

Dealing with Change

Shiera O'Brien, Zenith Training, asks what can change teach us and highlights the catalyst Change can be to help us see what really matters to us.



We Don't Like Change!

As human beings, we don't like change! We spend most of our time building our lives, our careers and our businesses to a point of stability, comfort and certainty, that will bring us safely through to another point, where we can benefit positively from all that we have worked towards. Then along comes a financial crisis that throws a massive spanner into that plan and brings unwelcome change.

Change is not something we really anticipate, want or expect, until it happens. Very often it knocks us completely, particularly in the form of a job loss. If we own a practice, it visits as a significant fall-off in business, which can truly put the axe to any plans to grow, prosper or sustain a life style we've built. And when change does come along, as it has for thousands of professionals recently, the natural reaction is to reach back to that place of certainty and try to recreate the old.

A Changing Ireland and Professional Landscape

Ireland was on course for the biggest economic boom in our history. We built up so much confidence and certainty in continued growth and prosperity, that we believed that nothing could really knock it. And then something did! It is probably safe to say, that no industry was left untouched by the sharp decline in the economy during this time.

It is no longer as easy to find a new job, at the same salary, if the one we were in didn't work out. Businesses are learning that you don't just suddenly find new clients, if the steady reliable clients disappear. And they have to work harder to keep the ones they have. The very fabric upon which our economy was built disintegrated into a whole new reality that we weren't equipped to handle.

Positive Aspects that Change Can Bring

Here are some thoughts and questions on the positive aspects that Change can bring to those who are currently looking for new job opportunities or rebuilding their accountancy practice.

Accept Change and Notice its Good Points

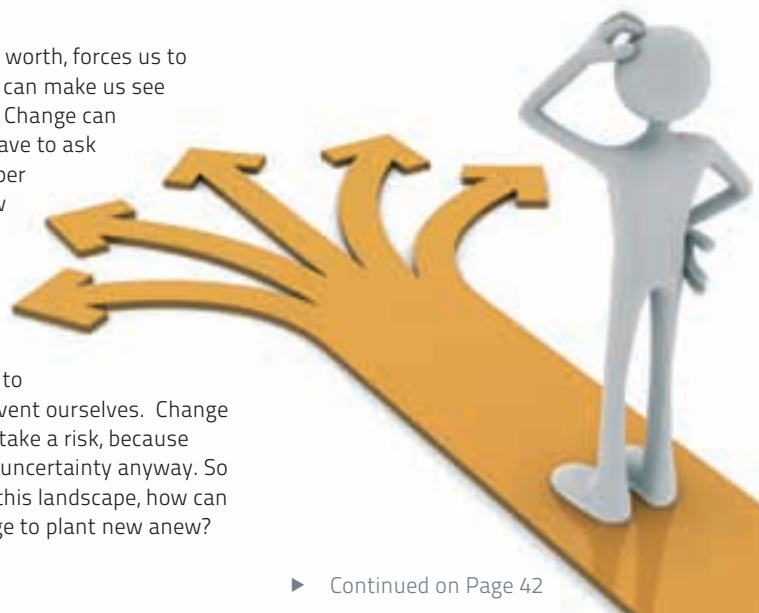
'A man should look for what is, and not for what he thinks should be.' Albert Einstein

We are very much conditioned to respond to events in limited ways that focus on the event and the problem it created. I have heard and read many ideas around the situation we are in economically and how we could have done things differently and not wasted the boom years. The reality is, on some level, perhaps, we believed our economic boom wouldn't end.

But let's look at how we can work with what IS right NOW. Having the old response, where somebody out there should fix our economy or create jobs, because somebody out there is responsible is not going to bring back what we had!

Change, for what it's worth, forces us to re-evaluate. Change can make us see what really matters. Change can wake us, when we have to ask ourselves some deeper questions about how we are doing things. Change always brings some new ideas, innovation and freshness. Change can force us to dig deeper and re-invent ourselves. Change is an opportunity to take a risk, because you are in a place of uncertainty anyway. So now that we are on this landscape, how can you work with change to plant new anew?

