

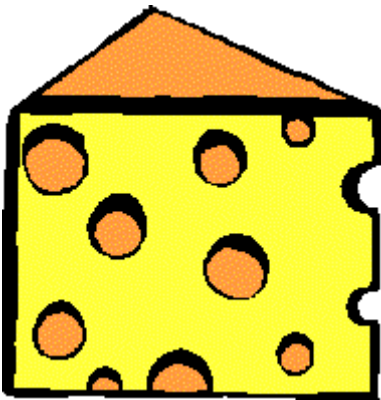


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Move Your Own Cheese A Personal Development Challenge

By Alvin Day



In this fast-paced world, change has become a part of everyday life. With the introduction of technology, the expanse of opportunity and the advent of the Information age, we have come to anticipate the often disruptive, always dramatic, infusion of change in our lives. Decades ago, it was typical for people to work at the same company for 10 years or more. Now, people are accustomed to having to move around from job to job and company to company every 2 or 3 years. We have abandoned the comfort of stability for an ever-evolving lifestyle. You may say that the only constant we can feel assured of is the fact that change is just around the corner.

Despite its frequent presence in our lives, many continue to fear change. After all, it is true that change brings disruption to an otherwise comfortable situation. People often dislike their jobs, feel they are not well paid, and have issues with company policies, but when they consider the bigger picture, most decide that they have become quite comfortable, enjoy most of their colleagues and have a reasonable commute to work each day. Finding a new job, raising income, moving a little further up the ladder would come with great demands. It is tempting to ignore the need for change until circumstances force action. I once heard of an experiment that proved that a frog thrown into a tub of boiling water will insistently leap out in concern for self-preservation. However, the same frog sitting in perfectly cool water that is raised in temperature by 2 degrees every few hours will stay there, unaware, until it actually boils. Can you see the link with human behavior?

Several years ago, an author named Spencer Johnson wrote a book called "Who Moved My Cheese?" Two mice awake one day surprised to see that the place where they usually find their cheese is empty. The book goes on to explain how the mice waste time trying to explain, rationalize and understand this change. The crafty allegory clearly explains the perils of a slow and ineffective response to changing circumstances. In the late 1990's, the book was very well received in the business world and used to help train executives on how to quickly and effectively adapt when necessary. Today, it is not enough to be quick and responsive to change. If you are going to stay ahead, you must be an agent of change; you must move your own cheese.

If the title of this article drew your interest, if you seek significant growth and improvement, then you do not want to keep up; you want to lead. Great improvements of mankind typically come through disruption, pain, crisis and trouble. It is in the ruptures and discontinuities of life that openings are made for huge leaps forward. On your quest for self-improvement, there are many helpful steps you can take. In order to help you create rather than adjust, direct rather than accept the opportunities that are buried deep in every conflict, I suggest the following three strategies.

1) Read Things Worth Reading

Seek out the wisdom that others have hidden in books. There is a wealth of knowledge available to you that is not taught in schools. Reading opens up a body of learning that develops your personality, your character, your fiber and your unique strengths. In this purpose driven world of information, you can find instructions on how to enhance skills that can help you earn more, fulfill your life's purpose, develop your communication skills and improve your personal relationships. Ask any successful entrepreneur what they are reading right now and they are likely to respond with the latest self improvement title. They understand that the best way to move your own cheese is to move yourself. Read what they are reading. Create a personal hunger for these materials; they can dramatically change your life.

2) Get Your Head Out Of The Sand

As a budding winner in a changing world, one of the greatest errors you could commit in your quest for success is to work so hard, so diligently, that you hold your head down and forget to look up and see what is going on around you. While it is tempting to believe that the most important factor in achieving the success you desire is good old fashioned hard work, it would be a great hindrance to your objective to ignore such equally important aspects as relationships, networking, and visibility. There are several ways of expanding beyond the immediate concerns of your job or small business. Volunteer for special assignments that are only slightly related to your position, they will empower you with a broader, more useful knowledge. Attend industry seminars, they will help you to make contacts, become more visible and learn about neighboring trades. Create alliances with complimentary businesses, they will help build a useful network, obtain referrals and secure new clients. Look up and search for opportunities that will expand your experience, enhance your work, and improve yourself. They will distinguish you in the workplace, help you make more money, and ultimately, enrich your life.

3) Learn From The Far Side

If you want to create healthy change that will insulate you against the unpredictable circumstances that drive most people's lives, you must go one step further. Not only should you look outside of the confines of your day to day job and begin to interact with your industry at a higher level, but you also need to begin looking outside your industry. If you broaden your mind and experiences by exploring the strengths and best practices inherent in other companies, industries and professions, you will be endowed with a body of knowledge containing success methods of which your competitors are not yet aware. You could invent the next best product in your industry by adapting the latest phenomenon in another industry; you could create the most effective sales presentation in your company by understanding and then customizing methods used in a larger company; you could increase your referral rate and raise your new client levels by incorporating the techniques of a customer service professional into the daily routine of a salesperson. Examining the tactics and strategies of others will allow you to inject fresh energy and ideas into your approach.



If your cheese has not been moved recently, it is probably getting stale. Given the nature of today's business world you should prepare yourself for major change at all times. Merely responding leaves you in a precarious position of uncertainty. It is far more desirable to create change that affects your life in a positive way. In order to attain and maintain the level of achievement that you want in life, move your own cheese, make your own waves, be your own leader. Nothing less will satisfy in your journey to greatness.

About the author:

Alvin Day is the Founder and Executive Director of *Sales Empowerment Institute*, a professional development and sales training organization helping people in the areas of personal and professional growth. Day delivers a message of personal empowerment as well as specific sales strategies in both private and public seminars. To

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