


# Strategies for Keeping Your Safety Program on Course in a Sea of Constant Change



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*“It is not necessary to change.  
Survival is not mandatory.”*

W. Edwards Deming

# So Let's Try an Experiment...

- If everyone could stand up for a minute.....
- Here's the question we'd like to explore: *“how long have you personally reported to the person (not the position) that you currently report to?”*
  - OK, if your answer is between 10 and 20 years, please sit down
  - Now, if your answer is between 5 and 10 years, please sit down
  - Now, if your answer is between 3 and 5 years, please sit down

# Strikingly Consistent Results!

- The University of Texas School of Public Health has asked this question to a lot of practicing public health professionals and the results have been strikingly consistent:
  - About 80% have reported to the person they currently report to for less than 5 years
  - And 25% for less than 1 year!
- This suggests that most practicing safety professionals can expect to have 6 to 30 different bosses over a 30 year working career!

# But While Some Things Change... Others Don't

- Although the organization your work for, or person you report to, may change, the key performance indicators for the safety program really don't....
  - Frequency and severity of reported illnesses and injuries; property losses
  - Regulatory compliance
  - Finances
  - Client satisfaction
- What does change is the method, framing, and formatting of the delivery of the information
- Acknowledging this fact is crucial for ongoing program support

# Why So Much Change?

- Mergers
- Acquisitions
- Closures
- Layoffs
- New job
- Promotion
- Streamlining
- Reducing “corporate cholesterol”
- Disasters
- Poor business decisions
- Changes in operational environment
- Changes in customer or investor demands, expectations
- Compliance/legal issues
- Market forces
- Global competition

# Something as Simple as a Traffic Light



Stop



Warning, slow down



Go, proceed with caution



# Has Now Become....



Text




Get ready to text



Keep texting until someone  
behind you honks their horn

# So What to Do? *(a.k.a. Learning Objectives)*

- Recognize and acknowledge that change will continually occur throughout your career
- Be able to identify some of the drivers that cause change
- List the steps that you can take to effectively manage change when it occurs to you personally
- Explain strategies that can be used to ensure safety program support in this sea of constant change
- Identify some useful references regarding the management of change



*“The oldest and strongest emotion  
of mankind is fear,*

*and the oldest and strongest kind  
of fear is fear of the unknown”*

H.P. Lovecraft, 1920

# Why We Naturally Fear Change

- Fear of the unknown
  - Lack of control
  - Lack of involvement in decision making
  - Is this yet another “fad of the week?”
  - Who will I report to?
  - Am I demoted?
  - Do I have a job?
- 
- But, to be fair, could we also ask: “is this an opportunity for me?”

# The Importance of Overcoming the Fear of Change



*“It is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change”*

Charles Darwin

# Change Adaptation Model



# Change Adaptation Model



# Even Some of the Most Recognizable Brand Logos in the World Have Changed

- Apple
- Microsoft
- Google
- Coca Cola
- Nike
- IBM
- McDonald's
- Samsung
- Toyota
- General Electric
- Facebook
- Pepsi



McDonald's  
FAMOUS  
BARBECUE

1948



1953



1962



1968



1985



2003

# How Organizational Change is Supposed to Happen

1. Address the human side systematically
2. Start at the top
3. Involve every layer
4. Make the formal case
5. Create ownership
6. Communicate the message
7. Assess the cultural landscape
8. Address culture explicitly
9. Prepare for the unexpected
10. Speak to the individual

# But How Does Change Really Happen and How is it Perceived?

- Sudden
- Abrupt
- Apparently not well thought through
- Little involvement of affected parties
- Lack of communications
- Rumor mill becomes rampant
- Change merely for the sake of change?

# When the Change Wave Hits...

- First, be sure to take care of yourself
- Reassess: what are the new organizational priorities?
- If you are still there, who is the new boss? What can you learn about him or her?
  - Any previous experiences? Events?
  - Background, experience, education?
- Have your information at your fingertips – ready to display -- not buried in an electronic spreadsheet
  - Be able to promptly answer the question with visible data: what do you do? And how do you support the mission of this organization?

# 10 Personal Survival Steps When Change Occurs to You

1. Maintain a positive attitude
2. Recognize that change is constant
3. Stay connected with previous co-workers
4. Communicate with others to learn your new role
5. Be optimistic even though you might not be currently happy
6. Self-reflect
7. Welcome learning new skills
8. Over communicate
9. Ask as many questions as possible
10. Look for ways to help others cope with change as well

# Succeeding With Your New Boss

- Managing up is as important as managing down...
- So to succeed in “managing” your new boss:
  - Clarify mutual expectations early
  - Secure commitments for the resources you need
  - Aim for early wins in areas important to the boss
  - Aim for good marks from those whose opinions your boss respects

# Five Suggested Conversations With Your New Boss

- The situational diagnosis conversation
- The expectations conversation
- The style conversation
- The resources conversation
- The personal development conversation

# Framing the Conversations With Your New Boss

- *“Whose bread I eat, his song I sing”*
  - Old German Proverb
- How would change the framing of your communications if your reporting lines were shifted...
  - from production to legal
  - from legal to human resources
  - from human resources to compliance
  - and then back to production



# What About When Change = Your Unemployment?

- Recognize that, in this new environment, this is always a possibility and it is nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed about
- Always keep your resume updated and on your computer at home
- Maintain and cultivate professional networks before the change ever occurs
- Stay active in local and national professional organizations – these are key nodes of information
- Establish (and follow through) on a personal professional development strategy before the change occurs!
  - Suggest a three legged stool approach:
    - (1) progressive professional experience,
    - (2) academic achievement,
    - (3) recognized professional certification(s)

# Keep in Mind: Change Needn't Be All Negative


- Some very positive things can come from change...
  - Opportunities to learn new skills
  - Opportunities to “show your stuff”
  - You might actually like “green eggs and ham!”
  - Great things have come from change – so don't automatically rebel against it - just understand its going to occur



# Opinion Item for Discussion: Safety's Unchangeable Core Measures

Regardless of whatever changes occur, in some form or fashion, there are core elements that safety professionals need to be able to speak to (and readily back up with data):

- Losses
  - Personnel injuries/illnesses
  - Property losses
- Finances
  - Expenditures
  - Revenues/cost avoidance
- Compliance
  - External agency inspections
  - Internal assessments
- Client Satisfaction
  - Clients served
  - Safety program staff



*“Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”*

John F. Kennedy

# Some Possible Changes We Can Anticipate



- Will more and more safety professionals be functioning as independent consultants?
- Will the workers themselves be performing personal monitoring with their phones?
  - And recording everything, and sharing it real time?
- Ready access of mis-information on the web?
- Regulatory changes due to science or politics?
- The merging of safety and security?

# Summary



- Recognize that although our underlying goal in the profession remains constant, change in the field is inevitable – you may have between 6 to 30 bosses over your career!
- When change comes, resist the natural fear response – it may actually be opportunity knocking!
- Size up the new priorities, then gather and display your data accordingly
- Be sure to manage up!
- Keep a positive attitude – it will serve you well in the long run

# Parting thought....

*“Change is inevitable – except from a vending machine.”*

Robert C. Gallagher

# References

- Goman, CK Adapting to Change, 1992
- Web references used for the development of this presentation include:
  - <http://quickbase.intuit.com/blog/2014/07/02/10-tips-for-handling-change-in-the-workplace/>
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