

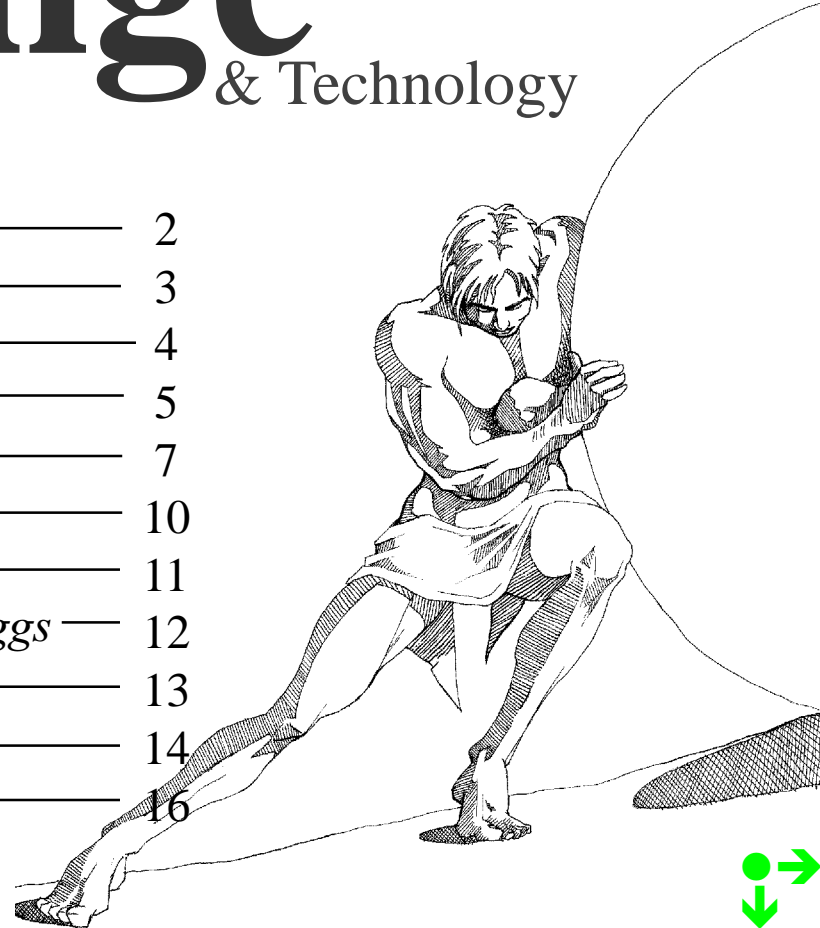
Managing Change

& Technology

June 2000

Vol. 1 No. 4

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Greetings!

How valuable are the soft skills of management? Before we seek an answer to that question, we'd better try at least to agree on what we mean when we use the phrase 'soft skill'. Otherwise, we're merely spinning our intellectual wheels.

I'd like to suggest - but would I get away with it, - that a soft skill, is by definition a skill which is difficult to quantify. I can just see people rolling their eyes as they perceive a cop-out.

Trouble is, whether you see it as a cop-out or not... I do happen to believe it's the best definition available.

Let's bring this back to the soft skills of 'Change Management'. What's the difference between a good Change Manager and a poor one? "They're better at managing change!" is the response from the back of the room. Huh? That's a circular argument. What do we mean by 'better'? And

can we quantify it?

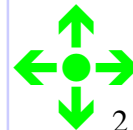
Does 'better' mean faster change? Regardless of the consequences? Does it mean cheaper change? Does it mean this change experience adds to our ability to change again in the future? Does it mean increased productivity? Or is it some/none of these? What are your thoughts? Send them in... that's the topic of July's issue.

My opinionated perspective? A good change manager minimizes the chaos involved in moving from the old to the new status quo.

A good change manager reduces the pain involved in even those situations where the change is unwelcome and does not result in a better place for all concerned.

Your feedback is welcome.
Peter de Jager

Only a mediocre person is always at their best
Somerset Maugham



Change Manners

By Mary E. Miller

In my capacity as a systems analyst in a problem and change management dept., I've noticed a disturbing trend - a complete disregard for common courtesy!

Why is it that people involved in **implementing** (sorry) inflicting change, feel that the stress and tight deadlines which always accompany change, entitles them to forget their manners?

