



THRIVING IN THE MIDST CHANGE

Some people cling desperately to the past. They hang on to what's familiar, snuggling ever deeper into their comfortable routines to avoid the chilling thought that they might have to change. Someone said, "No organization is so screwed up that somebody doesn't like it as it is." Change always means giving up something, and the greater the personal sacrifice, the more you feel like dragging your feet.

Another reason why people defend the old way of doing things is to maintain personal stability or feel more in control. They battle against change out of fear of the future, not because of love for the past. If uncertainty and ambiguity eat on your nerves, you can't get very pumped up about "progress." The more you dislike unpredictability, the more you're likely to protect the status quo.

A third group of people resists change as a way of getting even. They play "punish the organization" in retaliation for changes they don't like. We're talking about plain old revenge. And the fascinating thing is to watch how people are willing to damage themselves just to get back at the organization.

Finally, some change resisters are well-intentioned people who think they see their outfit about to make a mistake, and have the courage to try and stop it. They fight change because they (1) have the organization's best interests at heart, and (2) have enough nerve to take a stand. But frankly, these people with good intentions often happen to be wrong. In trying to save the organization, they shoot it in the foot.

When the winds of change hit your organization, here's the bottom line: Resisting does more harm than good. **To begin with, you could get nailed for being oppositional – someone may accuse you of causing trouble, getting in the way of progress. That easily damages your career.**

Second, resisting change takes effort, and you can find more productive ways to spend your energy.

Besides, you're probably going to lose the battle anyway. Even if you do win a skirmish now and then, you're going to lose the war.

Instead of trying to hang on to the past, grab hold of the future.

~~ MYTH ~~

THIS WILL GO AWAY

"Oh, brother, here we go again. Somebody in top management must have gotten bored and decided to stir things up."

"It will all blow over, though. It's just a matter of time ... this too shall pass."

"I'll hunker down and wait this out. Before long we'll be back to business as usual."

~~ REALITY ~~

CHANGE IS HERE TO STAY

The odds are ... it will never be the same again in the organization. Things may settle back down as time goes by, but they will settle down differently. When these changes are finally made ... finished ... things will be changed.

Got it?

The only thing you can count on to go away is "the way things were before they started." Sure, it is possible that life will level out again and you will see less tumult.



Time may clear up some confusion. Things might run more smoothly.

But chances are bigger changes will come along before these are put to bed. There really may not be much let up in sight. If this were a game of basketball, change would have us all under a full court press.

This isn't something management stirred up for the heck of it – what you are seeing are reactions to changes in the outside world. The organization is simply trying to cope. It does not really have much of a choice. Often the alternatives are to adjust (change), or die.

Check it out. Many organizations are not adapting fast enough. Some are critically wounded while others are already dead and gone.

Change, on the other hand, has eternal life.

~~ MYTH ~~

I CAN JUST KEEP ON DOING MY JOB LIKE I HAVE BEEN.

"I don't think my job will be affected by all the changes."

"We've been doing it this way for years and it seems to be working. I don't see any reason why I should change the way I'm doing things."

"Why fix something that isn't broken?"

~~ REALITY ~~

**IF THE ORGANIZATION IS CHANGING,
YOU PROBABLY NEED TO BE CHANGING, TOO.**

Pay very close attention to what is going on around you – if the organization is changing at a faster rate than you are, you could be headed for trouble.

Examine your work routines, your modus operandi, and see if you are out of step with the new beat in the organization. During times like these, the cadence changes. Work needs to move at a faster tempo. Problems can hit in a hurry and easily outrun you.

You probably should think of the next several months as one sustained "two-minute drill."

If you see changes in the culture, priorities, management style or work pace in the organization, take it as hard evidence that you probably need to start doing some things differently yourself. You cannot rely on the old tried-and-true approach during periods of major transition and change.

~~ MYTH ~~

MANAGEMENT DOESN'T CARE ABOUT US.

"The big shots have forgotten about the average employee. We are being sold down the river."

"They are insensitive and out of touch with the rest of the organization."

"It isn't fair. You think of all the years people have worked hard for this outfit, and this is the thanks they get."

~~ REALITY ~~

MANAGEMENT HAS TO MAKE SOME TOUGH DECISIONS.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP EVERYONE HAPPY.

Times like these put many new stresses and demands on everybody in the organization. Upper management has to make some hard calls and take unpopular steps. It isn't easy. It isn't fun. And it isn't proof that higher management is mean or insensitive.

Watching an organization go through major transition and change is sort of like watching people in a card game. Some win, some lose and some break even. Just like the card dealer, management must "work for the greater good" of the organization, realizing that in the process some people are hit harder than others.

