

## Are you ready, willing and able to change?

Margaret Beaton 01 July 2013

Are you ready, willing and able to change? is a question everyone should ask themselves about their career. Whether you are letting go to move on or stepping up into a new role, you need to be ready, willing and able to change. Here's why.

We all now understand nobody can or should expect to stay in the same organisation for life. Or in the same role for more than a few years. Many change career. From science to law. From medicine to entrepreneur. From corporate manager to public accountant or management consultant. And so on. If we haven't yet made one or several of these moves ourselves, we know others who have. Moreover most of my clients want to step up and/or let go—and this involves change, often of great magnitude.

### Making these moves successfully and happily requires adaptability

Making these moves successfully and happily requires adaptability. Sometimes the change is voluntary and sought by you. Other times, it's forced on you as your organisation changes, shrinks or even disappears. Every one must ready, willing and able to change to meet the challenges and make the most of the opportunities that change brings.

Author of the recent book *Adaptability: Responding Effectively to Change*, James Calarco observes "To survive change in your organisation or industry or profession, you must first lead yourself through the process of transition". He suggests this includes finding ways to help yourself feel more grounded and understand the impact of that change is having on you and how your behaviour is affecting others.

Being ready, willing and able to change means you are more likely to see change as positive and feel optimistic about it. You see change as an opportunity to which you can adapt. Where you can master the new environment, learn quickly and develop new skills. if you are ready, willing and able to change you will know your own strengths and weaknesses. You will seek feedback to help you navigate. And, above all, you will lead by *example*.

### You need to be adaptable in three ways

Those who are ready, willing and able to change are adaptable in three ways. Firstly, they have *cognitive* flexibility. They can incorporate different ways of thinking into their mental frameworks. They see the present and the future through multiple lenses and develop contingent approaches to solving problems. They learn quickly from experience and and know when old ways won't work in the new environment.

Second, those who are ready, willing and able to change have *emotional* flexibility. They vary their approach to dealing with their own and others' feelings. They sense when give is needed. And when being assertive is essential. They are comfortable with loss, grief, complaints and resistance—seeing these as responses to the change. And knowing it's their job to manage their reactions to these emotions.

Third, leaders who are ready, willing and able to change have flexible personalities. They are grounded in optimism and able to visualise long-term goals while negotiating the immediate pot holes in the road. They are realistic. They are able to tolerate ambiguity. And they make decisions under conditions of uncertainty. They see opportunity, not threat in change. They have a passion to succeed.

If you get stuck or have a hard time feeling positive about change and are reluctant to let go so you can step up, then learning to become adaptable is crucial.

Those who are ready, willing and able to change—in other words those who are adaptable—will be the happiest and most successful in today's world where career change is the norm.

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