EA Insights

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"Quotes"

"Business is constantly changing, constantly evolving."
~James Dyson

"[B]usinesses are changing all of those things because that's what consumers want."
~Jerry Greenfield

"No matter how...well you're perceived to be doing, your job is never done. Every day, you get up and the world is changing; your customers are expecting more from you. Your competitors are putting pressure on you by doing more and trying to beat you here and beat you there."
~Abigail Johnson

"If you're going to go build something or change whatever it is, ...the first thing you're doing is you're spending time figuring out how it works. The same thing happens in organizations."
~Brian Krzanich

"To me, success [as a leader] is setting a vision, guiding an organization through change... and bringing people together and with you. That, to me, is what it takes to be successful."
~Laura Lang

"In an organization that is unwilling to change, find the opportunity to talk and interact with people -- figure out why they don't want to change. It could be habits. It could be people's personal equities and reputations are defined by the role they're in or the process they've mastered."
~Stanley A. McChrystal

When It's Time to Change

I had a treat this week!

The morning news teaser urged me to stay tuned for an interview with the Brady siblings about their new show. What? Seriously?

Indeed, the family I'd grown up with, The Brady Bunch, was returning. And, though we're all a little older (okay, a lot older), seeing the familiar faces brought back swarms of memories.

Throughout the day, I found myself instinctively humming the original show's theme, which segued into full-blown renditions (at one point with my hubby joining in) of ditties the kids sang during the period when they fancied themselves pop stars. It boggled my mind; words flowed fluidly after all these years. (And, that is amazing, considering that, on any given day, it's a struggle to remember by 5:00 pm what I had for breakfast that morning!)

One Brady song forever is ingrained in my memory is "When It's Time to Change". Granted, it was penned about the transition from child to young adult; however, its words can apply more broadly:

When it's time to change, you've got to rearrange, who you are into what you've gonna be.

Hokey, I know, but go with me here!

Just as the maturing process brings about change in the life of a person, evolution should be an equally natural part of a business' life. And, that's the topic of this month's *EA Insights*. Let's take a few moments to explore both timing and tactics for strategically tackling organizational change.

Is it time for your group to change who you are into what you're gonna be?

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Business Changes for Better Results

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

Change is a concept that can be thrilling, frightening, frustrating, and tiring...all at the same time!

As I write this month's article, I'm walking with a group through a significant change process. While every engagement is different, let me share what I hope is helpful thinking as you consider the prospect of change for your organization.

The Reason for Change
If I had to choose, I would say that the buzz word for the past few years has been *disrupter*. It's chic not to be satisfied with the status quo. Shake things up; try stuff out.

You'll get no argument from me ...not in theory anyway. Yet, my question always is: Disrupt *why*?

Change brought about simply to tout a disruptive culture may make things fresh, but there are times when my grandmother was right on point. *"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."*

I get it. Resistance to change clearly is the death knell for a business. There is example after example of former industry giants that are nothing but memories today. But, baseless change brings on a different set of issues for leaders, employees, customers, vendors, and others.

So, absolutely, move forward with change...when there's good reason. Disrupt away...when what you're doing is having, or is projected to have, a negative effect on cost, quality, staff, the environment, or customers. (For more on assessing the pulse of your customer, read our March 2019 article Listen. Your Customer Is Speaking.) Just know that change may be best received, and most successful, when it's tied to a strategic reason; that is, when you persuasively can answer the "why" question that inevitably will be asked.

The Right Time for Change
In the eyes of some, there never is a perfect time for change. And, to a degree, they're right; there's always too much work, too little help, too many contingencies that make any timing iffy.

It's the rare instance in which everything lines up just right. However, despite the litany of obstacles that usually could be recited, I offer that it's time to get serious about change when your best intelligence points to a set of undesired consequences -- real-time or anticipated -- that you're facing by keeping things as is.

The Approach for Change
A systematic approach to change works best. The stakes are too high for a "build the plane as you fly it" mindset.

Do an honest analysis of the reason(s) prompting the whole venture. Be sure that you're separating out root cause(s) from symptoms. Seek to understand fully how you're operating currently. Envision a realistic future state -- with a correction to whatever's ailing you now. Determine how to move strategically from today's Point A to that desired Point Z. Assign accountability for each aspect of the effort. And, please, count the cost -- in dollars, in human capital, in resources, in goodwill, and otherwise.

You see, evaluation -- sans finger pointing, sacred cows, and impatience -- is essential. And, partner with evaluation some solid planning that both honestly accounts for your organization's current state and capacity and that deliberately charts a path toward your desired future. Coupling the two is indispensable to a change effort that will produce significant outcomes.

The Measurement of Change
Speaking of outcomes, the measurement of change is another necessary component. Every initiative should have a series of milestone markers -- key deliverables or breakthrough points that are expected along the way. Monitoring progress toward each, the time it's taking to get there, the internal and external impact all are items on the must-do list as the process continues. By taking the measurement of change seriously, you avoid launching a change effort that just fizzles away because real life and real work take over. On the other end of the spectrum, you dodge a change effort that goes on ad infinitum because clear boundaries and/or road markers were never developed.

The Support for Change
As the organization I'm working with understood well, there are times when undertaking change requires support beyond what the folks handling the day-to-day work can offer. That group's leaders knew that financial and other resources would be needed to accomplish the goal of studying current organizational operations in order to arrive at change recommendations and then to transition accordingly.

So, honestly consider your internal bandwidth when the need for change arises. Assess the match between the current team and the skills needed to shepherd you through such an effort. It may be best to keep your team's primary focus on the daily work, while you access extra hands to support the change process. Whether run strictly as an in-house function or utilizing trusted external resources, ensure that any change effort is adequately supported so that your organization can work through each adjustment designed to help you function more efficiently and effectively in the targeted area(s).

Is it time for your organization to achieve better results? What are the changes needed to help you get there? Could you use some help to figure this all out? Call on us at **Executive Advantage**. We're here to support in clarifying the reasons, timing, approach, and measurement of your change effort. Contact us today.

"Things change, and I think that's important."
~Zarin Mehta

"Big companies do not want to disrupt themselves. All they want to do is improve themselves. They see...another...project. It's going to save money; it's going improve a process here and there. It's not going to change their business."
~William Mougayar

"Many leaders of big organizations, I think, don't believe that change is possible. But if you look at history, things do change, and if your business is static, you're likely to have issues."
~Larry Page

"No matter what business you are in, there is change, and it's happening pretty quickly."
~Jim Pattison

"Any business owner can tell you that if their company isn't performing profitably and up to standards, one of two things will happen: either you make changes to improve its efficiency, or a competitor will drive you out of business. Market forces have a way of cutting to the chase rather quickly."
~J. B. Pritzker*

"When we talk about change, we, the business leaders, have to implement it. We have to look at what we're not doing and what we should be doing."
~Ofra Strauss

"The only thing I fear more than change is no change. The business of being static makes me nuts."
~Twyla Tharp

"If you use an annual review cycle, you aren't getting feedback at the same pace that you need to adapt and change the business."
~Fred Wilson

About Executive Advantage

At *Executive Advantage*, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about *Executive Advantage*, contact us **online** or at **(301) 280-5950**.

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