

THE INEVITABILITY OF CHANGE

Before you read

Do you find it easy to make changes in:

- your personal life?
- your professional life?

Give some examples.

Reading

Read this book review from the *Financial Times* and answer the questions.

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LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY ● ● ○

Changeability

by Morgan Witzel

Why Some Companies are Ready for Change – and Others Aren't

(by Michael Jarrett; published by Pearson Education)

'Change is inevitable,' said British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli in 1867. 'In a progressive country, change is constant.' In his new book, Michael Jarrett puts it another way: 'Change is inevitable, like death and taxes.' And, just as we fear death and taxes, many of us fear change. We hope that if we resist for long enough, the need for it will go away and we can carry on as before. But even when companies accept the need for change and set out to achieve it, they often fail. Jarrett, an expert in organisational behaviour at London Business School, believes that 70 per cent of all change-management programmes fail.

Why? Jarrett argues that managers often mistake the nature of change. They see it as something logical that can be solved using step-by-step approaches. They are wrong. 'There is no simple recipe for organisational change,'

he says. 'There is no one single way that will deliver change.' But there are some basic principles that most managers can adopt. First, they need to make certain that the internal organisation is in a position to make changes and that people support them fully. Second, they need to make sure that they understand the environment around them.

In other words, rather than developing change-management strategies, companies should first find out whether they are capable of change at all. Do their internal systems and culture support change? If not, these too must change. 'Readiness for change' is far more important than actual planning or implementation, says Jarrett. To all the various words that have already been coined in order to describe this state of readiness, such as 'flexibility' and 'adaptability', Jarrett adds another: 'changeability'. He de-

55 fines this as 'the sum of leadership, internal routines and organisational capabilities that make companies ready for change'.

60 A few years ago, for instance, McDonald's Europe faced declining sales and market share. Denis Hennequin, the new president, redesigned restaurants to make them more appealing and began sourcing food locally. Market share and profits rose. Dell, too, aware that its competitors were beginning to catch up with its original low-price model, embarked on a programme of market research. The information it gathered was analysed with a view to spotting emerging and future customer needs. The most dangerous state for a business, says Jarrett, is the steady state. Companies that resist change – he cites the pharmaceutical industry – run a greater risk of failure.

1 Look through the whole article and answer these questions.

- a) Who is Michael Jarrett?
- b) What is:
 - i) his subject?
 - ii) his speciality?

2 Look at how the expressions in *italic* are used in the article. True or false?

- a) A *progressive country* (lines 3–4) is one where people are willing to adapt and change.
- b) If something is *constant* (line 4), it happens only sometimes.
- c) If something is *inevitable* (line 7), you can avoid it.
- d) If you *resist* (line 10) something, you do it.
- e) If you *carry on* (lines 12–13) doing something, you continue to do it.
- f) If you *set out* (line 15) to do something, you finish doing it.
- g) If you *achieve* (line 15) something, you reach a particular objective.
- h) If you *fail* (line 16) to do something, you succeed.

3 Find expressions in paragraph 2 that mean the following.

- a) reasonable and sensible (1 word)
- b) an easy series of instructions, used for example in cooking (2 words)
- c) ways of doing things one at a time (4 words)
- d) a unique method (3 words)
- e) the most important ideas, etc., about something (2 words)
- f) the structure of a company, department, etc., rather than the way it relates to the outside world (2 words)
- g) the outside world (1 word)

4 Complete the table with words from paragraph 3. (Complete the last line of the table with two words, both from the same part of the article, that are related in the same way.)

adjective	noun
adaptable ^{a)}
changeable ^{b)}
flexible ^{c)}
..... ^{d)}	organisation
ready ^{e)}
..... ^{f)} ^{g)}

5 Which of the words above has Michael Jarrett added to discussion about change? What meaning does he give it?

6 Complete the table with information from paragraph 4. If there is no information for a particular point, write *not given*.

company	president	problems	change	results

7 Which industry is Michael Jarrett pessimistic about in relation to its attitude to change?

8 Items a)–d) are short summaries of the paragraphs in the article. Put the summaries in the correct order.

- a) Examples and counter-examples
- b) Mistaken ideas about change
- c) Readiness for change
- d) The inevitability of the need for change

Over to you 1

How do you rate your own organisation (school or company) on its changeability on a scale of 1 to 10 in relation to other similar organisations?

Over to you 2

Describe some actual examples of change (or resistance to it!) in your organisation, how they were put into action, and what their results were.

