



## News

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### Change, Risk and Fear

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Fear in business is a GOOD thing. Technology change, consumer shifts and competitive pressure all exert positive influences on the marketplace, but create potential turmoil in business. Your choice is whether to see these challenges as opportunities for your business or as reasons to hunker down and remain inflexible. Build a culture of what I call "business courage" that embraces change. The more experience your company has managing change, the easier it becomes. The easier it becomes, the more poised you are for properly handling risk. Maintaining positive control of change and understanding the real outcomes of risk reduce personal fear and anxiety.

### But I'm Already Cutting Edge

Don't think for a moment that because your product or service offering appears to be the latest in state-of-the-art solutions that you have already embraced change and risk. Your company is not defined just by its products. Its people, its operational processes and its marketplace truly define your company. Your products just represent the manifestation of those elements. Sounds heretical? Well, consider that before your firm existed the planet continued to rotate quite fine without you. I have argued countless times in the past to many companies that nobody needs them. Customers dealt with your competitors, lived with a poorer solution, or lived without one entirely. Until a company comes to grips with the lack of need for their own existence, it does not truly begin to understand how to market their offerings, deal with their competitors and remain ahead of the disruptive technology curve.

Now, I don't want anyone to feel bad about their company. The fact is: many customers do want your products and services, especially when you introduce step-change solutions. My point is, do not grow cocky or complacent. Examine everything about your company - what you make, how you do it, how you report it, how you service your customers. Competitive forces look for any edge to beat you, including exploiting behind the scenes processes.

### Look beyond what you sell

Most companies rely on sales people as the voice of need and change. Fear mongering is their specialty. I know. I've been one. It's how sales people get things done. They battle in the trenches, hear the customer complaints, and run head-to-head against your competition. However, you need to nurture an environment of fear in your internal processes too. Encourage your clerical staff, your marketers, your accountants, your engineers, your factory workers to seek out change and improvement. Build not only a culture of dedication to the company, but also one of exploration. They should examine, test and challenge their day-to-day work. Does your company currently use its web site as a real, measurable marketing and sales tool? Are you using the strength of affiliate programs across your product line? Have you exploited joint ventures, "coopetition" and globalization? Are you using cutting edge sales techniques? Is your equipment and software optimized for your needs? Have you embraced visual management in your operations? Ask the question: is it my products that sell or is it the service, the technology or the price?

### Living in the Rut of Change

Teach your employees to become explorers, testing ways to do things better, faster and cheaper. Just when you feel comfortable, begin questioning what should be done differently. Learn about disruptive technology. Talk with change management professionals. Attend shows touting new technologies for operations. Most people prefer to live in a rut. Let your rut be one of change, risk and fear.



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