

Make It an Encore Year

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Whether the coming year is exciting and new or redundant and boring is up to you. To create an encore year-the kind of year you'd like to repeat again instead of forget about forever-develop a plan. Here's what I suggest: Be a game changer. Why does Starbucks get so much attention? They were a game changer. Historically coffee shops served coffee; Starbucks brewed up a new experience.

Gary Hamel classifies businesses in three categories: the rule makers, the rule takers and the rule breakers. Big companies often become the rule makers and most of us regrettably occupy the territory of rule takers. The winners set out to break the rules. Yes, it is risky, but risk is always the price of big success.

Focus on finding and creating value.

Creation results in revenue; consumption is an expense. Enron and the subprime mortgage debacle have reminded us that if something seems too good to be true, it is neither. The winners are always those who discover, uncover, or create real value.

Michael Lewis, author of *Panic: The Story of Modern Financial Insanity* was interviewed by the Wall Street Journal in December 2008. He said, "We have entered a period of risk aversion unlike anything we've seen in our lifetime. Investors will be too wary for a while. You will read stories about people who got rich betting against subprime mortgages and then about people who combed through the wreckage and found bargains. The next rich wave will be those who figure out where the value is (emphasis added). As for the average American investor, he'll be a deer in the headlights for years. It will be a while until greed gets comfortable again."

Do less and accomplish more.

Business should not be about busy-ness. Leaders know that results, not activity, are what count. One of the great paradoxes of life is that we can accomplish more of importance when we schedule less activity.

People tell me they "must" do things that are not important. I don't get it. More often we "choose" to do things that aren't important and rationalize our decision. If you work for a boss who demands you do work that doesn't add to the success of your organization directly or indirectly, it is time to find a new boss.

Honestly assess what you are doing and how you spend your time. Much of our daily effort is consumed by the routine and habitual, not the important and productive.

Identify and destroy time-wasting activities. Watch TV if you really need to relax, but don't do it as a default activity.

Make improvement intentional and consistent.

In my book, *The Encore Effect*, I describe the need for “a new kind of PDA: a Performance Development Agenda.” I have observed that few people make improvements in their performance intentional. And yet our performance, skills, and ability rarely if ever improve accidentally.

To have more of what you desire in life, become more of who you need to be. It is important to read the right books, attend the right seminars and take the right courses. The key is in the word “right.” What makes an improvement activity “right” for you depends on how you are trying to improve. For many, their efforts toward improvement are neither directed nor purposeful.

High performers determine how they want to improve and then find and utilize the resources that will enable them to do it.

Use the Power of Commitment to Achieve Remarkable Performance

Remarkable performance does not happen by accident. Whether delivered individually or organizationally, it is always preceded by commitment. Think about the connection between commitment and performance this way:

- *Commitment is the price you are willing to pay to get remarkable results.*
- *Performance reveals the price you have paid.*

Consider:

- A remarkable performance reveals how highly you value (price) your customer, spouse, child, boss, co-worker, or other goal (athletics, music, academics, and so on).
- A poor performance reveals how little you value (price) those same people or goals.

When we deliver a remarkable performance we are saying, “There is no other place or way I would rather spend my “commitment dollars” than on you. But when we deliver a poor performance we are saying, “My “commitment dollars” would be better spent somewhere else.

Which do you want to communicate when it comes to your most important relationships and goals?

Commitment is not a binary (either/or, on/off, yes/no) experience. You and I make choices every day that reveal different levels of commitment. For instance, I enjoy the occasional good movie, but I have no intention of being a movie reviewer, so I am not committed to viewing every movie that comes out. That would be a poor investment of my “commitment dollars.”

You are making the same choices daily. Our challenge is to make smart, conscious investments of commitment; to pay the right price at the right time and place. When a remarkable performance is called for, we need to be ready to write a check and pay the price.

1. LEVEL – Interested

EVIDENCE

Aware of the basics and adding to that knowledge on a casual basis.

Non-remarkable: the equivalent of flipping through magazines or listening to Headline News working out at the gym.

