

LEARNING TO CAPITALIZE ON CHANGE

By: Rick Warren

Most societies around the world have always found themselves in a state of change to some extent. But what makes *change* in the 21st century different from the kind of change experienced 50 years ago, for example, is its *speed, intensity, and unpredictability*:

- **THINGS CHANGE FASTER TODAY.** Technology is driving this increase in speed. The shelf life of products, for example, is getting shorter and shorter. New models, new methods, and new paradigms appear on the business scene daily.
- **THINGS CHANGE MORE GREATLY TODAY.** In the past, companies could remain competitive by making only incremental changes. Today, change happens on a *massive* scale. The so-called "recession" much of the world experienced some years ago was not really a recession at all. What was taking place was actually a fundamental *restructuring* of the economy, at both the national and international levels. Many of the jobs eliminated during that process are never going to return
- **THINGS CHANGE MORE UNPREDICTABLY TODAY.** There is no pattern to many of the changes in our world. Forecasting and long-range planning are high-risk activities now. We no longer can guarantee more of the same of anything. Perhaps the only prediction we can safely assume and act upon is the certainty that things *will* change!

In this "**age of unreason**," to the term suggested by writer Charles Handy, CEOs, managers, sales people and leaders must learn to think upside-down, inside out, and backwards in order to cope with this unpredictable environment. Business consultant Tom Peters has called this ability **thriving on chaos**. To succeed, you must do more than *cope* with change; you must *capitalize* on it! Rather than a threat, we should view every change as an opportunity in disguise. Since you can't stop change, you must learn to take advantage of it.

Here are three suggestions regarding change that we would be wise to consider from the Bible:

- 1. Keep a positive attitude toward change.** Although not all changes are good, we do have the freedom to choose our attitude toward them. Change, even when it is negative, can be an ally – If you take advantage of it and use it for good. "*Now your attitudes and thoughts must all be constantly changing for the better*" (Ephesians 4:23).
- 2. Never stop learning.** Never think that you know it all. Stay humble and you'll be surprised who you can learn from – clients, enemies, employees, competitors, friends, even children. "*The intelligent man is always open to new ideas. In fact, he looks for them*" (Proverbs 18:15).
- 3. Stay flexible!** Before glass bottles were invented, wine was kept in canteens made of animal skins. As the containers aged, they would become brittle and crack from new wine that was still fermenting and expanding. Jesus once said, "*You can't put new wine in old wineskins*" (Mark 2:21-22). Here was his point: When faced with change, we must adjust or we will explode!

Rick Warren is the author of the highly acclaimed, best-selling book, The Purpose-Drive Life, which has been translated into many languages and sold throughout the world. It affirms the importance of having a carefully considered, clearly expressed purpose to guide everyday life.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree that the pace of change has increased greatly in recent years? If so, what are some of the primary ways that change has affected you?
2. In general, how do you respond to change – do you welcome and embrace it, do you resist it, or react somewhere in between? Explain your answer.
3. As Rick Warren writes, change occurs whether we like it or not. What do you think is the greatest challenge in dealing with change effectively?
4. What are some practical ways that you can apply the suggestions for coping with change – keep a positive attitude toward it, never stop learning, and stay flexible?

NOTE: If you have a Bible, consider some of the following passages that relate to teamwork and team-building:

Proverbs 3:5-6, 19:2, 20, 27:1; 1 Chronicles 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:17