Such unnecessary rudeness reflects badly, not only on the project (change) itself, but also on the project manager and his/her team members. Those attitudes create a negative environment in which participants will:

- Avoid meetings and training sessions,
- Refuse assignments,
- Complete assignments half-heartedly,
- Hold back ideas/suggestions,
- Fail to point out potential pitfalls.

When the next project rolls around, a project manager with a reputation for rudeness may find it difficult to get anyone on the project team at



all! The result is a new process or application without the support needed to succeed.

On the other hand, courtesy takes little time or effort and the ROI is substantial. Meetings and training sessions are more pleasant and productive. Participants, particularly the timid or insecure, are more comfortable proposing new ideas or solutions.

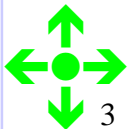
A wider range of creative options are brought to the table. More people are willing to get involved, join the committees, do the “grunt” work.

The end result is enthusiastic support from both end users and management.

Yes, change is stressful and not always met with enthusiasm, that doesn't have to mean the end of good, old-fashioned, common courtesy. Do you want smoother, more successful change? Try saying “please” and “thank you” - for a change!

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*Men's natures are alike; It's their habits that carry them apart
Confucius*





Mastering the Machine

By Peter de Jager

When we weren't paying attention, technology escaped from its role of servant to our needs and became master of our desires. We succumbed to the myth that regardless of the question, 'better' technology is always the answer.

Somewhere along the line we lost control of technology and became Techno-Peasants.

Today we feel obligated to acquire the next hardware or software upgrade even though we cannot provide a good reason for doing so.

We've accepted, as fact, the peculiar notion that technology becomes obsolete.

Here's a reality check. If you bought a computer 10 years ago, you can still use it to balance your chequebook, manage your collection of rare barbed wire, send e-mail to anyone in the world and write a best selling novel. The computer never lost any of the capability it had when you first purchased it.

What happened is that other accounting, word processing, e-mail and spreadsheet packages etc. became available and you decided that 'good enough' was no longer 'good enough.' So you went ahead and upgraded your systems, at great and never ending expense.

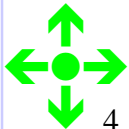
Here's another harsh nasty reality check. With all the extra money you've spent on upgrading your computer, you still don't manage your accounts any better, your collection of barbed wire is getting rusty, you haven't written Mom to thank her for the birthday gift and you've still not published that best seller.

Why do you upgrade? Examine that question and your answer very closely. I suspect most businesses are undertaking needless upgrades because they believe they must.

I'd like to gently suggest most of the technology upgrade spiral and associated costs, are unnecessary and are counterproductive to both effective and efficient use of technology.

Computers are useless, they can only give you answers.

Picasso





Beyond the Barriers

By Gilbert Cohen

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change” Charles Darwin

We are all struggling with this brave new world of ours. As individuals, as organizations and social systems. We are constantly being told to speed up - to be part of the global economy - to turn ourselves inside out and all about - to create - to throw out the old and the familiar - to embrace new technologies - to get plugged into the information superhighway - to meet ever changing and ever increasing customer needs - to adapt to a rapidly changing marketplace - But something is wrong - Word has it that over half of all major change initiatives prove to be disappointments or outright failures!

Why? Because we have not been listening closely enough to Darwin. To survive we need to be responsive to change. Change dictates we change our behaviors. All too often, we rush headlong into change processes and pour time and resources on technologies, processes and yet

somehow assume that the people side will somehow take care of itself with minimal intervention. And more often than not, people get left behind.

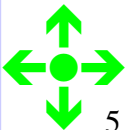
If we are serious about change, we need to manage our individual and organizational readiness to embrace the future otherwise we will revert to our base instincts. What do I mean? Scientific research indicates that the urge to cling to the familiar, is almost as strong as our instinct to survive.

During uncertain times we all have the urge to cling to what we know - the trusted - the status quo - the good old way. And we all know how strong our will to survive is!

Even if we move away from where we are comfortable to the unfamiliar - when confronted with a struggle, the rubber band effect kicks in and we return right back to what we perceive as the safety of the familiar.

Assumption is the Mother of Screw up.

Angelo Donhia





The fear of the unknown is always greater than the fear of

the known! We are dealing with primal forces here!

So how do we manage these fears? By leveraging our innate will to survive! The same resistance that dogs the change process can propel us to our desired destination.

How can we do it? First we need to keep people aware throughout the change process the cost of not changing is far higher than the cost of changing - and urgent.

Secondly - the change - has to pull us there - we need to create the compelling picture that pulls us and their organization forward!

