

Who Moved My Tent? Three Strategies for Dealing with Change

By Peter McLaughlin



One day, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. They set up their tent, crawled inside, and quickly fell asleep. A few hours later, Holmes woke his faithful friend and said: “Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see.”

Watson replied, “I see millions of stars.”

“What does that tell you?”

Watson pondered for a minute and then said: “Astrologically, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. Meteorologically, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you?”

Holmes was silent for a moment, and then said: “Watson, you idiot, someone has stolen our tent!”

All humor aside, the story illustrates an important point, especially for all of us at Navistar: Often, changes occur so quickly that we, like Watson, fail to come to grips with the new landscape. Our tent is gone. We’re left alone in the woods without shelter, and we’re not prepared for it. That’s why you as business leaders, whether it’s in sales, management, or support must be ready to tackle anything, at any time.

Getting Ready for Anything: Those business professionals who want to be successful and lead a sane, healthy, and happy life need a new kind of training—one that business schools don’t provide. To take an analogy from Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, ***most of today’s leaders (not you, of course), like institute-trained mechanics, are ready for everything—except a new situation.***

If you are to be ready for anything, your training must pay as much attention to you as well as, to the business. That means focusing on your personal and professional

development rather than just focusing on the situation. It's about becoming more optimistic and resilient, more creative and energetic. How do you actually do that? Well, consider the following:

Get Active! Physically fitter equals mentally tougher: You need a combination of aerobic workouts, strength training, and some variety of stretching to maintain the energy and positive emotions necessary to navigate a new landscape. Elizabeth Curtis, CEO of Sharp Community Medical Group in San Diego works out most mornings and rides her horse most weekends. She does so because her job demands it: Working with eleven hundred physicians is not easy. "I don't know how anyone can find the energy to keep up and to make crucial decisions without the benefits of exercise and healthy eating," she says. "Nothing relieves my stress like an hour at the fitness center or a 20-minute run."

So how do you fit exercise into an already busy schedule? That's where some creative scheduling comes into play. Chances are if you really look, you can find 30 minutes of free time in your day. Perhaps you'll need to wake a half hour earlier to adequately fit exercise in. And in fact, that's the best approach. Because exercise stimulates the right side of the brain, those who exercise first thing in the morning tend to get their most creative ideas during that time. So not only is exercise good for the body, but it's good for the brain too!

Leave a "Positive Emotional Wake:" Renowned author Peter Drucker once said, "A leader is a person who controls his own energy and orchestrates the positive energy of the people around him." Realize that everywhere you go; you leave an "emotional wake." If it's negative, your company produces less quantity and certainly less quality. In any situation, you can be angry or you can solve problems; rarely can you do both.

Martin Seligman, Ph.D., author of *Learned Optimism* and *Authentic Happiness*, has corralled the best psychologists in America to study positive emotions. His research proves what a lot of us suspected: Positive emotions help you become more productive at work, healthier, longer-lived, and happier. The results of Seligman's research give us the answer as to what and how to change in order to be more consistently positive and optimistic. For example, consider the following:

An optimist tells herself a good story, especially after a defeat. In Seligman's words, to be more positive, use an "optimistic explanatory style." For example, say, "The deal was almost done when the stock market hit the skids. That's not our fault. We'll get them next time," versus "I never win the big ones," or "It's hopeless dealing with big committees." Or, "I can't stand the change moving from Atlanta to Chicago." Instead, you might say, "Ah, new beginnings, new culture, how exciting!"

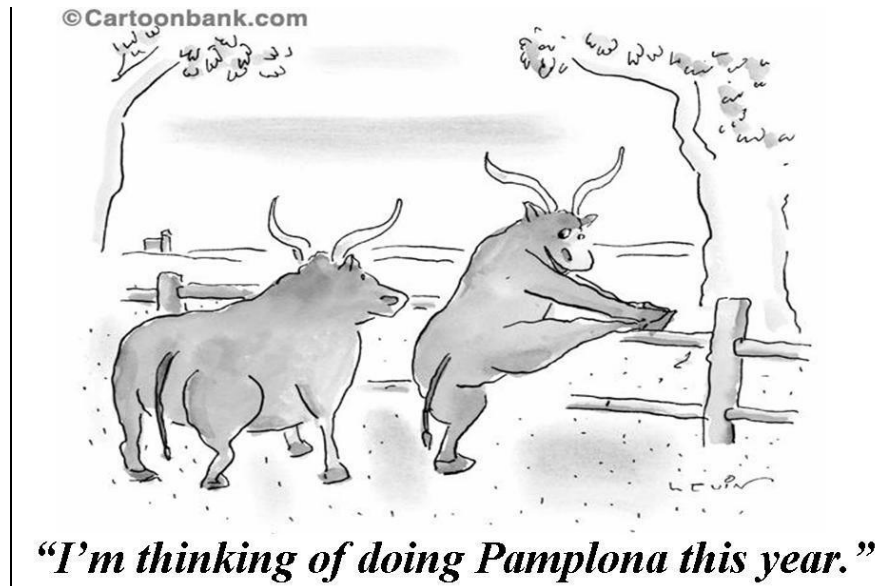
Perform a daily act of gratitude. But don't just send an arbitrary e-mail to someone. Rather, use handwritten notes, special phone calls, or surprise cubicle visits. Your team members will love it, but the real change happens within you.

Change The Company Environment from Hindquarters to Headquarters:

Look at the average company. Most, if not all, meetings are set up in the left-brained, logical, linear, sequential-thinking mode. Position titles are left-brained as well: CEO, CFO, COO, and CIO. We have budget meetings, operational meetings, and technology meetings. ***But where's the committee for creativity and innovation?*** Who got rewarded for the most innovative customer save or creative sale? Perhaps these are topics you can bring up at your next meeting.

Additionally, from a Feng Shui point of view, most of our offices are “hindquarters,” designed around where we put our rear ends. What we need are “headquarters,” places that encourage ideas and visionary solutions. While day-to-day business operations certainly depend on logical decisions and structure, we’ve gone overboard. We need to encourage the creative thinking that anticipates the new environment.

Stake Your Tent...And Your Claim: Those business professionals like you, who have had their tents pitched in uncharted territory, can become true leaders. Sure, they may be bit apprehensive of change initially, but because they’re physically fit, enthusiastically optimistic, and headquartered in creative thinking, they embrace the future in the new world of technology, globalization, and ever-aging employees...and their results are better for it. So the next time someone moves your tent, *like right now*, though not Eminent, we know will happen sooner rather than later, admire the new view and passionately embrace the change.



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