

## Change Stinks. Long Live Change!

By Mark Zust



Anybody who tells you that they love change is a little nuts.

I should know. I'm one of those people who believe change is always necessary and ultimately good for the soul. The reality is, human beings **hate** change. Why? Because it's scary, unpredictable, even painful. To make matters worse, change is largely unknowable and mostly uncontrollable.

Yet, you can't pick up a business book, a political memoir or the latest diet guide without reading that change is a necessary element to embrace as we navigate today's frenetic, rapidly shifting world.

If you run a business, the implication is even scarier: If you don't change, and right quick, you're dead.

To make the challenge to change even more interesting, it turns out your clients aren't crazy about change, either. They want their experience with your firm to be satisfying and reassuring, not dynamic and constantly evolving. Yet, these same clients are expecting you to provide new products, improved efficiencies (which they translate into fixed or reduced prices to them) and, of course, better service.

So, is it possible to put your arms around change and grow your business in powerful, unexpected ways? Sure. Lots of people have done it and lived to tell the tale. People like Albert Einstein, Betty Friedan, Berry Gordy and Steve Jobs **have all changed the culture by their willingness to do things that were familiar, but in a different way.**

This is the essence of accepting and managing change. Look for something that is familiar, then approach it from a new perspective. Einstein looked at time, something everyone viewed as fixed and immutable, and challenged the assumption. More importantly, he came up with an alternative model, his Theory of Relativity. Music producer Berry Gordy mixed tribal rhythms, gospel, and rock and roll into a soulful concoction that you couldn't help but dance to, and gave birth to Motown. Betty Friedan gave women a new voice and a bible for self-realization by first listening intently to what women said they were experiencing in their day to day lives. Steve Jobs' team at Apple stuck their tongues out at IBM's beige box and re-envisioned the personal computer as friendly and easy to use. Not content with reinventing the PC, the Apple team went on to create the i-Pod as not just another mp3 player, but rather an entirely new system for downloading and enjoying music. In 2007 they turned the phone industry on its ear with the iPhone and in 2011 Apple reinvented the tablet industry by introducing the iPad. Who knows what giant they'll aim their slingshots at next. That creative restlessness is at the core of both subtle refinements and startling innovations.

Contrary to many urban legends, none of the amazing intellectual, social and technological breakthroughs sprung full-grown from the head of Zeus. They were developed by people who were using what was already available but who had the stones to say: "You know, I think this could be done better". Then they went about the tough, grinding work of making change happen.

Are you up for change? It's not really a fair question, because change is hurtling toward you whether you're prepared for it or not. So, consider this easy, low-risk way to condition yourself for change:

1. Go to the library and pick out a book at random. Read it, even if you have zero interest in the subject matter. Then, go get another book from another section and read that one, too.
2. Listen to music from a genre you hate or from a country you don't know anything about. The library is chock full of selections. You'll begin to connect with the poets of another generation and maybe a slice of culture you've been avoiding or have been blissfully unaware of. Heck, you may even like it!
3. Try a least one new food each week. Sample something exotic at a restaurant or fix something at home from a world cookbook.
4. Go home tonight and rearrange the furniture. If that's just too crazy for your delicate sensibilities, then rearrange a shelf or your underwear drawer.
5. Try something else that's beyond your skill set and way out of your comfort zone.

These suggestions may sound hokey, but they work. Try implementing a few ideas for one month and write me a nasty letter if I'm wrong. The only way to start looking at change from the perspective of possibility is to shake up your world, first with little changes. Then when the bigger changes arrive and start rattling your comfortable existence, you'll be willing to look at them from a new perspective – one of possibility. Sure, sometimes change stinks, but it's here to stay. Are you planning to barricade the doors or put out the welcome mat?

*For more than 25 years Mark has helped companies large and small get the most from their brand investment by providing brand tune-ups, overhauls and everything in between. That's why business owners call Mark the "brand mechanic". He is available for brand evaluation, consulting, messaging and team training. For details, visit [www.zustco.com](http://www.zustco.com). To schedule a meeting with Mark to discuss your brand, call Zust and Company at 440-777-8373.*