



Out with the Old, in with Adaptable

by Jeff Davidson, MBA CMC

Flashback to one decade ago: While sites such as Napster raced ahead in violation of copyright laws, the powerful software it employed enabled millions of users to share data with one another anonymously. The legal hurdles were huge and Napster paid a price, but to this day operates successfully.

One of the many lessons we learn from Napster is that the old established order – in this case, the record industry – with its huge power base does not go away quietly. The "powers that be" invariably are wedded to packaging, shipping, warehousing and other industrial age trappings of the world in which they have long dwelled.

Strategic Design or Strategic Neglect?

It's one thing to carve out a strategic niche – "Our company will continue to be the leader in buggy whip sales even as the automobile dominates the landscape." It is quite another to sell buggy whips by default as the world passes you by.

Even in the case that you choose to become the buggy whip industry leader, you and your team will still have to embrace broad-sweeping disruptions to achieve and maintain market position.

Presuming you work for an organization or in an industry that recognizes the sheer volume and frequency of change occurring in the external environment, you, as a career professional, need to maintain a dual focus. At any given time, on any given day,

1. you're an alert, effective, responsible, forward-thinking employee, and
2. you maintain a sharp focus on the big picture of your own career.

Rewards for Distinctions

Considering how people are compensated in society, sometimes it seems as if wages and bonuses are distributed unfairly. Yet, there is a pattern to it. In baseball, for example, the home-run hitter is likely to make more money than the non-sluggers. Why? For one, the home run counts as a run itself, and the team that scores the most runs wins the game. The home run also automatically scores anybody else on base, presuming they touch all the bases on their paths toward home.

The fans enjoy seeing home runs, and this brings them out to the ballpark. Hence, the owner's gate revenues increase. Home-run hitters also are ideal for television and boost the value of contracts between the club owner and the TV networks.

Staying with baseball, the most superlative fielders, the best pitchers, the swiftest base runners, and so forth, tend to earn more than their counterparts because they are managing crucial factors – weather, travel, crowds and the pitches. They are meeting fierce competitors head on and helping their teams win +57% of the team's games.

Consider the high price the consultants who might walk the halls of your organization command. They work for prestigious firms, perhaps out of Sydney, Tokyo or Kuala Lumpur or New York, Boston or Chicago or London, Rome, or Paris, with long histories of success. Their pay greatly exceeds the typical worker in your organization. Why do they command such fees? Because they have the ability to keenly focus on the situation at hand and identify the critical factors for success.

Bargaining for the Best

What about other compensation superstars? High-level negotiators are brought in to strike a bargain with the opposition. The negotiations last for days, exhausting all participants and emotionally frazzling everyone. When the agreement is struck, it needs to be one with which all sides can live.

You only entrust the best problem solver to sit at the table for you, and you pay him or her larger amounts of money. Something viable must occur in a situation that necessitates two sides getting together and coming to a resolution; otherwise, everybody loses.

The CEOs who receive million dollar salaries and multi-million dollar bonuses are the subject of feature articles in magazines and newspapers. Many writers lament that pay scales are totally out of whack with contribution. Whether or not that is the case, why is there such a great disparity between the pay of top officers in a corporation and that of middle managers or line supervisors?

The top officers address the basic challenges confronting the organization, massive issues such as deciding in what direction to proceed in the future. They devise plans that answer these questions:

- How can we meet competition?
- What product or services should we launch?
- How can we increase customer service?
- They deal with issues related to remaining viable, generating revenues and earning profit.

Big Challenges, Big Earnings

In essence, those who take on huge challenges earn the most. Challenges do not stay the same, whether it's one baseball team playing another or one corporation fending for itself in a highly competitive arena.

- The competition will not stay the same.
- The external environment will not stay the same.
- The fans, or customers, will not stay the same in terms of their expectations, their loyalties, how much they are willing to pay, what they expect and what they are willing to endure.

You're probably not a baseball player or the CEO of your organization. You're a manager or an aspiring manager. You reached your present post by proving yourself to be effective. You faced problems of varying sizes and complexity and, for the most part, were able to generate effective solutions.

Perhaps you never regarded yourself as a change manager, but all the while that's what you've been progressing toward. Every course you took, every book and article you read, all the training experience and observations you made have prepared you to arrive at your present point as a manager or potential manager.

Now comes the more formal process of focusing specifically on increasing your skills in managing the types of challenges your organization constantly confronts.

It behooves you to become an effective change manager not solely for the income, but because higher levels of compensation in and of themselves usually correlate with the ability to handle significant, prolonged, disruptive situations.

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About the Author



Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC, is the internationally recognized expert on work-life balance and holds the registered trademark from the USPTO as the "Work-Life Balance Expert"®. Delivered with passion, Jeff has offered his cutting edge, hands-on strategies for a balanced career and a balanced life to audiences worldwide. He is a five-time state winner of the U.S. Small Business Administration's "media advocate of the year" award. Jeff's breakthrough books and articles have made him a favorite, repeat interview subject of USA Today, the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, and the Career Weekly of the Wall Street Journal. Jeff can be reached via his web site at www.BreathingSpace.com (<http://www.BreathingSpace.com>)