If you were the person in charge, you would face the same dilemma.

It is easy to sit back and criticize higher management's way of doing things. Also, it is easy to accuse management of not caring about people. When you don't like what is happening, the natural tendency is to look for someone to blame.

Instead of pointing the finger at upper management, consider the possibility that they are only doing what they have to do. It is very common to care deeply for others and still not be in a position to give them everything they want.

~~ MYTH ~~

I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

"All these changes are causing chaos and confusion. Why don't they get things straightened out?"

"Well, all these changes weren't my idea. It is not my responsibility to make them work."



"There's nothing I can do anyhow."

~~ REALITY ~~

**YOU'RE EITHER PART OF THE SOLUTION
OR PART OF THE PROBLEM.**

During times like these, people often feel like a victim of circumstances which removes power from them. They feel helpless, vulnerable and unable to have a significant influence on the work situation.

It is understandable why you might feel that way. But you should test the validity of those feelings. You are not helpless and you will make a difference in one way or another.

You and everybody else are in a position to have a positive impact. You also have a responsibility to wield that favorable influence. Broad-based, grassroots support of the changes is very important.

Don't act helpless. Test the limits of your personal effectiveness.

You may surprise yourself with how much you can accomplish and the contribution you can make toward helping the organization through the changes.

~~ MYTH ~~

THE CHANGES WEREN'T REALLY NECESSARY.

"The organization was doing just fine. This was a bad call by top management."

"We would have been a lot better off without all these changes."

"Why can't they leave well enough alone? I just don't get it."

~~ REALITY ~~

**WHAT'S NECESSARY NOW IS TO MAKE THE
CHANGES WORK.**

John Gardner, author and founder of Common Cause, said, "Most ailing organizations have developed a functional blindness to their own defects. They are not suffering because they cannot solve their problems, but because they cannot see their problems." Could you be missing something?

At any rate, nothing is gained by continuing to second-guess the approach that the organization is taking. Instead of arguing over whether it was the right

decision, now that the decision has been made, it is everyone's job to make it right.

The organization desperately needs each person's support. Major change efforts almost always destabilize and organization and temporarily make it more vulnerable. The entire work force needs to rally, close ranks and defend the organization that provides the paycheck on a regular basis.

Everybody loses if people keep questioning the wisdom of the strategy and the organization begins to splinter. What's done is done. The job now is to make it a successful strategy.

The organization does not need any "Monday morning quarterbacks" ... it needs team players.

BECOMING A CHANGE AGENT

CONTROL YOUR ATTITUDE

It is understandable that a person would be upset or disappointed about certain aspects of the changes. But how long should you let these feelings go on? Two weeks? Six months? A year? Are you going to hold a grudge for ten years?

W. Clement Stone, the president of Combined Insurance and the author of numerous books, said, "There is very little difference in people. But that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative."

You can concentrate on what's going wrong, and become preoccupied with things that are aggravating and upsetting. Or you can be a "change agent" and throw your energies at correcting problems. So get caught up in the new directions of the organization. Seize this chance to learn and grow. Choose – deliberately – to be positive, optimistic, enthusiastic. You will benefit far more than the organization will.

TAKE SOME OWNERSHIP OF THE CHANGES

In today's world, business as usual is business as unusual. That is the norm, not the exception. Change has become the new status quo.

Consider a central part of your job description to be personal responsibility for managing change. That's now a core element of every job in the organization.

Complaining, however, is not the same as contributing. If you wish to flag a problem, also be prepared to



suggest workable solutions. Have the guts to report problems to higher management, but don't just go around griping.

This is your organization that is changing. If the changes run into problems, you as a paid employee or the organization are suppose to help fix things. That is the best way to protect your paycheck and your career.

CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES CAREFULLY

During the months ahead you will be faced constantly with a choice of running against the wind or riding the wind.

Ride it.

Circumstances can be confusing, frustrating, sometimes scary and depressing. It is enough to bring on a sour mood and make you feel like fighting against the changes. But that can only bring you a bad reputation and burnout.

Don't fight losing battles. Concentrate on keeping the wind at your back.

DON'T LET YOUR STRENGTHS BECOME YOUR WEAKNESSES

The abilities, work habits or loyalties that served you well in times past may outlive their usefulness. The winds of change reshape circumstances and present different problems. New personalities come into the picture. Even if your job title and duties remain the same, the situation calls for something new out of you.

