



By Silver Rose

As we enter (willing or not) the second year of this Decade of Change, we will be called upon more often than ever to adapt quickly to rapidly changing circumstances. I can think of no more important competency for success at work and in your personal life than the ability to dance with change. As with any dance, mastering the steps is necessary before you can relax and enjoy the music.

Over the next several months we will learn, together, the steps for dancing with change. Once we master the basics, we can learn to improvise.

The process of change is both simple and complex. Simple in that it is something we do everyday. There is not one person reading this who is the same person she was yesterday: cells have grown or died; we've aged by another 24 hours and the world is different than it was and we've adapted accordingly. Change is *complex* in that it is something we all do and yet resist to varying degrees and under different circumstances.

Take the weather. As I write this, it is winter and many parts of the world are buried under snow. Some relish the change, declaring the air "crisp" and the smell "fresh." They love to see the white powder covering the ground. Others complain nonstop about the inconvenience of waiting for cars to warm up and roads to be plowed. They never see the beauty of the white powder; only the roadside soot-covered snow piles.

Identical circumstances; different processes of adapting and yet, the bottom line is that we all adjust to cold by changing the way we behave and how we dress; it would be foolish and sometimes deadly not to.

Those who relish cold weather have learned that adapting to winter comfortably requires acceptance. They do not resist the cold; they focus instead on the good things that come with it. Conversely, those who resist can see nothing good and spend the months of winter in misery. *Either way, they adapt.*

The first step in learning to dance with change is to accept that which cannot be changed.

Have you ever been on the dance floor when the song that lured you onto your feet ended and the next song turned out to be one you didn't know how to dance to? When that happens to me, my initial response is to get mad at the song or the band playing it. I think, "Who could dance to this? Nobody!" And then I look around to

CHANGE YOUR FOCUS CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Step One *Dancing with Change*

discover that better dancers than I *are* dancing to it, and well.

I cannot change the song so I have two choices: (1) figure out the beat and how to move to it; or (2) get off the dance floor.

When you run up against a circumstance you cannot change, what is your initial response? Are you determined to figure out how to go with it or do you want to flee? This is the typical "fight or flight" response to danger.

Change, even one as simple as a new dance song, can trigger feelings of vulnerability. The intensity of that feeling depends on several factors:

- Are you a practiced dancer, experienced with many styles of dance?
- Do you only know one or two dances? If they play rock 'n roll, you know what to do; if they switch to a polka (do people still polka?), you're lost.
- Are you a complete novice? You're not even sure why you ventured onto the dance floor in the first place!

Our feelings of vulnerability when we are asked to adapt are directly proportional to our perceived level of expertise within the domain that is changing. Show a Communications Manager a problem with a component of the message he is writing and he frowns for a moment and then goes to work using his expertise to solve it. Approach that same employee looking for solutions involving how to use a company software program he has had little interaction with and his anxiety level rises. He feels vulnerable. In many instances, this vulnerability is tied directly to the fear of looking stupid.

The good news is: if you have learned to adapt in one domain, the same skills you learned to do so are applicable in another. It is fear that keeps us from trying.

In today's rapidly evolving world, we must all learn to apply these skills in different domains. That Communications Manager, if he knew he had to learn the software program in order to feed his family would figure it out. He would have taken the first step: accepting that which cannot be changed.

What circumstances are you faced with that cannot be changed? What do you need to do to accept them so you can move forward? And how can you apply your success at adapting in one domain to the new one you are facing?

Remember, the Law of Attraction says you get more of what you focus on. Therefore, whether you think you can or think you cannot, you are right.

Next blog: Step Two of *Dancing with Change*

January 5, 2011

Silver Rose works with individuals who want work that they love and organizations that want employees who love their work.

Reach her at Silver@SilverSpeaks.com or 877-840-5416