November - December, 2011   Volume 3 -- Issue 43   Share 'Designing Strategies'   Opt Out/Unsubscribe

A fellow business consultant, Jim Sybert, once said that when an organization is considering change of any type, their options are either to do things differently, or to do different things. Just think of those two simple options when change is necessary but seems insurmountable. Remember that definition of insanity? As the saying goes, doing the same thing over and over and expecting different outcomes is just plain insanity. If something wasn't helping your situation last year and isn't helping now, odds are that it's not likely to work as you move into the future. Committing to change isn't easy, but sometimes it just has to be done to improve your situation.

As we continue through this turbulent economy, I am reminded of a useful book on the topic of change: Who Moved My Cheese? by Spencer Johnson, MD. A number of years ago, when the book was hot off the presses, our ASID national board was assigned to read this book as we prepared for our strategic planning. The theme of the book is change, and how individuals react differently to changes that occur in their lives or businesses.

Four characters in the story are two mice, Sniff and Scurry, and two little people the size of mice, Hem and Haw. They all lived in a maze and each day would set off into the maze to find their Cheese. A big supply of if located in Cheese Station C. Day in and day out, they would all rush into the maze to enjoy that wonderful cheese. The mice nibbled and the little people gorged themselves on this delicacy.

This went on day after day until one day, they arrived at Cheese Station C to find the cheese was gone. The mice had noticed the cheese supply diminishing each day, so they were not all that surprised when none was left. They immediately took off into the maze, sniffing and scurrying, in search of more cheese at another location. The little people, however, never noticed that the pile of cheese was getting smaller. They had just kept eating, assuming it would always be there. After all, they were entitled to it, weren't they?

Hem and Haw, stuck around for days, angry that 'their' cheese was gone, but expecting the supply would soon be replenished. One day they noticed the mice weren't around any more. Figuring the mice had gone in search of more cheese, they finally acknowledged the cheese was probably not coming back. Hem and Haw decided maybe they, too, should strike out in search of new cheese. Like the two mice had done, Hem and Haw ran up and down one hall and down another. If they found nothing at the end of the passage way, they would turn and go another direction. Using this trial and error approach, they were finally rewarded by finding a new supply of cheese in another Cheese Station in another part of the maze.

Not one person, company or industry has gone through this economy unaffected by some type of change. Maybe a job was eliminated, a home lost, customers disappeared, or suppliers went out of business. Everyone has felt change over the past several years. What have you done to stay ahead of your diminishing supply of cheese? Hopefully, you have not, like Hem and Haw, decided to stick to your same processes and routines, assuming a strong economy would be 'right back', continuing to do what you've done for the past decade or more. A better course of action would be to follow in the footsteps of Sniff and Scurry, looking for things you could do differently, or different things you could do to keep your head above water and your doors open. If you have changed nothing yet, stop procrastinating, hemming and hawing and look at some new strategies to get you through our new situation. There is no time like the present to investigate new products or services you can offer. Look for new customer bases or internal changes to systems, policies and procedures to prepare your organization for the change that is our new reality.