playing in this new and very different game.

Meet the New-Game Players

I was introduced to some of the new-game players through Bill Drayton, whom I'd met in fall 2011. Widely credited with creating and defining the field of social entrepreneurship over the past four decades, Bill introduced the world to the notion that there is nothing more powerful than a bold new idea in the hands of an exceptional entrepreneur innovating for the good of all. The organization he founded, Ashoka Innovators for the Public, boasts a fellowship of the world's leading social entrepreneurs, with some 4,000 high-impact innovators having a presence in more than 100 countries. These are individuals who tirelessly devote their entrepreneurial capacities to creating broad systemic social change through their own initiatives and citizen-sector startup organizations. The social entrepreneurs affiliated with Ashoka are particularly impressive. A recent

survey showed 93 percent have altered market systems in at least one way after their election to the fellowship, and 74 percent have changed legislation or significantly influenced policy. Additionally, 90 percent have had their innovations replicated by independent groups.⁵

Bill says that over 1,300—roughly one in three—focus primarily on kids. I've gotten to know many of them and have become acquainted with their work advancing powerful ideas and approaches aimed at giving agency to a generation of confident contributors in the world. Jürgen Griesbeck created Street Football World in 2002, after the murder of a Columbian national soccer player in connection with the goal he unintentionally scored for the opposing United States team that eliminated his own team from the 1994 World Cup competition. Jürgen wanted to show another side of soccer as a transformative tool for communities. The organization he founded supports a network of community-based organizations that use football to enable and accelerate social change where they are, including developing safe spaces and pitches for youth play, reaching more than 2 million young people each year.⁶ Also in 2002, Arnoud Raskin launched Mobile School in Belgium to reintegrate street kids into mainstream society using his "box on wheels" with customizable educational games and content, behind a mission to help these young people value the qualities they exhibit of positivity, creativity, perseverance, and entrepreneurial skills.7

Many in the Ashoka Fellowship are also focused on issues of social inclusion and full economic citizenship in society. Sascha Haselmayer has brought new innovations to more than 130 global cities through Citymart, a platform for engaging the public in finding solutions to community challenges and exchanging innovation best practices. For example, in 2017, Citymart worked with the City of New Orleans to launch a contest to close the city's digital divide, sourcing an idea for an innovative creative arts program that lowers barriers to access for hard-to-reach teenagers by baking digital skill-building elements into arts and cultural pursuits they love. By taking procurement out of the back room and putting it in front of the public consciousness, Citymart is changing how cities solve increasingly complex and pressing challenges. In Sweden, recognizing the difficulties of integrating into a new country and building a

new life from scratch, Sofia Appelgren launched Mitt Liv to help immigrants find jobs in companies that would value their motivation, skills, and experience. Mitt Liv matches educated, entrepreneurial people with foreign backgrounds to mentors in leading companies in Sweden as a way to assist with work integration. And in the UK, Mark Johnson, a social entrepreneur and best-selling author who'd personally experienced crime, addiction, and homelessness, created User Voice to give people in prisons and on probation a voice in the system at the policy level—punishment should not silence. His flagship program, User Voice Councils, also enlists ex-offenders to lead the process for directly engaging decision makers on systemic issues that affect "users". This approach enables individual change, as people feel heard and get a stake in their rehabilitation and recovery journeys, while also reframing public perceptions about ex-offenders as contributors in society.

I immediately understood the important insights that could be gleaned from this community of big-time social-impact leaders. These are the new-game players!

I'll introduce you to some of these extraordinary individuals throughout this book. You'll also get to know Bill. But this is not a book about social entrepreneurship, and it's not a book about how you can become a social entrepreneur. This is a book about what we can learn from the world's most highly effective changemakers so that we can thrive and confidently command this new game as parents, professionals, and fully contributing citizens. We will also meet everyday changemakers outside of this special community of social entrepreneurs who show us how this new game is played—civic leaders, educators, parents, and young people from all over the world and all walks of life. Together, they offer powerful insights that I have gathered and fully explored.

You'll learn leadership lessons from a clown—no joke—a Brazilian man who comes across as an everyday guy until he puts on a red nose and joins the medical teams of terminally ill children in hospital operating rooms.

You'll witness unusual bravery in a North Carolina mom who laces up her running shoes and becomes a superhero in the lives of the young women she's helping to make their way in a complex world. You'll be taught how to fight by a petite Spanish woman with a big smile whom society once labeled "a victim." Her weapon of choice is radical inclusion, which she has used to build a global network of abuse survivors who are stepping out of the shadows of shame and into lives in the light.

Finally, you'll be schooled in empathy—one of the core foundational skills necessary for playing the new game—by a 6-month-old baby.

Along the way, we'll look to historical figures like Florence Nightingale for clues on how to play in the new game from those who were way ahead of their time. We will also explore how we can prepare youth to confidently play, not just because it is critical for their success, but because we learn best for ourselves when we teach the young people in our lives. You will see many examples of how I have practiced being a changemaker through my children.

In the end, you'll see the world in very different terms. It might initially intimidate you and cause you to freeze in your tracks, just like our football player, because it will challenge everything you understand about how to thrive in life. You will be forced to change. But I promise, it'll be okay. Changing your view of the world will change your view of yourself in the world. And then you'll have all the information you need to act.

Changemaker Playbook is quite simply the playbook for our new reality. We are already living in a world that requires every person to confront the new nature of change and to possess the skills to navigate and lead through it. As this twenty-first-century reality comes into sharper focus, you'll want the important principles revealed in this book to help you and the people you care about play the new game. Holding up a more precise lens on the world offers a better perspective to discern the qualities everyone must have to thrive and to fully contribute: an innovative mind, a service heart, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a collaborative outlook.

Let's play!