

The Trip to Relevance

By Karel Murray, CSP

Sitting at my computer, working my way through a complicated course which explains the technology tools necessary for successful business entrepreneurs, I had the sinking feeling that I might not be relevant any longer. It was more than a sinking feeling, it was nausea.

Startled by the fierceness of my negative thoughts, I understood instantly that this realization has been waiting to surface for quite some time and now I feared that I had no weapon in my personal arsenal to beat it back into submission. Reality of our changing, high speed cultural environment is something that can no longer be ignored and must be faced head on.

Change in any form is always difficult if it is forced upon us against our will. As the four different generations merge and collide in our workforce, I can intellectually comprehend that technology advancements are sure to follow. Emotionally, I wasn't prepared for how out of sync I could become if I didn't at least spend some time each week exploring what was new online in terms of communication systems and social media use. These advancements range from improvements to existing systems to complete new paradigms that utterly wipe out the "old ways" of doing things. It's this erasure of my comfort zone and habits that make me want to become obstinate and stubbornly cling to that skill based security blanket which has always served me well in the past. But the light is shining brightly and all I can see now are the stains on the fabric of the material I have been clutching for so long.

Linus from the long running Peanuts cartoon would understand what I am feeling. I believe the proper response is "Ahhhhhhhhhh!"

Stubborn that I am, I know I have the intellectual ability to recognize the potential for becoming a relic and outdated. But I also know I must have the will to gather my courage and move forward with a plan of action. This push, a direct result of technology changes, has caused many of us to feel intimidated. That feeling, in turn, should remind us that we are alive and still able to activate our natural curiosity to explore new ways of doing things.

Once we get past the first blush of stress and anger due to being forced to change, we can finally acknowledge that relevance is created through the perfect blend of experience and action. How we react to a changing work environment, technology, or family status is what gives us character. New perspectives can arise that may ultimately define how we live our lives. And that alone is a liberating concept.

To make the first steps to action in meeting change on my own terms, I must consider these questions:

1. What is it exactly that I want out of life?
2. What has changed in my life that has created this feeling of insecurity?
3. What is it about this change that gives it the power to shake my foundation of confidence?

4. What is it exactly that defines my experience in the business environment?
5. What does “relevance” mean to me and to whom does this relevance matter?
6. Can I list three things I currently do manually that could be much easier if it was converted into an online system or application?
 - a. For example, I recently uploaded the Weight Watcher Tracker application on my smart phone which replaces the little spiral book where I manually scored my food points.
7. What method can I adopt where I can offer my experience into conversations which are already happening online?
8. How can I ignite and nurture the joy of curiosity which in turn will defeat the fear?
9. What three changes can I adopt that will have the greatest impact on 80% of what I do? (Pareto’s Principle - The 80/20 Rule)
10. Why do I fear aging and moving into the next stage of my life?

The conversation I must have is to figure out how I can instill the “Grandma Moses” attitude of never letting age become an obstacle, but instead making my aging a reliable resource from which to define my future choices. Grasping an understanding of my ultimate purpose is the change that should matter to me, making the technology and world cultural changes incidental. Ultimately, I believe relevance and authenticity walk hand in hand. And that’s a journey I don’t mind taking.

Karel Murray, author, humorist and business trainer speaks nationally and internationally. She is the author of “Hitting Our Stride: Women, Work and What Matters”, “Straight Talk – Getting Off the Curb”, co-author of “Extreme Excellence” and publishes a monthly online newsletter, “Think Forward® which has thousands of subscribers, The Profitability Blueprint Series: Career Building Concepts for the Real Estate Licensee and numerous articles in local, regional, and national publications. You can listen to exciting interviews at <http://www.JustForAMomentPodcast.com>. You can contact her at karel@karel.com or call 866-817-2986 or access her web site at <http://www.karel.com>