



## How We View Change

We need not look far to find articles and presentations that show us, beyond a doubt, that companies need to change with the times to remain viable. In fact, this has always been true, and now the message seems louder and far more prevalent. Unless we are willing to fully embrace change in virtually every aspect of the arena in which we compete, the verdict seems clear: we cannot sustain success.

Yet, when we talk to leaders and CEOs about what that change process looks like, we do not find agreement very often. We have as many ideas of what the “new” approach will be as we have people to offer them.

To suggest that current innovative initiatives about reinventing our companies are misguided is simply not true. But those initiatives are based on our view of the history of whatever industry we represent. Let’s take a look at what we are likely to decide from historical analysis.

We have typically viewed whatever changes were needed from a place of stability and success. In fact, the change we thought we needed was designed to protect that stability and success. For example, the banks that shifted their entire customer-facing approach to universal banking did not do so because they were facing failure or the inability to compete. Rather, one of the reasons for that change initiative came from market analysis and customer input.

From the perspective of our historical view of organizational change, we saw change as a bruise that needed a bandage to prevent

infection. We did not focus on the bigger picture of the whole body’s health as much as we focused on the bruise. We faced change to minimize danger and reduce worry.

It seems that today’s requirement or demand for organizational change is very different from that bandage approach. Young people entering the workforce today often represent a very different view about what our company should look like, what it should say it is all about, and how it needs to make those promises real for the customer.

A middle manager shared with us this illustration recently. He had been charged by his CEO to complete a study and be prepared to present it to him the next week. Our manager had gone into the calendar of the CEO to reserve the time for his presentation. He was shocked to see that the newest member of his staff had reserved time on the CEO’s schedule for a meeting. Typically, finding availability on the CEO’s schedule was usually challenging, and appointments were often pushed out for weeks, and even months. So, when our manager approached his new staff member about her reservation on the big boss’ schedule she simply explained, *“I saw that you had time approved with the boss, so I piggy-backed on your meeting. I have a number of questions for the CEO that were not adequately explained during my orientation, so I figured I’d ask the boss to clarify them for me.”*

That kind of behavior represents a whole new way to look at change. The technical capability of that new employee is a given to her. She has

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had that capability all her life. She takes it for granted because she has never been without it. It is likely that her manager's technical capability was learned as an adult. He needed to learn it to be a viable asset to the company. Her ability to use technology is a function of a much larger, systematic approach, while his was the result of the bandage he had applied to himself to remain viable.

So, the way we look at change is perhaps more important than anything else when we are charged with the best ways to improve our organization. What used to be the platform of stability and success from which we decided what changes were needed in our company is being replaced. Changes in society now are

more rapid and numerous than ever before. Our IT clients tell us that their dilemma is that the process by which new technology gets fully functional takes too long, and the result is that the new technology isn't the latest or best by the time it is fully installed. They need to be thinking past the bandage to whatever worries haven't fully reared their heads yet. Too often their challenge is selling that idea to their most senior leaders.

The young woman in our story is the future for her company. In her company, full access to everyone in the company is a given. Going to the best source of information is a natural, normal behavior. Her ability to see her whole company from the broadest, world-wide perspective is the way she'll view change.

