



Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

I want to do something a little different this month. I want to reflect not only on what COVID has forced us to do, but also share how some critical skills and behaviors prepared the Chapter to not just weather COVID, but actually thrive during it.

Six years ago when I joined the Chapter Board and then received the honor of being elected your President, the

Chapter was in dire straights with the loss of a \$250k revenue stream and an unsustainable amount of continued operating debt. It took a serious look at breaking out of the “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” mentality to move and grow the Chapter beyond where it was then, to where it successfully is now.

I have approached many things in life, including my role at the Chapter, with a view of improving things outside that outdated mentality, where possible. At the Chapter, its always been focused on how to best serve the membership now and in the future. This article I read and saved a few years ago by Mila DeChant really sums up and articulates these critical skills and behaviors and, most importantly, their benefits.

The Problematic Thinking of “Ain’t Broke, Don’t Fix It”.

Be The Thriver That No One Wants To Become

(Originally published by Mila DeChant at medium.com on October 29, 2018.)

We have come to settle in an environment of the sluggish mindset of “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” or “Let’s not recreate the wheel”. The iPhone was never broken for it to be fixed and upgraded to iPhone XS, it was recreated by reinventing. If NASA had not reinvented the wheel, they would not have advanced technology to explore the moon mars.

It is crucial to consistently reinvent and to improve processes even when something is not broken. It allows our human minds and the self to tap into our problem solving, critical thinking, and strategic thinking skills. These skills are not sufficiently promoted at the work place. In a sluggish culture of “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, it oppresses an individual’s and a team’s growth. Here are some positive behaviours this mentality of “Ain’t broke, do not fix it” mindset oppresses.

1. Creative Thinking

When employees are discouraged from reinventing the wheel, it discourages creative thinking. When a group does the work or a procedure by following an outdated mantra of “This is how it has always been done”, it does not empower individuals to put their diverse knowledge into action. It only forms a longer line of robots who are programmed to do a task of how it has always been done. Once creative thinking is compromised, your employees can reach a point of burn in a matter of 2-3 months. This leads to disengagement.

2. Open Dialogue

Open dialogue is slowly diminished by those who refuse to use creativity

to think outside the box in order to rethink or reinvent. A shift in communication style and communication culture is noticeable within the team when a culture of back dated work mindset is anchored. Communication now shifts from an open dialogue culture to a singular one sided communication. Your people will feel their voice is not heard and will stonewall.

3. Simplification

Simplification of processes get eliminated with the stagnant believe of “ain’t broke, don’t fix it” mentality. Simplifying processes allows your team to build their creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving, and creative strategy skills. When simplification is obstructed, it creates a culture and team who abide by the singular outdated work etiquette of not taking action. This also prevents your team mates from becoming owners of projects when improvements can be made. It deskills your team.

4. Curiosity

Curiosity of learning and advancing knowledge is inhibited from this singular back dated thinking as well. Curiosity is human nature and it comes innately. When an environment promotes an outdated set of work guide, it creates a viscous scenario similar to a factory production line — No questions asked, just do what is told.

5. Rediscovering Ones Strengths

When you prevent your team from sparking their curiosity, allowing room for simplification, having open dialogues, or creative thinking, it causes a huge impairment. An impairment where others cannot rediscover their strengths. Ones strengths changes and new experiences cultivates one to inherit and discover new strengths.

“Businesses do not evolve singularly with technology. It evolves when your humans within an organization are empowered and are liberated. Rethink Human Innovation.” -Mila DeChant

It is an organization’s social responsibility to improve in how they cultivate their talent. It is their social responsibility to change from an oppressive mindset to a more evolved state of growth. When businesses and technology are improving and innovating swiftly, our human innovation at the work place has to innovate in parallel to the business.

Fix it even if it’s not broken - it promotes collaboration.

My hope in sharing this article and its thoughts with you, is to help us all see the potential future that lies ahead for us by simply looking beyond some of the outdated things we feel a need to continue clinging onto. I know it might seem like a bold thought, but its truly a necessary one.

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