

Dealing With Change

by **Steven D Huff**

Everyone remembers the scene in the Wizard of Oz. Dorothy enters the house and is soon swept up in the twister. After several bizarre scenes of farm animals and neighbors flying past her window in the tornado, Dorothy and her dog Toto finally find themselves at rest on the ground. She slowly makes her way to the front door, opens it and steps outside. Of course, through that threshold she moves from her simple, familiar, black and white world into a remarkably different, fairy-tale-like, world of full technicolor. And then comes that classic line, as Dorothy looks at her dog and says, "Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore!"

Likewise, many business people look around and see a whirlwind of change happening in our world. We're all experiencing rapid changes in technology, the world economy, employment markets, and more. If you've been feeling like "we're not in Kansas anymore," -- you're right! According to the U.S. Congress: Office of Technology, "Change is happening faster than we can keep tabs on and threatens to shake the foundations of even the most secure American businesses." The business people who will succeed and flourish are those who learn to master change. So, here are a few ideas for making the most of change:

- **Assume Present Trends Will Not Continue** -- Ralph Larsen, CEO of Johnson & Johnson, observed that , "Fully one third of our more than 13 billion in revenue comes from products that simply did not exist five years ago." Larsen was identifying a business reality that exists for all of us: Change is inevitable and current trends simply cannot predict the future.
- **Learn To Move Quickly** -- One of the biggest reasons why successful business people fail is that they ride a horse until it drops before they shift horses. Robert H. Waterman offers this analysis: "The main strategic advantage for successful people will be organizational arrangements that allow them to move fast."
- **Ask Questions That Others Don't** -- The best business consultants are effective, not because they know all the answers or can immediately see the best solutions, but because they know how to ask the right questions. Masters of change must be the same way. Ask questions and probe for insights that others simply refuse to explore.
- **Don't Use Yesterday's Solutions On Today's Problems** -- John F. Kennedy once noted, "Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future." Don't get caught in the trap of believing that old ideas will succeed in today's situation.
- **Evaluate Every Change As A New Opportunity** -- It has been said, "Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time; what we want is for things to remain the same but get better." Learn to look at change as the opportunity for things to get better. Remember the words of Bruce Barton who said, "When you're through changing, you're through!"