Be sure to shift your job's priorities to match the changes in organizational priorities. Align yourself with any changes in values and culture. Adjust your approach to fit the personality and management style of new leaders. Get busy developing new competencies if your skills become outdated. Tom Peters writes, "Only those who constantly retool themselves stand a chance of staying employed in the years ahead."

Be alert. Catch on. Refocus rapidly.

Examine your job and identify the critical few, make-or-break factors important for job success. Chances are something there has changed.

Continuing to focus on "doing what you do best" might be one of the worst things you could do.

KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR

You have heard the line: "They said cheer up, things could get worse. So I cheered up and, sure enough, things got worse." An upbeat attitude and good sense of humor won't keep you from getting hit by trouble, but they will help you handle it if you do get hit.

For years Reader's Digest has been saying it

"Laughter is the best medicine." Psychological and medical research solidly confirms this – humor is good therapy. It helps you keep things in perspective, and that's important right now.

Change usually offers plenty of reasons to be upset, worried and confused. You can laugh at the craziness of it all, or you could choose to cry. Either one would be an understandable emotional reaction to the situation. Crying can be cleansing, but humor is healing. So choose laughter. It also helps keep you from blowing all the aggravations out of proportion.

BE TOLERANT OF MANAGEMENT MISTAKES

"Zero defects" is an alien concept in managing transition and change. If the organization waited until the changes could be made perfectly, they would never be made at all.

Of course, what looks to you like a mistake may be precisely the right move management should make. Or the best move under the circumstances. So when you see higher management do something that looks wrong to you, remember it might look right if you knew more or if you sat where they sit.

What looks like a dumb move may be the lesser evil. They might simply be doing what they have to do. In other words, they may be boxed in by higher orders, or by the situation itself. Your boss could be boiling inside, but feel compelled to defend the actions of the organization. Plus, the organization itself may not have any appealing options.

Almost always there are some trade-offs involved. And particularly when you are the victim of one of those trade-offs, it easily looks like a management mistake. Give bosses the benefit of the doubt. Put yourself in their shoes. Doesn't it make sense that they are trying to do their best?



PRACTICE GOOD STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Adjusting to new circumstances is a drain on your psychological energy. Even if the changes don't require more physical effort, there is always more emotional labor involved. When the changes hit too fast, too hard or go on too long, you suffer emotional fatigue. Or to put it in everyday language – you hit burnout.

So it makes sense now for you to work on managing your personal stress load. Keeping your sense of humor and controlling your attitude are steps in the right direction, but you also need to take care of yourself physically.

Vigorous activity offers tension release and helps keep you healthy. Good exercise makes you feel better mentally as well as physically. You might run, swim, mump rope, walk, do aerobics or work out at a health club. Any kind of regular, sustained exercise will do, assuming you don't have any special health problems.

Bookstores and your local library also have books or cassette tapes on relaxation training and stress management.

Finally, don't believe a lot of the gossip you hear. The rumor mill churns out all kinds of stories about disturbing events that will never come to pass. You can waste mental energy worrying about things everyone is talking about, but that have no basis in fact. As Mary Crowley said, "Worry is misuse of the imagination." Instead of fretting about what might go wrong, invest your imagination in doing your job well.

SUPPORT HIGHER MANAGEMENT

Upper management catches a lot of criticism during times of transition and change. Those people

are probably not having a very good time. They desperately need your help and support.

Soldiers will tell you it is hard to be a hero during peace time. It is in the heat of combat that one wins medals and rises in rank rapidly. The same thing is true in conducting our business – when things are quiet, peaceful and the organization is not being tested, there is less of a chance for valor. But major change changes that.

Now you have a chance to show what you're made of, to be loyal and committed. You can make your mark because there's a real need for good soldiers to protect the organization.

INVEST IN THE FUTURE

INSTEAD OF TRYING TO REDESIGN THE PAST

The best way to predict the future is to invent it. This suggests that the best way to know what's coming is to put yourself in charge of creating the situation you want.

Be purposeful. Look at what's needed now, and set about doing it. Action works like a powerful drug to relieve feelings of fear, helplessness, anger, uncertainty or depression. Mobilize yourself, because you will be the primary architect of your future.

One of the keys to being successful in your efforts is to anticipate. Accept the past, focus on the future, and anticipate. Consider what is coming, what needs to happen and how you can rise to the occasion.

Stay loose. Remain flexible. Be light on your feet. Instead of changing with the times, make a habit of changing just a little ahead of the times.

Need Help? Have a Question?

Call Greg's "Wonder Woman" assistant Christal. She will assist you in with booking information or answering your questions. Call her at 304.400.4703

**Find Your
Passion
Chase Your
Dreams**