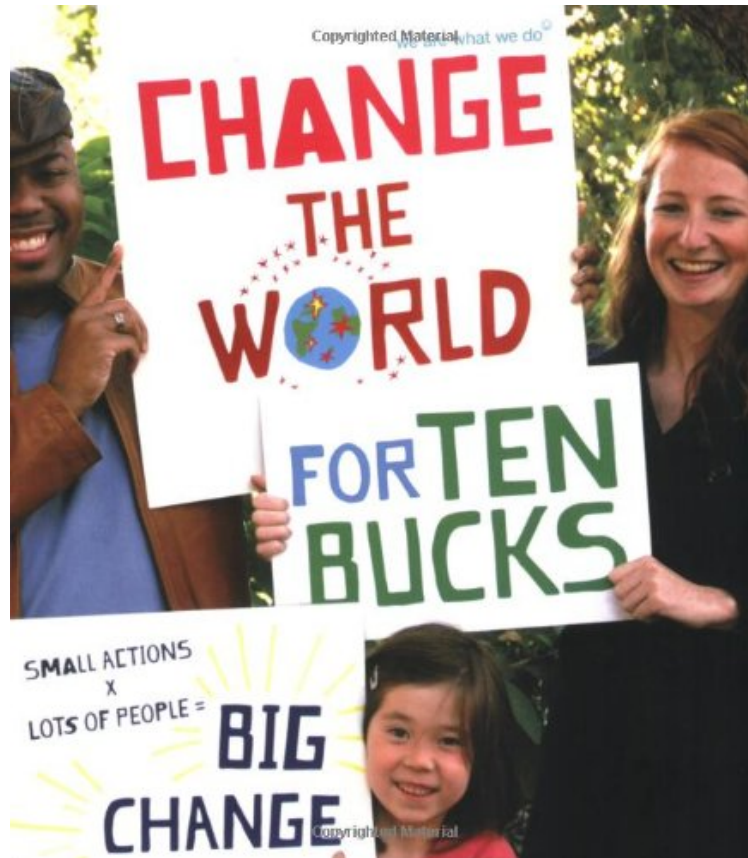


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## Change the World for Ten Bucks: small actions x lots of people = big change

*We Are What We Do*

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YOU LOVE. These pictures are way too suggestive for children. I love the book for myself, but not for children. I ordered 40 copies that I was going to distribute to my co-workers children for Take Your Child to Work Day. Thank god a colleague saw the pictures in Action 08, otherwise I might be out of a job today.

