



ITS ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

Change Wont Change

Stop the world I want to get off'. I want time out! You know that feeling where, like a hamster on a treadmill, you seem to be going round in circles. When change is happening so fast that it seems everything is spinning out of control. In the early 1970's futurist and writer Alvin Toffler hypothesised that this change will overwhelm people, the accelerated rate of technological and social change will leave them disconnected and suffering from "shattering stress and disorientation" – future shocked!

In his book he illustrates the increase in change by the "800 Lifetime Theory". If we take the last 50,000 years – since the beginning of mankind divided by 62 years (average life let's say), this equals 800 lifetimes since the beginning. So how have we spent these 800 lifetimes?

650 lifetimes were spent in the cave. Not until 55 lifetimes ago did we have syllabic writing (1400 BC). Not until 9 lifetimes ago did we have printing (1450). Only in the last 4 lifetimes have we had an accurate time measurement. During the last 2 lifetimes we have had the electric motor (1880). However, in the last lifetime and a half we have experienced air travel, space travel, microwaves, laser technology, rapid communications, computers, great medical advancements, and television. And in the last 1/2 lifetime we have experienced moon landings, genetic engineering, personal computers, the shuttle and artificial hearts. Essentially, everything that we know and take for granted has happened in the last 1 1/2 lifetimes.

Today's 21 year olds have watched 20,000 hours of TV, have played 10,000 of video games, talked for 10,000 hours on the phone and they have sent/received 250,000 emails or instant messages. Compare that reality with what our ancestors just 10 lifetimes ago would have been exposed to – the printing press hadn't even been invented yet. There are more than 540,000 words today in the English dictionary, that's about 5 times as many as during Shakespeare's time. And just to put communication in perspective, the number of text messages sent and received daily exceeds the population of the planet!

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As crazy and hectic as it is – change is not going to change and its sink or swim in the workplace. As the Boomers fade into retirement and Gen Y (current 13 to 31 year olds) takes root in the workplace, we're going to see some big changes ahead. The workplace is filling with the young kids of today, the most digitally active generation yet, having been born 'plugged in' and who know nothing else but rapid constant change. Whilst the Boomers may feel overwhelmed by it all the Y Generation knows no different.

There are two reasons why companies today need new and creative strategies in order to survive. Employees are changing - and technology is changing. In a way, everyone knows this of course. What's surprising - shocking even - is the sheer pace of that change. In both cases it's faster and more radical than anything we've seen before. Yet many organisations are no different in terms of style and make up than they were 10 years ago and comparatively speaking they are evolving at a snail's pace.

Organisations need to take cognisance of this now. Its not that change is dramatic and scary and that they have to 'suddenly' pull themselves together to confront a new threat, it's just that they've simply been ignoring the world around them for decades. The future is all about change - and we are fearful of change. There are many hopes and fears – perhaps an overpowering number, competing with each other and swirling about in the collective mind of humanity.

We should be monitoring these changes that could have an impact upon us; we should take them seriously, observe what's moving in our direction and then just do the basic work to be ready for the next momentous leap!

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