

## “It doesn't matter where you are.....”

*"It doesn't matter where you are it just matters which way you are facing",* another one of those anonymous sayings that if you think about, it makes a lot of sense. However facing the right way is no help if you don't start walking! The past does not equal the future but this is the reality in many businesses and a business equipped to deal with the world as it used to be is likely to suffer the same fate as the dinosaurs. Walking in the business sense requires change and Managing Change is as much a part of business life as minding the shop (assuming you want to even survive let alone thrive).



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Whether we like it or not the economic landscape we are now in is likely to be the world going forward. A long shallow slope is probably the shape of any recovery rather than the dramatic roller coaster of boom and bust we've seen in the past.. Whatever the shape of any macro economic recovery if you are waiting for a market solution to carry you forward I'd suggest you'll have a long wait. Many who have surfed the market waves in the past will now have to swim to get anywhere! (to mix another metaphor). Strategy is about making sure you are facing in the right direction (Leadership) but walking forward is about managing change (Management).

Change is something that all managers need to be able to deliver and it's perhaps one of the more difficult things to achieve. Changing process is easy but it's people that run processes in the main and managing people to effect change is not as straightforward. It doesn't matter how much you want or need to develop, change only goes as fast as the people that you are trying to manage can cope with and it's success is about what **they Can and Will do to effect it**. Very few people instinctively embrace change and most are wary if not downright uneasy about it. Recognising that fact is fundamental to being able to get a group of people to think about and do things differently, even if the new way is demonstrably for the better. Often individuals will not articulate that sceptical or scared view but will nod politely, they may even make some token efforts but when push comes to

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shove, people revert to what they know and what they have been able to deal with, albeit painfully, in the past. Consider your own personal resistance to change, how many New Year resolutions do you keep? Personal change requires us to drop familiar behaviours and adopt new ones, organisational change is that magnified by the number of participants.

Dealing with and this resistance often frustrates managers, they see such resistance as negative and destructive when in fact it is the natural 'default' reaction. Most people need time to think things through and much of what they feel is conditioned by their previous experience. If they have been involved in poorly managed and unsuccessful change programs that have been abandoned over time they will naturally expect the next initiative to be a similar waste of their time and energy. Their assessment is based on their perception of reality and whether you like it or not their reality is as far as they are concerned the truth. If I had £1 for every time I'd heard that "*we are doing this the best it can be done*" or words to that effect..... but even if people accept the current situation does not deliver what they want (good customer service, efficient production etc etc) they still resist change. The first reaction is always "*how does it affect ME*" and unsubstantiated rumours only make people assume the worst, even more destructive.... and I've seen it done... is to set out at the beginning how success will enable us to sack a few of the team required to effect the change and reduce costs in the future.

In part two of this article we'll look at how, even if you have the organisation or your team facing in the right direction you can get it to lace it's boots up and start walking! In other words some strategies for managing change.

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