

The Changing Face of 'Change' in Today's Workplace

By Mary-Lou Griffiths – Director Sana Vita Pty Ltd 21/7/2016

I often hear from companies that they are struggling with getting staff on board with the changes that are necessary to keep their company relevant in today's world. I have heard the same issues and challenges raised by multimillion dollar blue chip companies to small to medium sized companies which has made me contemplate how we need to go about helping staff stay resilient and for companies to continuously look at quality improvements and changes to remain viable and prosper in the future.

As part of remaining current in my skill specialisation (business consultancy and in particular change management) I am always reading current up to date research which has been published through a range of avenues. (Majority are through my Uni SA Alumni) and whilst I intrinsically know that we need to rethink how we approach 'change' to remain current and useful for our ever changing world it hasn't been until recently that I have been able to voice and explain my new approach adequately.

I recently read an article by: Dr Robert M Goldman MD, PhD, DO, FAASP, World Chairman-International Medical Commission, Titled – Future Predictions and published 31/5/2016. Dr Goldman gave a number of really great examples of how business is changing, he classifies this time as the 4th Industrial Revolution calling it the Exponential Age.

The example of 3D printing was one of the highlighted areas where business is changing, stating that the cheapest 3D printer came down from \$18,000 to \$400 within 10 years, making them affordable for most consumers to have in their home. In the same time, it became 100 times faster. He also advised that all major shoe companies started 3D printing shoes. Spare airline parts are already being 3D printed in remote airports; the space station now has a printer that eliminates the need for the large number of spare parts they used to have in the past. He goes on to advise that at the end of this year, new smart phones will have 3D scanning possibilities. You will then be able to 3D scan your feet and print your perfect shoe at home. In China, they already 3D printed a complete 6-storey office building. Dr Goldman also states that by 2027, 10% of everything that's being produced will be 3D printed.

The premise of reminding/advising everyone of this was how business is likely to change over the next few years. I recall hearing in the news approximately 6 months ago that a University student required braces for his teeth however was unable to afford the approximate \$2000 cost of traditional braces. He scanned his mouth/teeth and went about making his own 'braces' utilising his 3D printer. He re-scanned his teeth/mouth a further two times over the space of twelve months. The end result is that he now has straight teeth and I believe it cost him approximately \$12 for each set of home-made 'braces' which makes of total cost of \$36 saving him a whopping \$1964.00 to gain the same result as traditional methods.

I also recently listened to a world leading business consultant on the current moves of leading companies to scale back employees and instead utilise consultants thus reducing employee HR issues and the ever increasing staff absenteeism and WorkCover claims thereby allowing them to get on with the business of keeping their companies current and relevant.

It is feasible to think that in as little as 10 years, full time permanent employment roles will be extremely limited; employment growth will come from self-employed subject matter experts/consultants and how business is done will look very different from today. The business of consulting is large. Careers in Business – Facts and Trends published report states 'Last year, over 200,000 consultants sold over \$100 billion of advice. Today, technology planning, strategic services and enterprise consulting represent 35 percent, 20 percent and 15 percent roughly of the worldwide consulting spending. The pursuit of specialized knowledge is rising rapidly. Firms are looking for consultants with very specific knowledge in areas like logistics management, knowledge management, data warehousing, multimedia, client-server development, sales force automation, electronic commerce, brand management and value management. Many large consulting firms also have practices targeted at particular industries--for example, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and electric power--which require specific technical qualifications.'

Leadership and continuous education on technologies and the changing face of consumerism will be the cornerstone for successful businesses going forward.

I will always recall in University the example of 'Nokia' who started out as a single paper mill in 1865. By the 1960's they had become a conglomerate comprised of rubber, cable, forestry, electronics and power generation. Deregulation of the European telecommunications industries in the 1980s triggered new thinking and fresh business models. In 1982, Nokia introduced both the first fully-digital local telephone exchange in Europe and the world's first car phone for the Nordic Mobile Telephone analog standard.

