

Change and Choice

It all boils down to how you think about it

BY RANDY G. PENNINGTON

“Our organization isn’t working as well as it needs to be. Things aren’t bad. They just aren’t great.”

Every leader, at some point, has likely felt this way. It’s a general feeling that everything is harder than it should be.

While the industry changes and your competition intensifies, do you seem to be locked into doing things the way you’ve always done them? Customer needs and demands are always evolving. Events, circumstances, and changes in our environment are often out of our control. As a leader, you will always be dealing with change, and your past success only proves that you were once right. That reality leaves us with an important choice: will we be a victim who complains about change or a leader who makes change work?

CHASING A MOVING TARGET

Negotiating and securing right of way is a complex and often lengthy process. But, the goal is clear and once an agreement is reached and executed, that particular piece of the project, under normal circumstances, is considered done. Your organization’s effectiveness, on the other hand, is a moving target in a dynamic environment where demands change and competition increases every day.

Leaders must continually change to align the organization to meet the current realities. And, they must do this with full knowledge that tomorrow’s reality could render today’s solution obsolete. When faced with continual changes, leaders must remain—and help others remain—nimble and open to new challenges and opportunities.

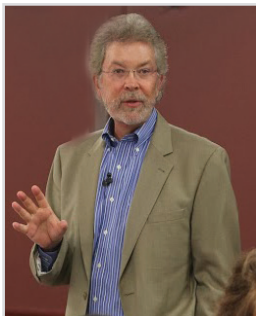
Here are three ideas to help you accomplish this important task:

Look outside yourself and help others do the same. The natural reaction to change is to focus internally on how the change affects you, your team or your specific area. The stars in every field, however, are externally focused on what it takes for the entire organization to achieve success in a changing world. Acknowledging the disrupted expectations is okay, but don’t dwell there. Customer-focused change is about what it takes to make the organization successful with those it serves.

Focus on continually increasing the value you add. In times of intense uncertainty, organizations tend to refocus their attention on their value proposition. Change happens naturally when we alter our mindset from maintaining the status quo to looking for new ways to add value.

Explain (and ask) why – then focus on how. Contrary to popular belief, children and teens are not the only ones to ask “why” when a change is suggested. Change pushes us out of our comfort zone. Some find that exciting, but most of us want to know that there is a good reason to expend the energy and effort. However, there are some changes are out of our control. In those situations, we are best served by focusing on how to make the change work.

The effectiveness of our response and the quality of our functioning is determined solely by how we think about change in the moment of choice. We each create and sustain our own perception about any given situation. The leader’s job is to manage their own thinking about the need for continual change and to create the environment where followers can do the same.



*An expert in leadership strategies, Randy’s latest book is **Make Change Work: Staying Nimble, Relevant, and Engaged in a World of Constant Change**. Follow his blog at www.penningtongroup.com*