

Career Rx

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Forces of Change, Creative Destruction

Few things in our world remain static. The ascent of our species is a story about change. We are continuously developing technology beginning with fire, the wheel, air travel, space travel, cell phones, genetic interventions and who can imagine what else. There were times in our history when change came quickly. The turn of the twentieth century brought the airplane, the model "T", the radio and the air conditioner. The middle ages brought little change and possibly some diminution of technologies. Today's economy may have slowed the pace of research and development but we can rest assured that this is a temporary condition.

From a career perspective, change will necessitate reinventing yourself from time to time. If you solve all of the problems you face in your current position, you will be able to move on to new opportunities. Take for example a doctor doing research for a particular condition. If they succeed in curing the condition, they will have eliminated the need for their specialty. The development of the refrigerator was a new opportunity for many and was unfortunate for the ice delivery man.

The economist Werner Sombart describes in 1913 that growth in a capitalist system depends on the process of "creative destruction". As new technologies develop, it is inevitable that antiquated technologies are destroyed. With this destruction come the displacement of workers and enterprises. As Sombart points out "*however, from destruction a new spirit of creation arises...*"

From a career perspective, we can learn from Sombart. Human beings have two choices: arrest the development of new ideas and technologies or be able to adapt and change. For the sake of future generations, I would hope we would choose the latter.

The economic reason for creative destruction is related to the idea that a company is heavily invested in a particular technology, is likely to be leapfrogged by a start-up venture. The message that I would like to communicate regarding your career, is that it rarely pays to be overly invested in the status quo. One only has to look at the lives of people like Edison, Ford, Deming, or the Wright brothers to be inspired to lead the process of change rather than being swept up by it.

When you allow your vision to stretch beyond the urgent pressures of daily work, you start to become an agent of change. When you make time to look into the possibilities of life in the future, you begin to move beyond your routine and become a leader.

The mechanism of personal growth requires the discipline of prioritization. This means distinguishing between what is urgent but unimportant and what is important but not so urgent. Learning, innovating and changing are of paramount importance but not urgent. These tasks are often put off because of petty urgencies. Without personal growth, people tend to become supporters of the status quo. This makes them more susceptible to obsolescence and Sombart's creative destruction.

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Lisa's extensive human resources and coaching experience with Fortune 500 companies, small enterprises, medium-sized firms, and non-profit organizations gives her the unique ability to bring together wide-ranging perspectives on career transitions, executive and leadership development. She has consulted with a wide variety of sectors — consumer goods, financial services, healthcare, media and entertainment, pharmaceutical and life sciences, publishing, professional services, technology, and non-profit. Lisa has a passion for motivational speaking, conducts career forums, and provides executive and career coaching.

Lisa's greatest strength is that she enables individuals and organizations to see themselves in new ways, freeing them to achieve their goals. Lisa can be reached at Lisa@ChenofskySinger.com.