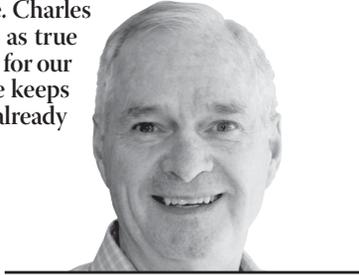


Effective leaders eliminate fear

CHANGE OR PERISH. Adapt or die. Charles Darwin wrote of this in 1859. It was as true then for the world's species as it is now for our organizations. And the rate of change keeps accelerating — just look at your new, already outdated smartphone.

Knowing these axioms, why do organizations continue to resist change? Management is the main reason, because they fear personal loss. With change comes risk, and risk insinuates loss — loss of position, loss of power, influence, control, prestige and title. In a nutshell, they don't feel safe — so neither can anyone else.

So how can we encourage leaders to embrace change? By showing them change is actually good for them, their personal risks are low and the upside is high. Look what Google has done in its brief 15-year history: Google Search, Google Earth, Google Energy, Google



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LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Glass, Google Apps, et al (more than 100 in total). Has all this change caused much risk? Sure. But most of it has resulted in positive consequences.

While risk remains the biggest inhibitor to change in most organizations, it can be mitigated. Jamie Gruman rightly states the best way to achieve this is to create a safe environment, in which

all employees can voice their opinions and ideas, knowing what they say will be listened to and judged on its merits, with no negative repercussions.

When employees are treated as mature, responsible adults, they behave as such. Most of them can self-manage very well, given the chance. Most of them want to contribute and most can contribute significantly. When a climate of trust, respect and co-operation is established, initiative becomes the norm.

This means abolishing the old command-and-control, hierarchical structure. This outdated framework is notorious for forcing an employee's great idea to navigate from concept to reality only after receiving 1,000 "yeses" along the way, and it can easily be squashed by one "no."

While at it, get rid of the word "chief" in job titles. Toss "officer" too — unless

you work in a police station. Their days are done. Retiring these old-guard, authoritative symbols sends a clear signal that change is indeed starting. Several other cultural and organizational changes must also be made as Gruman mentions but, whatever you do, act fast before the Millennials catch you napping.

"A business... has two basic functions — marketing and innovation. They produce results. All the rest are costs," said management consultant Peter Drucker. So, what will it be — change agent or cost item?

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