Recognizing that the fear of change is not always an obstacle, sometimes it is key.

The tools for change implementation are many and include communication, awareness workshops, executive briefings, sponsorship,

education and of course motivation - you get what you reward!

Gilbert Cohen is a Management Consultant focusing on Change in the Knowledge Era. Reach him at gacohen@istar.ca

Amplifying Your Effectiveness
Individual, Team & Organization

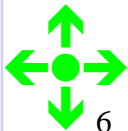
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active participation matters.**

November 6- 8, 2000 • Scottsdale, AZ
Our book to be released by Dorset House

*Old custom
without
truth is but
an old error*
Thomas
Fuller

*Change is easy,
unless you're a vending machine...*

Anon





Doing It “Now” vs Doing It Right

By Bruce Stewart

There’s been a lot of talk about “Internet Time”. You have to make decisions - fast. A bad decision is better than a late decision, no matter how right the thought-through decision is.

Hogwash. Thinking like that leads to companies blowing 60% of their cash on hand for a few Super Bowl advertising slots. Anyone remember who advertised during the game? If the name of the game with a start up company is to grow and prosper, a lot of the dot-coms have followed strategies that are anti-survival.

We talk a lot about the difficulty of change. We know - in our bones - how hard it is to move past denial. But did you ever stop to think that racing through changes at lightning speed is also a form of denial? A denial of common sense?

The problem with the “Internet Time” is that “We’ve got to get it done now” rather than ‘business sense’ takes over. Old lessons are

ignored: in the 1980s the Japanese were winning by going for market share before going for profits, so let’s spend, spend, spend to make sure we gain share. One error compounds upon another: they give UPS at Post Office delivery rates - we give free shipping. They saw our free shipping and raised with a points program - we’ll match that affinity program and give cash back as well.

Managing change isn’t just about racing ahead. It’s also about calling a halt at times.

There’s no room in most of these dot-com start ups for the change manager who says “whoa!”. Even the so-called “adult supervision” of a seasoned CFO or CEO is tempered by the need to be a success - now. (“Or can’t you shake off your old economy habits, mister?”)

Let’s look at the status quo before the dot-coms: we’ll concentrate on retailing (which has become

To gain maximum attention, it’s hard to beat a good mistake.

David D. Hewitt





“B2C”). A few national or regional chains competed against a few local shops in any area. The number of competitors meant that a few could compete on service, a few on price, perhaps one on selection (inventory costs a lot of money, especially if it doesn’t turn over fast enough). You could comprehend the competitors well enough to predict their probable moves - and change your own stance to meet the challenges.

Now let’s look at the dot-com economy. How difficult is it to start another “me, too” outlet? Don’t like doing business with amazon.com? Then there’s bn.com, chapters.ca, books.com - even “yournamehere”.com.

Racing to offer even lower prices, cheaper shipping, more advertising, better giveaways - in other words, to apply all the conventional approaches used in retail when a price competition is needed to reduce the number of competitors - isn’t “changing at the speed of Internet time”. It’s denying that fundamental change is needed in the dot-com business model you’re following.

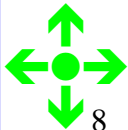
Slowing down would actually be resisting the change - recognising that racing for market share, or forcing name brand recognition, or undercutting the value proposition of everyone else at the table (the techniques of the 1980s and early 1990s) might not work any longer. It would be working out how to compete when the number of competitors is unlimited now and in the future rather than assuming you can sweep the field by upsetting enough of the others fast enough.

Why does this matter - after all, most of us don’t earn our living in frenetic dot-com companies (and we probably enjoy benefiting from the temporary largesse as they all spend their way to the bottom). Well, it matters because the departments we do work in face similar challenges.

Let’s take the IS department as an example. Less code is written every year as packages do more of the work. More software is outsourced, thanks to ASPs and web designers. Facilities managers wait in the wings to handle the operations and technical functions.

Prophecy is the most gratuitous form of error.

George Eliot





On the other hand, the organisation we work for needs technical expertise more than ever. So many IS groups have turned their staff into internal consultants. In the rush, though, who asked the questions: what kind of consulting?

How does the client know I'm delivering something valuable to them? What do I have to do differently when I advise, but might not do the work? Do I know this business - its industry - its markets - well enough to propose approaches that are "right for us"? (Or am I just going to propose another technology because it's available - and I don't know what else to do?)

