

Are You Ready?

Navigating change in 2015 will lead to success

by: Mike Lecak, Collaborative Consultant Group

As you step back and celebrate 2014, I hope you are putting behind a year that was filled with met expectations, company growth and a strategic direction to ensure that you maintain that upward trend. If your company is like most, you have seen change and adjusted accordingly. Some, however, continue to do what they have always done, thinking: “It has worked in the past, so there is no reason for us to fool with success.” I caution you: In these times of rapid change, that line of thinking can have adverse effects on your organization and everyone in it.

Predicting the future is fool’s gold. We all know the world is changing. We know that if we do not adjust, we will be left behind. What does that really mean and how can we make sure we are on the right seat of the right bus, headed in the right direction?

Today, more than ever before, I believe organizations must be prepared to change. As the saying goes: “Change is inevitable, growth is intentional.” We do have a choice. We can choose to continue to ignore patterns. We can choose to ignore our employees’ needs. We can choose to drive new initiatives with stale management tactics.

More than 80 million millennials are entering the workforce. Chances are you have hired this “new” worker. Do you and your management team understand this generation? Are you able to give these workers what they need? Do you know what that is? The new workforce is made up of well-educated, technically savvy, optimistic people. They have a keen understanding of what they want and have been coached on how to get it. How will this new generation of workers thrive in your organization? These are people who can move your business forward. They have no “history.” Put them to the test and provide them with a coaching atmosphere. This is what they desire and the reality is, if they do not get it from you, they will seek it elsewhere.

As you look into 2015, ask yourself this question: “Can I get the results I need by doing what I did last year?” Chances are



the answer is “no.” I assume you went through some level of strategic planning in the fourth quarter of 2014. Those planning sessions differ for everyone, but one thing is certain: You have a number in mind and you need to get your team on board to hit it. Getting that number now requires some level of change — a change in your approach or a change in your products and services.

If you are going to change your approach, it is more likely to affect your current employees. They just came off a good year, and they understand their jobs and their customers, so why mess with a good thing? Well, the answer is to create the next “good thing.”

Getting pushback from your employees in regard to change is normal. Your ability to navigate the waters of change and bring your team with you is what will ultimately lead to success. You can dramatically increase your chances by including your employees in the change initiative from the start. Ask their opinions. The idea is not to acquiesce, but to seek input and allow them to have a stake in the outcome. Most of us want to be part of the solution. We also want to give our ideas and help shape the direction. This level of “ownership of the outcome” creates accountability — and accountability is a business owner’s best friend.

If your plan includes changing your products or services, this will require an “all-hands-on-deck” effort. I frequently am asked: “What are the best strategies to pursue in 2015?” The first answer I give: “What is your capacity to change and what is your organization’s awareness of the need to change?” Let’s look at MNS or MPS. These initiatives have been around for a while, although I contend that while the terms are somewhat mature, the execution inside our channel still has some catching up to do.

As you look at 2015 and decide if you should introduce MNS or re-introduce MPS into your portfolio of deliverables, you will need to look at your organization as a whole. Do your current sales practices align with a services model? Does your management team understand how to manage

the sales cycle of a services platform? Is your compensation structure aligned with this model? If the answer to any of those questions is “no,” then the chances of success are less likely and the interest level will fall off quickly. Leadership will be critical. This type of change requires a mentoring leadership style. You cannot “scrub your MIF” or look at lease expirations and expect to drive results.

Business strategy is driven by the consumer. Your customers are demanding more; are you ready to give it to them? The method does not really matter. What matters is what the customers need. We need to step back and ask ourselves: What besides our relationship bonds us to our customers? Is 2015 the year that you cement those relationships with more than a lunch and an invite to the company golf outing? Are your sales staff members trained to deliver this new model? Are they capable of moving into different levels of an organization and really find out how to best service its needs? If the answer is “no,” you need to

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understand that someone is — and that someone is your competitor.

2015 will be a year that you possibly ask more from your sales reps — more in terms of higher quotas, new product lines/services or even larger territories. Have you done an adequate job preparing them? Do they have the tools and skills to succeed? As your services change, you must position your sales team members as experts. This means they will have to

“sharpen the saw.” Good enough is not good enough anymore.

The easy answer to “What’s next?” is MNS, MPS, mobile printing or 3D printing — and I could go on. The real question is: Can you get your team members prepared and put them in a position to be successful in a changing market, regardless of what product or service you move into? When you understand where your organization is, you will be in a better position to move it forward. Too often we do not take a “personal inventory” and we end up spending time, money and a lot of effort on something we were never prepared to change. Set your coordinates and understand what or who can take you off track. Dealing with these “interruptions” up front will make the journey that much easier.

I believe the key to making strides in 2015 will be to understand where you are and where you want to go. Try benchmarking. Your ego may take a hit, but it is important to measure yourself against successful companies. This is the surest way to understand if your company is not adapting. If you are not adapting as an organization, you, as the leader, must force the pace. Talk about it constantly, walk the walk and lead by example. Sometimes you have to force greatness. Searching for a magic bullet is a huge waste of time and resources. This is a game of singles, not home runs.

So, what is next? I am not sure what that means in terms of products or services, but I do know that the organization that is best prepared to make changes and adapt to business conditions can and will be successful. 2015 is set up to be an amazing ride. Jump on! ■

Mike Lecak has been in the industry since 1983, starting with ComDoc in Pittsburgh, Pa. After a successful 15-year career, he joined Toshiba as a district sales manager. Lecak joined Print Inc. in 2004 to manage sales for the company's channel-focused PrintValue Solutions program. In 2009, he joined Konica Minolta to manage

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