

Center Enter Turn Sustain

Essays on Change Artistry



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Change Artistry

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I Center

1 Change Quotients

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Some wag said, “The only person who likes change is a wet baby.” Another favorite is “Everyone likes change, when someone else is doing it.”

If change is so inevitable, why do people, teams and organizations experience so much difficulty changing? We should be good at it!

In fact, we are good at change, but in our own particular way. We have a unique change quotient. Change quotients range from 0 to 1. Values close to 0 indicate slower changes and values approaching 1 indicate people who readily change. People with lower change quotients often view those with high change quotients as chaotic and “flighty”. Conversely, glacial describes low change quotients to those having change quotients approaching 1. 0 doesn’t mean “bad”, and 1 doesn’t mean “good”. The values are simply indicators.

Our preference for change depends on our heritage, personality, and work environment.

Our family creates our initial world view. Some families view consistency and slowness to change as admirable

qualities. Others feel adaptability and responsiveness are desirable attributes. You start with this view.

Personality builds on this foundation. Some people like closure. Do it once, and it's done forever. Others prefer to keep options open and frequently appear to make conflicting sequential decisions. OK what I mean: Given a choice between A or B, A gets chosen. Shortly thereafter, based on some new piece of information, B becomes the preferred answer. The final answer occurs when the time window closes, and there no more chances exist to change the answer. This appears (to me, at this time) to correspond to the **Myers-Briggs** "J/P" type comparison.

Lastly, the work environment influences how we feel about change. Large systems change slowly. Too much change too quickly, and the system (think company) becomes unstable. Complex, critical systems resist change too. Life critical software development should be written by people who aren't in a hurry to change things.

So what to do? The answer depends if you are the changer or the changee.

For the changee ...

Rhonda's Second Revelation: "When change is inevitable, we struggle most to keep what we value most." – Jerry Weinberg

- Remember everyone has a different change quotient.
What you see as change, they may view as stable.

- The Helpful Rule reminds us that “Regardless of how it looks, people are trying to be helpful.”
- Share with the changer what is most valuable to you.

For the change agent ...

Rules of Thumb for Change Agents – A manager gave me a photocopy of these. I BELIEVE they came from Herbet A. Shepard, OD Practitioner, Vol 7, No 3, Nov 1975

1. Stay Alive – This rule counsels against self-sacrifice on behalf of a cause you do not wish to be your last.
2. Start where the system is.
3. Never work uphill.
 - Don’t build hills as you go.
 - Work in the most promising arena.
 - Don’t use one when two could do it.
 - Don’t over-organize.
 - Don’t argue if you can’t win.
 - Play God a little.
4. Innovation requires a good idea, initiative and a few friends.
5. Load experiments for success.
6. Light many fires.
7. Keep an optimistic bias.
8. Capture the moment.

Understanding that we change differently as individuals leads to the conclusion that team and organizational changes present unique challenges.