Whilst theirs is a successful example of embracing changes during these periods there is also the example of 'Kodak', who Dr Goldman also highlighted in his paper. In 1998, Kodak had 170,000 employees and sold 85% of all photo paper worldwide. Within just a few years (3), their business model disappeared and they went bankrupt. Dr Goldman states that what happened to Kodak will happen in a lot of industries in the next 10 years. Looking further into the Kodak example, digital cameras were invented back in 1975 and only had 10,000 pixels. When executives were first alerted to the 'new' digitalisation available in camera's they dismissed it instead of investing and innovating in changing their company to remain at the forefront for camera's with new technology. By 2001/2002 digital cameras were mainstream, (3 short years after holding 85% of photo paper sales) those executives didn't believe the technology would take off and therefore were left chasing everyone else to capture some of the market share they previously held but in the digital space. The point of talking about this is that change will not stop therefore as business and company leaders we need to remain up to date, not dismiss new ways of doing things whether by way of technology or alternate ways of doing things even if they seem farfetched in current times. Those that dismiss them do so at their own and their company's peril.

Having worked in the Health Industry for the past 5 years I have also seen the correlation of illness intersected with change and resilience and the impact on not only individuals and families but also on companies. I am always hearing from individual's 'we are currently going through a large change', 'I'm not happy, I just want to keep doing things the way I know how' and 'why change it if it's working'. I am constantly hearing that we are 'change fatigued' by employees and 'I'm frustrated' by management. Businesses are complaining of loss of productivity as well as an increase of staff absenteeism due to illness and a rising number of WorkCover claims due to 'mental health' claims.

I believe the time has come for traditional change management education to be re-written. As change managers, agents, champions etc we need to look at change in a holistic sense as all parts of a person's life are impacted by how well we can cope and handle change. There seems to be an increasing number of people getting 'stuck' in what the 'Bridges' Model calls the 'ending zone'. This is where you have to let go of the familiar before moving into the 'neutral zone' being the unknown and then into the 'beginning zone' where you start embracing the 'new' state. When a person gets stuck in the ending zone they are continuously mourning the loss of the familiar, they fight to retain what they know, can be viewed as being saboteur's and generally take on very negative behaviours. The extension of this is that they start to become negative in life, always expecting the worse, they tend to have a problem for every solution, have tuned out of listening, are not appealing to be around which in turns can also lead to various forms of isolation. This presents a flow on effect into personal life and resulting negative feelings in all aspects of their life. Impacts to health are that they generally stop looking after their health nutritional needs, lessen their physical activity and therefore become more susceptible to general illness and chronic diseases. From a company point of view this all impacts on productivity whilst at work and also an increase in absenteeism. This then adds strain on managers and HR professionals to deal with performance issues which in turn impacts the individual's resilience and ripples out to further impact their family, community and Company.

So what can we do about this 'epidemic' that is growing? We cannot educate/inform or manage one thing in isolation from the other. CEO's and Managers need to understand the impacts of each contributing factor, how they intersect and the resulting loss of resilience in staff to productivity levels and increasing HR costs. Often when an individual is 'stuck' in the ending zone of a change it is because their expectations are not being met. We need to work on ensuring employees/individuals expectations are consistent with company/family/community vision, we also need to ensure individuals expectations of change stopping is altered.

The reality is change never stops, sometimes there are large changes and other times there are small changes but there are changes every single day in our lives. We only need to look back from the introduction of Microwaves, to bankcards, to Discman's, to iPod's to Mobile Phones to Smart Phones and most recently swipe technology for payments. All of these have been significant changes to people's everyday lives since their introduction; many scoffed at these and resisted the changes initially however 90% of people now own and operate these devices daily.

Employees need to be educated on their own wellbeing and health through reminders and education on nutrition (in particular the impacts nutrition has on brain functionality), the importance of some form of physical activity which also assists with the raising of endorphins to help maintain resilience, their responsibilities to themselves, their families, communities and their Company which in turn assists them in their quest to remain resilient and healthy in this ever-changing world. When an individual says 'I hate change or I'm not good with change' they also need to be reminded of the significant changes they have adapted to and accepted in their daily lives over the past 20-30 years. They need to be given the tools on how to practice positivity and how they can accept and move forward with those things outside of their own control. They also need to learn how they can focus on their behaviours as part of their own sphere of control.

If you would like to hear more about how we can help address your Organisations overall 'Health' and move forward with 'Change', call Mary-Lou (0422143543) or Simone (0405054721) for a one to one chat on how you can deal with change in a holistic way.