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## **Survival in our Ever-changing Industry: Adaptability Required**

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It is no secret that the economy and job market have been a roller coaster ride lately. Survival in this environment, for both an organization and an employee, is dependent on the ability to change. Whether it's new technology or a new product, the ease with which one can adjust is what makes one successful. Those professionals who embrace change will flourish in their positions and steadily climb the corporate ladder, while those who resist change and react negatively toward it will eventually be faded out of their companies.

Personal agility has become even more important than technical knowledge in our industry. To thrive in change, you must embrace the four characteristics of adaptability; you must be focused, flexible, facilitative and fast.

### **Be focused.**

- ***Proactively seek information.*** Know the direction the industry and your company are moving. Ask questions to clarify priorities, objectives and timelines, and ensure a thorough understanding of your role.
- ***Seek out those that can help.*** Network to discover how others are dealing with the same changes. You can learn from their mistakes and echo their successful actions.
- ***Plan projects in detail.*** Create a "To Do" list or set goals for each step necessary to assimilate the change. Prioritize these goals with a timeline. This will make the adjustment seem less overwhelming and more achievable.

### **Be flexible.**

- ***Adapt to fit changing business demands.*** Keep pace with your environment and your clients' preferences. If your territory expands to include a new time zone, alter your office hours to be available. If your clients prefer email, translate your standard letters into an e-mail friendly format.
- ***Continually update your skills.*** Read current periodicals and attend industry meetings to stay in touch with the latest technology, methodologies and other trends.
- ***Work on an unfamiliar project.*** Offer to sit on a new committee or work on a project that is not in your comfort zone. Expanding your background will give you a broader perspective.
- ***Operate in an environment where structure is not always present.*** Don't get stuck in a routine; change your schedule on a daily basis to allow yourself to think outside the box.
- ***Become open-minded.*** Look at things from all perspectives. Listen to what others have to say. Schedule meetings with co-workers to learn their feelings on certain situations and to absorb new ideas and processes.

### **Be Facilitative.**

- ***Lead by example.*** Be positive, and encourage others to also maintain a positive attitude. Focus on the benefits of the change.
- ***Coach those who are struggling with change.*** Provide instructions on how to make the change and more importantly, why the company is making the change.
- ***Collaborate.*** Gather input regarding how the proposed change will affect your team. Ask for suggestions on how to make a smoother transition. The more involved your team feels, the easier they will adapt.
- ***Initiate change.*** Make suggestions to improve outdated processes and systems. By becoming a change leader yourself, it is easier to accept changes initiated by others.

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- **Take risks.** Try new things; don't be afraid to go out on a limb to propose an innovative solution.

## Be Fast.

- **Strive to maintain momentum.** Seek the tools and the resources necessary for a smoother transition. Gather information efficiently to make timely decisions.
- **Communicate.** Promptly inform those impacted by change. No one likes to be kept in the dark. By maintaining open lines of communication, you will put those affected at ease and avoid defensiveness.
- **Generate ideas to remove obstacles.** Schedule a team brainstorming meeting to air out all the concerns regarding the change and to solve problems before they arise.