Change the World for Ten Bucks: small actions x lots of people = big change

.com Book Description: In 2004 a London-based community organization called We Are What We Do launched with the publication of a little book with a big idea: 50 simple actions to make the world a better place. Since then Change the World for Ten Bucks has spawned a movement resulting in multiple editions and sales of over one million copies internationally. At last here's the U.S. edition. Change the World for Ten Bucks delights and engages at every turn. It includes a postcard to send to someone who inspires you two pages stuck together (don't throw your gum in the street!) tear-out tabs to make introductions to the neighbors and dozens of other creative prompts for positive change. An Interview with We Are What We Do, the Creators of Change the World for Ten Bucks What is We Are What We Do and what does it aim to do? We Are What We Do is a global social change movement that aims to inspire people to use simple everyday actions to make a difference to problems which affect us all--for example: climate change, poverty, social exclusion, crime, and inequality. We bring our vision to life by creating products, campaigns, and initiatives which make these problems and their solutions accessible and engaging to people like us who care about the problems we see on the news but aren't quite sure how or where to start to impact them or whether our little bit really will make a difference. Change the World for Ten Bucks was our very first project and it aims to give people a really simple starting point for making a difference. How did you come up with the 50 actions in the book? We started with the question, "what simple action would you ask a million people to do to change the world." We put a little ad in the paper and sent emails to everybody we could think of. In the end we had nearly 4,000 suggestions from people all over the world. The action that was most frequently suggested was "smile." How did you produce such a creative book out of a list of 4,000 actions? We always knew that creativity was the key--the actions themselves while hugely important and worthwhile--were not exactly front page news! So we wrote to a small group of people that we knew in the advertising industry. They were all really senior and extremely sought after and we were pretty amazed when they all agreed to help us. The idea was to treat each action as though it were an advertisement for a big brand in a glossy magazine rather than a dreary public service announcement which they could very easily have been. After the creative group had come up with the 50 treatments, we invited illustrators, graphic designers, animators and photographers to take the treatments and bring them to life. In the end more than 130 people contributed to the book and every one of them donated their time. It was an amazing and really humbling experience. But how did you get from 4,000 to 50? The actions all had to pass a test. They had to be things which pretty much everyone could do, pretty much everyday regardless of their age, ability, race, gender, beliefs, sexuality, etc. They had to be a good mix of environmental, social and personal actions and then it was just down to the quality of the ideas we came up with to bring them to life. Which is your favorite action in the book? Spend time with someone from a different generation--I love the action and I love the photo which is of Poppy Ashton, whose dad, Tim, was one of the lead creatives on the project and their next door neighbor Robert. Tim told me the other day that Robert still wears his T-shirt when he's gardening. If you were starting out, what is the first small action you'd try? Turn the tap off when you clean your teeth. It's the action which people tell us time and time again that once they start doing it, they never stop. And we know that when you take on one new behavior and continue doing it, you are more likely to take on other related behaviors. And lets be honest, it's a bit of a no-brainer! Are there any actions not in the book that you wish you'd included? I would have liked to include "put yourself in somebody else's shoes" as a way of encouraging people to be more empathetic. Bit it was a little too abstract for the book. What else does We Are What We Do do? Well the book is just the tip of the iceberg. We do products to bring the actions to life and make it easier and more compelling for people to do them for example we collaborated with British handbag designer Anya Hindmarch to create the "I'm not a plastic bag" bag which was very successful in 2007 and has played an important part in changing people's behavior around plastic bag usage. We do a lot of education work both in schools and with companies--last year we produced a new book called Teach Your Granny to Text Other Ways to Change the World which has gone to every school in England. How big is the team? At the moment there's seven of us working full-time and we have a couple of people who work part-time. We like being a small team and we really like working collaboratively to achieve things we could never dream of achieving on our own. What inspires you to keep going? I often describe the book as like dropping a pebble in a pond. It made a big splash and got lots of press coverage but it isn't actually changing the world. What is changing the world--little by little--are the thousands of people who have taken on the simple actions as part of their daily lives and then, in many, many case, have found ways of bringing the We Are What We Do ethos to life and inspiring others in new and imaginative ways. For example, a school teacher in Kampala in Uganda uses what he describes as "the spirit of our idea" to talk to people in his community about the practice of bigamy which is contributing to the spread of HIV and AIDS; an employee of the office worker in the UK has been inspired by the action "recycle your spectacles" and has collected more than 3,500 pairs of spectacles from colleagues in 94 offices and sent them off to charities which re-

purpose them for people in need in developing countries. We have many, many examples of stories like this as well as encouraging emails from people just telling us to keep going and we're on the right track. I find that really inspiring. Do you really think that small actions will change the world? Yes I do, for three reasons. Firstly small actions connect us to big issues. So for example, every time I say no to a plastic bag I am consciously connecting with the problems we are facing with the environment. I shop most days which means that most days, I think about climate change. Secondly, if enough people do these actions--and obviously we're talking about millions and millions of people--then we will start to make a real difference to the problem. In the US alone, 100 billion plastic bags are used every year and most of them end up in landfill after a single use where they can take up to 500 years to decay so it is a problem that requires all of us to play our part. And thirdly--and perhaps most importantly--every time we do one of these actions we contribute to what I would describe as the "public mood"--the thing that governments and business leaders respond to. They want our votes and they want our custom. They will do what we en masse demand. But "en masse" only happens if each of us plays our part and that is through the actions we take every day. What advice do you have for someone who would like to pursue their wildest dreams but is afraid of taking the leap? Well in my case, I just got to a point where I was so unhappy with what I was doing and the direction my life was going in that it was scarier not to take the leap than to take it (I spent 10 years working in public relations and communications before quitting my job to join David Robinson and start We Are What We Do) so I think I was kind of lucky--lucky that I was so unhappy that there wasn't an alternative and lucky that it worked out. If you're not at that point of unhappiness, then I'd say give it a lot of thought, talk to some people whose opinions you value, find out as much as you can about exactly what your dream involves and by the time you've done all that you'll either be so excited that you'll be able to manage your fear, or you won't in which case, it's probably a good sign that you shouldn't leap. Oh and just because you take that leap and pursue your dreams, it doesn't mean that life is without its frustrations and disappointments. It still is! But it does mean that they're easier to bear! Do people around the world embrace the idea of change--especially when there is so much turmoil in so many places? You're right--people everywhere have a huge amount to contend with right now but I think that's why the time is right for encouraging people to take some very small, very practical actions which could have a significant impact on the problems we're facing and which could help to minimize the distress of those who are in greater difficulty than we are. It can be a real comfort to know that even though things are tough, you are making a small, useful contribution to making them better. That has definitely been my experience--in fact at times it has been my saving grace. What do you dream the world to be at the end of making all these changes? A kinder, fairer, safer place. About the Author We Are What We Do is a nonprofit organization in London with the goal of inspiring people to use their everyday actions to change the world. They have offices in Australia, Canada, and Germany.