2. LEVEL – Informed

EVIDENCE

Knowledgeable as a result of persistent, intentional study.

Potential for remarkable: subscribing to magazines, buying books, taking classes, attending to seminar

3. LEVEL – Involved

EVIDENCE

Knowledgeable as a result of both study and activity

Evidence of desire for remarkable: taking what they are learning and applying it to life; beginning to make positive changes in light of recognized benefits.

4. LEVEL – Immersed

EVIDENCE

Recognized as an expert or specialist

Gateway to remarkable performance: rising above the pack, standing out in the crowd; expert/specialist status creates desirability and indispensability.

5. LEVEL – Invested

EVIDENCE

Recognized as “a” leader in the field

Consistently remarkable performance: investing time, talent, and treasure in

improving; clearly committed to education, improvement, and continually seeking higher standards of performance.

6. LEVEL – Innovative

EVIDENCE

Recognized as “the” leader in the field

Defines remarkable performance: doesn’t seek new standards as much as set new standards of excellence and remarkable performance. Discovers new, innovative ways to increase his/her own value by meeting the needs of others.

8 Realities of Change

Reality #1: Change will come to everyone-even you!

At an intellectual level, we understand the impact of change, but we really don’t think it will happen to us until it actually does. We believe that change affects other people but that we’re immune. It’s been astutely noted that the difference between a recession and a depression is this: in a recession your next-door neighbor loses his job. In a depression you lose your job. The key is to understand and accept change as a personal and concrete reality and to understand that it will affect you in the future.

Reality #2: Change is now the norm, not the exception.

At a biological level, change and adaptation are normal and natural. But at an intellectual level change is anything but natural. We’re taught how to read, we’re taught how to write, but we aren’t taught how to deal with change. It’s assumed that somehow basic skills will add up and help us make changes. Maybe they did once, but events are redefining stability. No longer can we base our stability on external circumstances or conditions. All stability today is based on internal resilience. We need to develop an internal gyroscope to deal with the rapidly changing world we live in.

Reality #3: You’re not imagining it: change is painful.

If corporate America has been guilty of ignoring one important aspect of change, it’s that change hurts. The era of revolutionary corporate change, which is still just beginning, promises enormous economic improvement, but threatens substantial human pain. It is naïve to minimize or to discount the pain of change, whether it’s for yourself or for the people who you work with.

Reality #4: It’s not back to normal, but forward to normal.

The past cannot explain the future. It is irrational to look forward to things getting back to “normal,” the way they used to be; things will never be the same. No amount of wishing, hoping, or waiting will bring back the past. Therefore, we need to focus on the challenges of the future rather than dwell on the nostalgia of the past.

Reality #5: Change is relative.

Some people and some industries are being rocked more severely by change than others. For example, I worked with a client in the utility business that was experiencing layoffs for the first time in their century-long history. This was devastating and traumatic. But in other industries, layoffs have been going on for the last several years and are a way of life. Your present change resilience will be determined by how much change you've been accustomed to in the past.

Reality #6: The skills and beliefs needed for mastering change are transferable.

When it comes to change, the world is our classroom. Whether it's at work or at home, with a spouse, or with a colleague, we have plenty of opportunities to apply what we've learned about change. You see context and circumstance may change, but truth is truth. That's why it's important to learn the fundamentals of change.

Reality #7: We're not in control of the majority of the changes that impact us.

Some changes are self-initiated, while others are imposed by higher ups or circumstance. We can no longer count on being able to choose what changes we'll have to deal with. We've got to be capable of dealing with imposed changes as well as dealing with the changes made by choice.

Reality #8: Even change itself has changed.

What has changed about change? First, the speed of change is different; telecommunications broadcast world events into our living rooms as they occur. The magnitude of change is different. Because of the velocity of technological innovation, changes today are larger and more dramatic than those of the past. We've gone from new and improved to unimaginable and radical. And of course, there's complexity. We live in an interconnected world; change is seldom singular, and the challenge is that it usually requires the input or cooperation of others if we're going to address the change.