Dinosaurs or Dynamos: Entrepreneurial Skills for the Future of HR

Part V, Giving Up on Change Management

by Lynne Eisaguirre

"Do you speak on change?" is one of the most frequent requests I receive as a speaker.

“Our organization has been going through a reorganization (downsizing, rightsizing, reengineering, merger, start-up, becoming a public company, growth pains—take your pick!), and our people are having a hard time adjusting. We need a speaker to come in and help our people learn how to manage change. They don’t seem to have the right attitude. Can you do that?"

I try not to laugh or sigh, depending upon what kind of day I’m having. “I speak on change but I have a different approach from most speakers or trainers,” I begin. “I don’t believe that learning how to manage change is very useful for most people.”

“Oh really,” the perplexed client—usually an HR professional or CEO—responds. “I’m not sure what you mean.”

As I explain to the client, if we’re only managing change we’re probably in a reactive or catch-up mode. I try to help people anticipate and plan for the future instead. The future is all about change but language is so important that I avoid the words “managing change.” It makes people focus on something that’s being done to them, rather than their own active participation. “Change management” programs also sometimes create the illusion that this change will be the last and allows the ostriches among us to hunker down and wait it out—an “I’m going to hide until things calm down” attitude. Most organizations today are trying to encourage employees to feel “empowered” (another fuzzy word). The whole idea of change management runs counter to that goal.

As John Sculley, former president of Apple, emphasizes: “The best way to be ready for the future is to invent it.” I agree with William Bridges’ prediction in Jobshift: How to Prosper in the New Economy, that in the future we will all be contingent workers without traditional tidy job descriptions. Learning how to manage work in the “dejobbed” workplace of the future will require skills far beyond “change management.”

The workers you counsel will have to acquire entrepreneurial skills in order to stay happily working. As HR pros, you will increasingly be called upon to demonstrate and teach these skills. Successful entrepreneurs stay ahead of change and anticipate the future. As Andy Grove, founder of Intel, emphasizes in his new book, Only the Paranoid Survive, we need to learn the power of positive paranoia. In a future without jobs, we need to help our workforce learn how to forecast the future, and then imagine and place themselves in their new work, rather than just teaching workers how to manage the present chaos. Future forecasting and planning is a way of creating power in the present moment for your employees.

A provocative ad I saw recently asked: “The World Wide Web is the Future. Do you want to be the spider or the fly?” To which I would add the twist, “Do you want to spin your own future work or just be caught in the web of change?” HR professionals and other leaders will need to become role models. The best way you can help others change is to evolve gracefully yourself.

To do this you will need another additional element we have not yet discussed in this Dinosaurs or Dynamos series, a queren-cia. A querencia is a term from bullfighting, which is not a bad metaphor for how HR professionals and others will feel as they evolve into future workers.

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News Flash

Colorado Human Resource Association welcomes you to the grand opening ceremony of their web site. Members of CHRA will see firsthand what will now be available via the Internet. Join us to receive the web site address and to enter a drawing for a free luncheon meeting.

When: March 19, 1997
1:30-3:30 p.m. (immediately following the luncheon)

Where: Marriott Southeast — Hampden & I-25

What: In addition to a tour of CHRA’s web site and an overview of the uses of Internet/Intranets in HR, you will have the opportunity to meet with product and service providers who specialize in...
- Internet-based business solutions
- Web site design
- Internet communication links
- Internet training
- Hardware configuration

To attend, simply write on your luncheon reservation card that you are interested in attending the web site introduction. If you call in your registration, just mention your interest in attending.

See you there!