Right now there's a lot of struggling IT professionals out there, trying to be something the business they work for hasn't prepared for, and the IS group they're in hasn't prepared for. But the rush is on. As they say, "everybody's doing it" - and "if you're not, you're dead".

Maybe a little resistance could cut through all the denial in more places than the dot-coms.

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Contact him at bruce@bastewart.com

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And it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new.

Machiavelli

...The greatest obstacles to Change are past successes and fear of future failures.

You can observe a lot just by watching
Yogi Berra



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Waiting Alertly

By Joe Vles

Change would be easier to manage if we knew with certainty that a change would in fact really “take hold” and stay around for a while. A lot of change that we witness lately is essentially an improvement on a change that just took place, often less than a year earlier.

Although that’s still a change, it might have been prudent to wait a little longer to see if the new technology would actually stay around, or would be replaced, in very short order, by something else.

For instance, we tried to stay on top of change last year with an internet ISDN connection, only to find out that if we had waited just a little longer, we could have had DSL instead. In this case, and many like it, rather than managing change immediately, the decision should have been to wait and see.

The question is how long we should “wait and see,” and that one is hard to answer. What we have generally found is this: there is hardly ever a need to be on the “bleeding edge” even in this fast-paced environment, things do not become

obsolete so quickly that they become unusable immediately. “Waiting alertly” might be the right phrase.

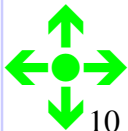
If you reasonably try to stay on top of technology development, you won’t miss the trends - even the daily newspapers will give you sufficient information to see where things are going, and how fast. Once you decide that your competitors are starting to benefit by adapting a change, it’s probably the right time to start looking at it yourself.

There is an added benefit in waiting: your implementation of the new technology will be smoother, quicker, more mature and less costly than those of your competitors who went first.

And sometimes, “what goes around comes around,” and old methods, albeit with new delivery vehicles, are reborn because they make good sense. Computer time-sharing in the 70’s and 80’s has transformed itself into the ASP services of the 2000’s. Thin client “dumb” terminals are replacing full-fledged PCs.

There’s never time to do it right, but always time to do it over.

John Meskimen





These are changes from changes, so taking a little distance from the thunder and lightning is an excellent idea.

Your management task is to determine when change is good for you. Change is really under your control, always.

Joe Vles is the president of ComputersAmerica, Inc., an IT service provider and distributor of computer products, based in California. Email: jvles@pacbell.net

QUOTORIAL

Why should it be done at all? Why should it be done now? Why should it be done that way?
Herbert Bayard Swope

...Creating a future requires a present unafraid to question the past.

Contest!

Throughout all my Y2K activities I injected humour into the process. The most successful methods were the various contests I held, I'd like to continue that tradition with MC&T.

Here's the deal. Send in an original limerick devoted to the subject of 'Change' and I'll choose a single winner. The prize? Since MC&T is not bringing in any income as yet, this will be small. How about \$100 donated to the charity of your choice?

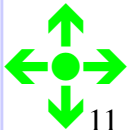
Here's an example.

*There was once a change manager, Bill
Who developed an unusual skill
From out of the rubble
Of projects in trouble
He rolled his successes uphill!*

It's not a good example... but it's one which will entice you to claim 'I can do better than that.' Mail entries to managechange@technobility.com with 'Limerick' as the subject. Deadline July 10th 2000
Good luck!

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*Brevity is the soul of wit.
Shakespeare*





Reflections on Change

By Elizabeth W. Riggs

Being a nurse-entrepreneur and a consultant, I'm constantly faced with challenges to the way I do things. Each of my clients has his/her own preferred format for reports and record organization. In addition, I am faced with having to change my focus and even the services I offer.

I have taken up the motto "Adapt or Die!"

It's posted on the door to my home office, and over my desk. I even have it in numerous places in the house, and my car. Everywhere I look, I remind myself if I don't adapt to the changing needs of my clientele, if I don't adapt to the changing marketplace, my little business will die.

I find this thought helpful. When something comes up and I want to say, "I don't think we can do that," my eyes fall on "Adapt or Die!" and I find myself saying, "Sure, we can do that," and

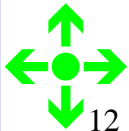
in my mind I'm saying, "I'll try this out and if it works for this client, maybe other clients will like this, as well."

Now, as the single person in my business, I mainly have to deal with only my own resistance to change. I have subcontractors, however, and often they don't want to change the way they do things.

It's important I make sure my own mind-set has changed before I try to assist my subcontractors to change theirs. If I'm not committed to the necessary changes, how can I solicit their cooperation?

