

*Dear Dr. Mazie,*

*I've been in the right of way industry for 35 years, and looking back, it feels like the industry has been in a constant state of change. Recently, I am seeing more changes and at a faster pace than ever before. I also see a lot of new blood entering the industry, and they seem to be unprepared for dealing with the cyclical nature of our work. Do you have any suggestions for helping us all adapt and prepare for the inevitable ups and downs we can expect in the future?*

*Sam in Pittsburgh*

It's true. The industry is changing faster than ever before, and we all seem to be dealing with it in our own personal way. The newcomers to right of way may find themselves struggling to understand and adapt to the changes, while those who have been around for many years are finding it difficult to keep up.

For those right of way professionals who are impacted by the energy sector, it is important to realize that we are—and will continue to be—in a constant state of flux. There are many new players in the game, and the ability to be flexible and to go with the flow is a must for the individuals involved, as well as for the success of the many companies and agencies involved.

First, let's acknowledge why there are so many changes in our industry right now. One reason is the growth in the shale plays, which has created an increased demand for new right of way professionals. In response to these shale opportunities, new companies are entering the energy/right of way field in response to the 'gold rush fever' these opportunities have created. The process used in fracking oil and gas products has generated an increasing level of public and environmental controversy, and the regulatory agencies are taking a more active role than in the past. We are also seeing today's landowners becoming more active and outspoken, and the politics on both the local and federal levels are creating obstacles and challenges that impact all of us.

Now that we understand why the industry is experiencing such constant change, we can address our options. The biggest challenge is finding the best way to handle change in a positive and healthy way.

As individuals, we each decide how we will perceive and react to change. You can elect to fight it or embrace it. You can perceive it as a negative force and procrastinate or

ignore it. Or you can anticipate it and become involved in implementing and even initiating it. It's a conscious decision we make for ourselves.

For many individuals, change can be difficult and for many different reasons. Some issues stem from our personality characteristics, upbringing and life events, while other obstacles are based on fear. Some people are fearful by nature and tend to worry and feel anxious, especially when faced with the unknown. The more prevalent the fear, the more difficult it is for them to deal with change. The problem often rests in our desire for comfort, and many would prefer to stay in their comfort zone, holding on tight to their sense of control.

However, there are also those individuals who seem to embrace change and even thrive in it. They are inspired by anything that creates a sense of adventure and actually gravitate toward new experiences. Eager to learn, they exhibit a healthy self-confidence and seem to enjoy new challenges.

Success in dealing with change has a lot to do with our level of acceptance. If we choose to remain in a state of denial, we limit our chances for success. However, if we can learn to accept the fact that change is constant, we have a much better chance of adapting to it.



*A nationally recognized speaker, workshop leader and trainer, Dr. Mazie Leftwich, Psy.D has a clinical background in applied psychology with expertise in organizational and personal development. She is Senior Vice President of Contract Land Staff, LLC, where she oversees training and team excellence programs.*