"Who Moved My Cheese," a parable by Spencer Johnson, tells the story of two people, Hem and Haw, and two mice, Sniff and Scurry. All of them have the same goal: they hope to find their cheese, a symbol of whatever it is in life one must have, whether it be money, success or love. The story tells what happens when the characters' cheese is suddenly taken from them.

When one of the characters finds his cheese, he shares with readers the lessons he learns in the process. The biggest lesson of all: When you embrace change and let go of old cheese, you're immediately on the path to finding some that is new and even tastier.

Dwight Campbell, a senior information technology consultant for Information Engineering Services in Alexandra, Va., says he used to resist change in the workplace. "I was stable and I liked the status quo," he says.

But when his boss suggested that all employees read "Who Moved My Cheese," it opened Campbell up to a whole new way of thinking. "I think he was trying to prepare us for the coming change within our organization," Campbell says.

If that was his boss' intention, it worked. "I have found 'Who Moved My Cheese' to be an excellent motivational book," Campbell says. "At one point in my life or another, I have been able to relate to each one of the characters in the book."

Indeed each character approaches change differently. When the two mice discover that their cheese is missing, they immediately set off to find new cheese. They don't sulk, they don't complain; they just cut their losses and set off for greener pastures.

But the characters of Hem and Haw act as people often do. For a few days, they return to the spot where they last saw the cheese, hoping it will miraculously reappear. Neither one is happy, but each is too afraid to delve into unfamiliar territory. That fear is something unhappy employees can often relate to when they contemplate searching for a new job.

One of the characters eventually stops stalling and decides to venture through the maze of life to find new cheese. And after a few harrowing experiences, he does. The other character remains stuck, waiting for his cheese to return and failing to realize that it never will.

Andrea Smith, an online advertising executive who recently started a new job at NationalGeographic.com in Washington, D.C., says the book helped her to embrace the decision to move on to a new career challenge. "Things change almost daily -- especially in the dot-com world," she says. "Everyone can identify with probably one of the four characters in the book." Smith, in searching for and choosing a new job, chose to identify with the fearless mice.

Ayoka Campbell, an attorney-advisor for a government agency and no relation to Dwight Campbell, says the book changed her. "It gave me a positive view of life and offered the simplistic theory that you can make the best out of work, your relationships and any hard knocks in life," she says.

So impressed was Ayoka Campbell with the book that she convinced several of her colleagues to read it. While many see the book as being motivation to search for a new job, she says she saw in it the lesson that a little bit of change in the workplace may be the best thing for your career once you stop resisting it. Reorganizations, often viewed by employees with dread and disgust, can actually catapult one's career if he or she stops fighting the change.

"It showed how you need to recognize when things are changing and that if you adapt to these changes instead of 'hemming and hawing' about them, you could make the new situations work in your favor," she says.
While Dwight Campbell isn't ready to say he looks forward to change, he says the book has helped him to expect it.

"Change can be hard," he says. "However, it is necessary. More importantly, change is inevitable."