This same principle applies to larger companies. The change-agent must be committed to the change before s/he can assist anyone else to commit to the change! The process will inevitably take longer when there are more people involved. The more people

Success is a process, a quality of mind, a way of being, an outgoing affirmation of life.
Alex Noble





involved, the longer the time it takes to effect the needed changes.

If you don't adapt to changing markets, to changing methods of developing and producing workproducts, whether products or services, you will die. I don't plan to go the way of the Dodo and the Passenger Pigeon. I will adapt!

© 2000, Elizabeth W. Riggs, RN, CNM, PhD,
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Little minds are interested in the extraordinary; Great minds in the commonplace.

Elbert Hubbard

...It's in life's daily path that great opportunities lie. Look to your feet for gold, not to the sky!

More on Chaos

A few letters expressed concern (disagreement) with the notion that 'Chaos' is unavoidable. Here's a definition of Chaos, and some examples, to remove the problem.

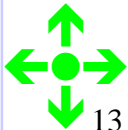
Chaos refers to the transition period between old and new status quos where you are acquiring new skills. In other words the beginning of the learning curve where incompetence is not a value judgment, just a fact of life.

Driving a red car rather than a blue car, doesn't require new skills and is not legitimately called a change (unless you have a problem with the colour red.) Driving a standard automobile rather than an automatic does cause chaos... especially when you grind those gears together.

Going from a standard to an automatic generates some low level discomfort as you unlearn the need to shift gears. Change is either about skill acquisition or unlearning old behaviours. 'Chaos' is the label we've assigned to the period when the learning/un-learning takes place.

Peter

*'tis the
sorest of all
human ills,
to abound
in knowl-
edge and
yet have no
power over
an action
Herodotus*





From Local Govt. to Service Provider

By Jackie Couch

Local governments use technology to facilitate service delivery to citizens. The strategy most employed is stand-alone, best-of-breed systems. These systems transfer data among themselves through interfaces. They can't provide a corporate view; only limited views of business segment operations. Their very nature results in redundant data and duplicate processes. They help create the ideal bureaucracy, but is a bureaucracy ideal?

Since the Year 2000 event is hindsight, local governments are asking: Is this the most efficient and effective way to use technology to provide services? Is the return on the technology investment the best possible? Is the organization positioned to adapt to changing customer demands? The answer is NO. Local governments are beginning to shift their focus from what they are doing to how they are doing it.

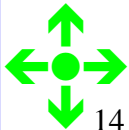
Local governments tend to live in the bureaucracy phase of the Organizational Life

Cycle (Idchak Adzises, Ph.D; Organizational Modeling). In this posture, the organization controls the marketplace, has a take it or leave it attitude, and lives in a protective environment. It is easy for local governments to operate this way; they monopolize the market that citizens must rely on for certain services. And, they don't have to change—their culture is change adverse.

Technology is changing rapidly all around local governments. Their citizens are demanding efficient service delivery and the ability to serve themselves. The slow, inflexible nature of the bureaucracy is frustrating to citizens and does not enhance the quality of their lives. Governments are beginning to rethink their service delivery approach.

One way local governments will improve service delivery is through the utilization of integrated systems. The information available from these systems will enable managers to have a corporate view of the organization vs. the current functional view of their business segment.

*A councilor
ought not to
sleep the
whole night
through
Homer*





By moving to the Innovative phase of the Organizational Life Cycle, governments will begin strategizing, shaping, and creating a flexible government that can quickly respond to customer demands. An innovative, efficient local government will enhance the quality of its citizens' lives.

However, a move in this direction could be perceived as a threat to long-tenured managers that hesitate to fix what they don't perceive as broken. New technology will bring about process change and organizational restructuring. A move local governments will take to improve how they do business.

How will this change begin? The Mayors and City Managers will become visionaries. They will envision themselves as entrepreneurs. They will "see" how their use of technology can both reduce the costs of delivering services and enhance the quality of that service.

It's much easier to keep the businesses, customers, and citizens that currently reside in a jurisdiction, than to entice new ones to come.

Local governments will efficiently operate in the new Millennium with wise technology choices that leave the bureaucracy behind.

By Jackie Couch, Manager, Special Projects
City of St. Petersburg, Florida.
Mail to J1couch@stpete.org

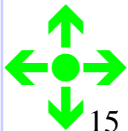


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A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery.

James Joyce

...Creativity is just mind over mutter



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