MANAGING CHANGE SUCCESSFULLY

Before you read

What is the reputation of the legal profession in your country in terms of its attitude to change?

Reading

This article from the *Financial Times* is about a competition to find the best ways of introducing change in the management of law firms. Read the article and answer the questions.

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LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY ● ● ●

Law firms get into shape

by Laura Empson

Until quite recently, even the largest UK-based law firms were fairly loose organisations where partners had considerable personal autonomy. When important management decisions needed to be made, the partners could rely on their shared educational and social backgrounds and their long years of working together to help them reach a common understanding of what needed to be done. This represented the 'glue' that held the firms together.

This glue does not work properly any more. In the past 10 years, the leading law firms have expanded rapidly and have grown to accommodate different kinds of lawyers, doing different kinds of work in different ways, with different expectations of their careers and their firms.

Law firms have responded to the challenge by developing and implementing more explicit methods of management that can accommodate this new-found

complexity. Senior managers have introduced a range of new management systems and structures and have expanded the teams of business services staff to support these initiatives.

All of these schemes, while necessary steps on the road to professionalised management, have challenged the traditional bonds that have held these partnerships together. Five to 10 years ago, even the largest law firms were no more than adolescents in the area of management, with ambitious ideas about their futures and vast amounts of energy but very limited expertise in developing and executing systematic, long-term strategies.

In spite of (or perhaps because of) this, the leading law firms have been extremely successful. They have made plenty of mistakes, but have expanded at a phenomenal pace while maintaining profitability.

These firms have not simply grown – they have grown up.

The successful entries in the competition this year represent a wide variety of initiatives, showing increasing sophistication. Some entries relate to current hot topics in law-firm management. For example: market entry strategy in China (Lovells); retaining and promoting women lawyers (Latham & Watkins); and new models of service delivery (iLaw).

And lastly, spare a thought for the partners of Baker & McKenzie on their 'Fit for Life' programme. The firm has introduced a scheme to help its lawyers perform at their best, including a complete review of their well-being – emotionally, physically and mentally. While all law firms must be aware of the need to get into shape to survive the tough times ahead, Baker & McKenzie seem to have taken the advice literally.

1 Read paragraphs 1 and 2 and decide if these statements are true or false.

- Until recently, UK law firms were highly structured.
- Each partner had a lot of independence.
- Partners made management decisions by bringing in outside consultants.
- Partners found it difficult to take decisions because they came from different backgrounds and did not understand each other.
- The 'glue' that held firms together refers to the shared values of the people working there.
- Law firms have grown quite slowly in the last decade.
- People working for law firms are now looking for different things in their careers.

2 Match the verbs with the nouns that they go with in paragraph 3.

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 respond to | a) complexity |
| 2 implement | b) new management systems |
| 3 accommodate | c) a challenge |
| 4 introduce | d) initiatives |
| 5 expand | e) methods of management |
| 6 support | f) teams of business services staff |

3 Now use the verbs 1–6 from Exercise 2 to complete these definitions.

If you ...

- something, you bring it into use for the first time.
- something difficult, you are able to deal with it.
- something, you make it bigger.
- something, you help it.
- something, you do something as a reaction to it.
- something, you put it into action.

4 Find adjectives in paragraphs 4 and 5 that mean the following.

- done in a proper, serious way (16 letters)
- done in a structured way (10 letters)
- done in the old way (11 letters)
- determined to be successful (9 letters)
- very big (4 letters)
- designed to last well into the future (4 letters, 4 letters)
- extremely fast (10 letters)
- the biggest and most successful (7 letters)

5 Why are law firms described as *adolescents* in line 43?

6 Which of these examples of change management are *not* mentioned among the competition entries?

- promoting people from ethnic minorities
- promoting women
- introducing flexible ways of working
- offering years off for study and personal development
- finding ways of getting into new markets
- finding new ways of providing services

7 Baker & McKenzie *seem to have taken the advice* (on complete emotional, physical and mental well-being) *literally* (lines 83–84). Which of these alternatives is the most probable explanation for the author writing this? She's suggesting that the firm ...

- does not really believe in its initiative, even if it pretends to and carries out a lot of activities that are not really useful.
- is doing something (perhaps something not mentioned here) that shows they are taking ideas on change management too far.
- has not taken ideas on change management far enough, despite putting a number of measures into action.

Over to you 1

Imagine a competition in your company or industry, or one you would like to work for, to find the best initiative in change management. Who would win, and what would these initiatives be?

Over to you 2

Is it the job of organisations to take care of their employees' complete emotional, physical and mental well-being? Why? / Why not?