



Are You There, Success?

It's me, 2014!

How The Rut Was Dug...

2006: the year Twitter was launched, the year Western Union killed the telegram, the year NASA launched the first mission to Pluto (back then it was still a planet), and of course, the economy started to slow down. Then in December of 2007 the recession hit us full blown. Eight years ago, we saw the writing on the wall. We put our corporate growth initiatives into hibernation. We changed our focus from innovation to efficiency, from bolstering profits to protecting capital, and from proactive leadership to conservative management. We hunkered down, saw the light at the end of the tunnel, and coasted our way there.

So, now what? It's 2014. Our economy is on the upswing, innovation in technology hasn't slowed since 2006 and consumer confidence is 70% higher than it was at the start of this decade. We should be jumping up and down shouting "carpe diem." Instead, we are trying to find the best shovel to get us out of our rut. Is it the technology shovel that will upgrade our tools and position our infrastructure for growth; is it the talent shovel that will bring us the brightest innovative minds? While the tools of change are important, it really starts in the collective minds of your leadership. So read on to get elevated.

Why Don't Organizations Change?

Simply put: change is hard. It's a long and often dirty process, and even the most informed change initiatives are subject to the same variables that undermine less well-thought plans: people, technology, processes, money and the overarching culture of our organizations. It's easy to see these variables as road blocks and avoid change as a result. The best way to overcome these obstacles is to change the way we think of them.

- **Outdated technology and tools:** Over the last decade the recession rut kept many organizations from updating their infrastructure. Getting bogged down in the need to update MCIF, HRIS, and intranet systems will keep you from embarking on large scale change initiatives. While these tools are necessary and help create better programs, updates should not stop you from exploring change and making incremental progress. What's certain is that these problems can't continue to be the quiet elephant in the room. Contract an expert to examine your current capabilities, determine the gap between what you have and what you need, then create a plan and budget to get updated.
- **Sunken cost investments:** From time to time, we all buy a bridge. We make investments in programs that look like the airplane to the future, and instead we take a ride on the Titanic. Don't wait for the last life raft. Just jump ship. So now that you get the metaphor, let's shoot straight. You spent too much time and money on a failed program; you teeter between frustration and the hope it will just magically click. The truth is, the longer you continue trying to make it work, the more time and money you are wasting. Accepting you are in a rut is the first step to getting out.
- **Bureaucracy:** All that focus on efficiencies has really strengthened your operations. You have a new arsenal of forms, protocols and procedures all coveted by their creators. Strengthening controls is an important measure especially when your organization is subject to regulation and auditing, but have you gone too far? If the reins are too tight, you may stifle innovation. Sure, you need processes, protocols and procedures... but you also need passion! It's a good time to unwind some of the red tape. Get your administrators on the next hot phrase in pop management text: "adaptive controls."

Progressive Thoughts from Professional Thinkers



So now that we've countered some of your arguments against change, we'll turn to the experts to discuss how you should reinvigorate your organization. Dan Mroz, PhD and organizational guru, is certain when he tells us, "there is no set formula for innovation," but he does offer some fantastic suggestions. Hint: it's all about people. **1) Create a learning environment:** Learning encourages collaboration, idea generation and professional development - innovate by drawing out the best in your people and putting them in the right roles. **2) Consider your attitude:** If your culture needs to be re-energized, examine the projected attitudes of your leaders. Do you truly encourage an open,

honest and collaborative environment? **3) Celebrate small wins:** employee recognition is more than just perks and bonuses. Celebrate your employees when they contribute to organizational knowledge. Mroz advises celebrating small wins because it creates an "organic sense of progress."



Amplify the Message:

Uplift your organization by supporting the developmental needs of your employees.

If brainstorming meetings with your team turn up more roadblocks than possibilities, MIT scholar Clark Gilbert may suggest you need more "Energizers" among you. "Energizers see realistic possibilities; de-energizers see roadblocks." Energizing your staff by creating a compelling vision for change. Take their minds off of past or current problems by presenting an inspiring possibility for the future. Do be certain that the goals of each member of your change teams are realistic. If it is overwhelming or difficult to execute due to resource issues, the discussions of possibilities will quickly turn back to roadblocks.



Amplify the Message:

Lead change efforts with a strong vision that is both inspiring and realistic.

Ultimately, it's about recognizing when it's time to change and taking steps to snap yourself and your organization out of a rut. The Recovering Leader recommends concrete action when you have accepted you are in a rut. Among his advice is the need to "face it" by discussing your organization's complacency with an advisor who will give it to you straight. He also advises you tackle the "bigger enduring issues" first. Remember the top reasons organizations don't change? Those reasons are things that can be, well, changed. Rank them in order of importance and knock them out of the way.

Get in-SPIRED

"Change is the law of life and those who only look to the past or present are certain to miss the future." - John F. Kennedy

in-FUSE Your Solution:

in-FUSION Group was founded in the wake of the economic downturn, and we've achieved remarkable growth in our first five years of business because of our ability to help organizations through both the tough times and periods of growth and change. If you are ready to make the transition from triage management to innovative leadership, in-FUSION Group can help you find the energy, implement the tools, and bury the roadblocks to organizational change. We work with you, not for you to manage all aspects of change, from leadership coaching and culture change, to managing the projects that help you reach your ultimate vision.

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Smart People We Quoted:

- 1) Mroz, D. 2013. How to Invigorate Innovation in a Stagnant Organization. From Wire Magazine's Innovation Insights blog.
- 2) Gilbert, C. 2003. Exploring the Architecture of Disruption. MIT Sloan Management Review.
- 3) Peck, D. 2013. Leading from the Rut: 7 Ways to Snap out of Complacency. The Recovering Leader on Huffington Post.