



Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA

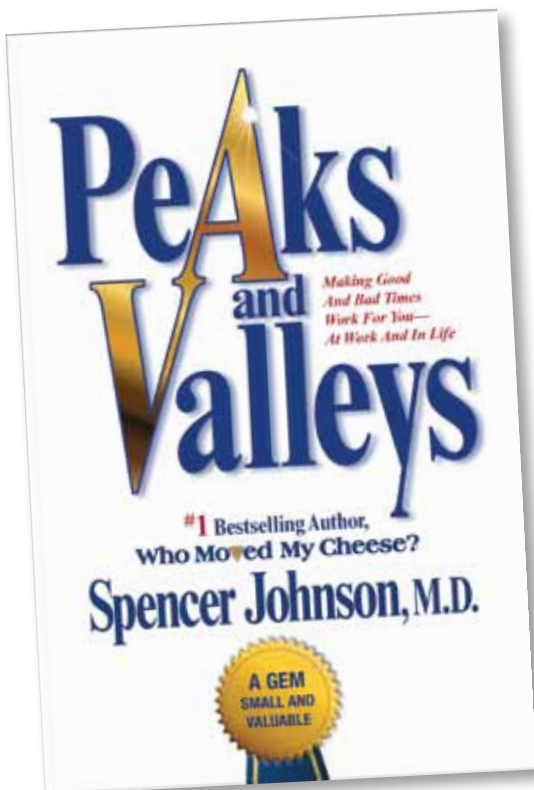
Through a combination of need and good luck, this issue looks at two books that present ways to overcome adversity from different perspectives. The past year has certainly presented us with adversity, and it's not clear as I prepare for my deadline whether the economy is on the mend, and whether higher education will survive intact or not. Regardless, these books should provide some insight and guidance to address what most facility managers need to know at some point in their career.

—TW

PEAKS AND VALLEYS: MAKING GOOD AND BAD TIMES WORK FOR YOU – AT WORK AND IN LIFE

By Spencer Johnson, Atria Books, New York, 2009. 101 pages, hardcover, \$19.95

Almost ten years ago I was told to read *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Dr.



Johnson. It was a beneficial book, and at least one APPA President referred to it directly several times. So when *Peaks*

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and *Valleys* became available I purchased and read it with high expectations. My expectations were met.

Peaks and Valleys is about the good times and the bad, getting from one peak to another without getting stuck in a valley (a funk). How does one get through a funk? There's no simple answer, and this book is not the Holy Grail. But it does provide a clear set of recommendations that will help most people. The principles described aren't new, just as the principles in *Who Moved My Cheese?* weren't new, but the story presenting the principles was compelling, just as it is here, and thus the message comes across quickly.

This book is not a long read. You can complete it in one sitting or put it down for a couple days, as I did, and pick it up easily. In parts of the book, each page seemed to contain stand-alone ideas that facilitated the quick pick-up after a break. I found the book helpful because it made me focus on opportunities.

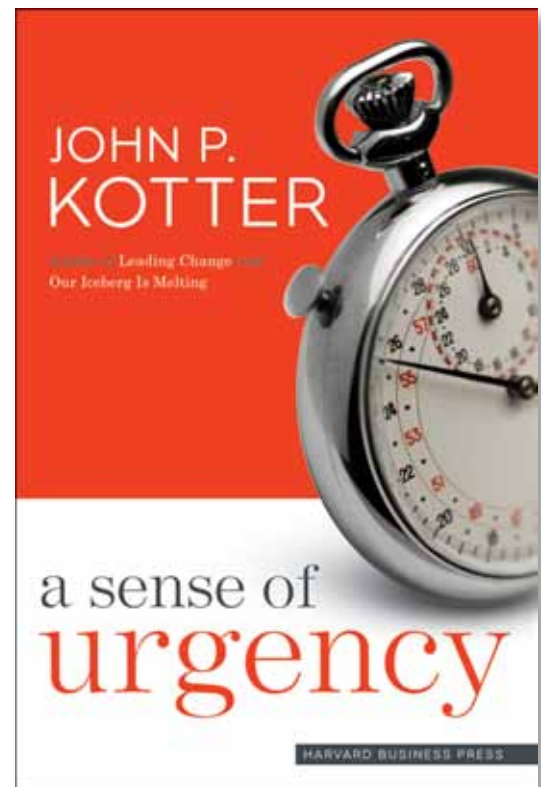
If we ever needed a quick read on getting through the tough times, we need it now with *Peaks and Valleys*.

A SENSE OF URGENCY

By John P. Kotter, Harvard Business Press, Boston, MA, 2008. 128 pages, hardcover, \$22

While motivated people may have the drive and determination to tackle the peaks and overcome the valleys, it takes a leader to create *A Sense of Urgency* in an organization. But while a leader often knows what needs to be done and can select good people, it is possible that external influences may evolve and create the need for change. Convincing those same good people to change can be difficult if not impossible.

Without change, the organization may fail or wither away and the fault will be



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placed on the leader who was unable to redirect the organization—not the people who resisted the change.

Kotter has said in other books (*Leading Change*, 1996) that those organizations that continue to succeed and thrive are the ones that identify the need to change, gather the appropriate forces to make the change, and then enact the change. As has been discussed in many management/leadership books, that change from the grassroots is the best way to create effective change; change from above usually doesn't stick.

Kotter's focus is about situations where change is needed, but the leaders lieutenants don't see the need to change or aren't comfortable making a change (their cheese got moved.) Or, in Kotter's terminology, their "iceberg" is melting.

SO WHAT'S A LEADER TO DO?

There are several scenarios reviewed. The lower level (often newer employees) might see the need to change, but are prevented from helping because their supervisor doesn't want to change. There's a need to shelter this good employee to avoid the potential for failure. Another scenario is of the lieutenants who are positioned to kill the change efforts from inside (one of the "Nonos"). The negative influences opposing change are overcome by creating *A Sense of Urgency*.

Urgency is not a one-time event, it can be a continuous or long-term need. The scenarios to make urgency continuous, or easier to start and maintain, are discussed and presented with several examples. The

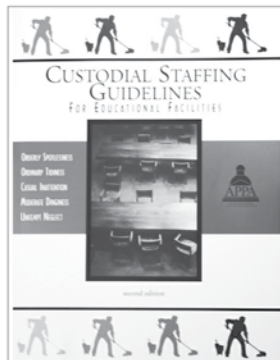
executive attempting to lead changes must not become complacent by thinking that urgency will be self-sustaining; it is very difficult to maintain urgency. Kotter describes how to maintain urgency and how to avoid losing it.

Due to recent experiences, I used *Urgency* almost while still reading the book. It works, but it's also important that I keep inspiring urgency among my staff. So instead of providing a relatively weak recommendation based on whether I agree with the author or

not, I can say that I have personally applied many of the techniques outlined in *Urgency* and, so far, recommend it as a success-leading tool. ☺

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