



AI Comeaux

AI Comeaux is a global authority on change from the inside-out, having lived, led and researched change from inside organizations large and small, disruptive and established, across numerous industries and countries. He's held senior leadership positions championing vast strategic changes, including an IPO, reaction to a hostile takeover, a take-private/leveraged buyout, digital transformations, two startups inside large corporations, massive globalization, two 40 percent layoffs, as well as three CEO transitions, countless other executive transitions, four nationwide strikes, and too many other changes to count.

After helping lead a terribly unsuccessful change effort in the late 90s, he set out to understand why some organizations' change efforts succeed, while most fail. This research and in-house experience make him one of the world's most forward thinkers on what leaders must do—and how they must think—to succeed at change. Now, after this 20-year journey, he's developed *Primed for Change*, a disruptive new project created to prepare leaders to steer their organizations successfully through change.

Perhaps his most salient change-oriented role was at the uber-disruptive startup Travelocity. AI joined Travelocity and its leadership team in 2000, just after the crash of the dot-com bubble, when the public—including employees—began to question whether e-commerce would even survive. Through his time there, he supported phenomenal company growth: Travelocity grew from the 33,000th largest US travel agency to the 5th largest in just five years. As a VP at Travelocity, he became a cultural crusader and successfully championed the company's Customer Service Guarantee, a product and service initiative that drove tremendous technical and process change across the company. He also re-shaped Travelocity's public image from its technology focus to one of travel expert.

Five years, three CEOs, and billions of dollars in sales growth later, AI moved from Travelocity to its parent company, Sabre, where as SVP of corporate communications he was asked to bring the culture he had championed inside Travelocity to its corporate family.

Amid rapid globalization—with Sabre’s employee population going from 85 percent US employees to 45 percent US-based in just three years—he partnered with technology innovators there to launch what’s believed to be the first-ever internal social network; SabreTown created business and social connections across the organization, lowering costs and shrinking the organization even as it grew. Al also helped maintain cultural balance at Sabre during a change in its ownership—from a publicly traded company to a private equity leveraged buyout.

In 2010 Al joined GE Aviation, where he brought crowdsourcing and other digital capabilities to this \$20 billion industrial business and helped launch its purpose: “We invent the future of flight, lift people up and bring them home safely.” Known for strong “imagination and courage,” he later helped GE create its Distributed Power business, a startup that combined three existing units and their people across multiple industry verticals and continents. Al started his career with five years in Washington, DC, where he was a Congressional staffer and consultant. But his professional journey truly ‘took off’ at American Airlines, where he managed internal and external labor communications and helped launch groundbreaking capabilities such as online travel, new airport technology, ticketless travel, as well as the **oneworld** global airline alliance. Later as a senior leader at American’s European division, he led communications during a strategic change program across nine countries.

After briefly serving as chief communications officer at financial services startup Elevate during its IPO, Al finally took the time to put his 20 years of change research to good use. In 2019, Al founded *Primed for Change*, a disruptive new project that helps prepare leaders to shepherd their organizations successfully through change. In 2020, Al released his debut book, *Change (the) Management: Why We as Leaders Must Change for the Change to Last*, which draws on his decades of experience in-seat as a change champion and senior executive, as well as his years of research on the subject of organizational change. With well-told stories that illustrate the need for this fundamentally new way of thinking, this book finally speaks straight to senior executives who need to re-think how they manage change...and even how they lead every day.

Al and his wife Katie have two daughters and live in Ft. Worth, TX, where he is deeply involved in his family, faith, and community.