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Take a Higher View of Change

"No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." Albert Einstein

The habit of the mind is to always look at a problem and resolve it using ways that worked, when things were different. So if you are looking to see how you would grow your practice or you are looking to find a new job, and you have not come up with any ideas on how to do that, take a higher view. Notice what you notice about how you are thinking about the change that has been "visited" on you.

Notice the conclusions you are drawing about Change. Are they all true? What other truths are you not noticing, while you reach these conclusions? Will this matter in 10 years? Where do you need to focus your mind to get different results? Who can you connect with that is going to give you a better perspective? What if you took total responsibility for this change? How much better would you feel? How do you need to think to make progress in turning this change into an opportunity immediately?

So many great thinkers explored the power and ability of our minds to create anew. Einstein always took the higher view, because it gave him a very different perspective on his research and opened up new solutions. Your mind and your thinking can be your greatest ally in times of change.

Change What Changes Means to You

"Change is an announcement that something isn't working." Neale Donald Walsh

That is a powerful meaning for change. What we, as a nation, were doing clearly wasn't sustainable. We had the highest levels of price and wage inflations, borrowings and personal debt in decades. Ireland was indeed pricing itself out of the competitive market place. Perhaps this was a necessary correction to bring better things.

The events we experience are shaped by the meaning we give to the experience and what we do with it rather than the event itself. Are you still seeing your life/business

through old lenses, when people were willing to pay more, or when it was easy to move from a job to job? Are you trying to sell your services in the old world, where business came easily through the door?

Give a few different meanings to change and as you do that, notice your emotional response to this idea of change. This change could be the best thing that ever happened to you. Maybe you needed or wanted this change. Perhaps you are now doing things you would never have done, if this change hadn't come along. What's great about this change? What's not perfect yet?

Create a New Paradigm of Comfortable Uncertainty

"Imagination is more powerful than knowledge." Albert Einstein

We have been forced into a new structural paradigm and there is no going back to what was. The paradigm we live in is not all that is offered, however. Change pushes us into the unknown, the place to create a new comfort zone. What if your new paradigm was a place where you are totally comfortable with uncertainty; you expect it, and you plan for it? What then?

Perhaps you could develop new skills to compliment your professional skills, or explore new aspects in your career or company. If you own a practice, you could add another profitable service to your business to create new revenue streams, one you would never have associated with your business. What new comfort zone are you ready to create? If money or time were not a problem, what would you be doing?

Reach Some New Conclusions by Asking Yourself Better Questions

"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning." Albert Einstein

The quality of your life also depends on the quality of the questions you ask yourself about your career or business.

"Why has this happened to me? What has all my hard work come to this? Why is my practice dwindling? These questions will certainly keep you stuck in the problem. The important point is to ask yourself quality questions, if you want to reach some quality conclusions and move forward.

Consider how you can use this job loss or down-time to create some new opportunities.

What positive steps can you take to build existing client relationships? What can you do now that you have been putting off? What gaps are in your skills that you can now upgrade? Where else can you apply your skills until the right opportunity comes your way?

Re-invent Yourself and Reach out to Others

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." Albert Einstein

The final piece in making change work for you is to reinvent what you are and what you do. Make yourself more adaptable and flexible for when uncomfortable change comes your way again, as it surely will! Take new actions in defining who you are, not just a professional, but as an individual. Build a range of dynamic, transferable skills that will open up doors, when others close.

Begin to explore new territory. Reach out to others and explore opportunities to collaborate. Use social media to reach new people, build relationships and share new ideas. LinkedIn is a free business platform that is an excellent starting point for reaching out to others.

The impact of change is only as bad as your response to it. Change could be a tremendous opportunity to shake you up. It may open door ways to new passion, new ideas and businesses. All success and innovation happens at the edge of the comfort zone, not in it! There are a thousand ways to see change and only one way to work with it. Embrace it.