



The Challenges of Change

BY DONNA MESSER

For years, I have been experiencing the challenges of change and I have always welcomed these challenges. It never dawned on me that not everyone feels as I do when those challenges are thrust upon them.

Challenge as defined in the dictionary –

is to query, to question, to confront – yet when we look at the word “challenging,” the definition is inspiring, stimulating, thought provoking, worthwhile. It appears that perception could be the winner of this battle with words and how to cope with those Challenges of Change could be based on our perception.

I speak to audiences across the country and many in my audience are in transition.

Some are experiencing the challenges of Mergers and Acquisitions. Some are being downsized, given an early retirement package, or choosing to move to another field of endeavour. Some are students, considering career choices, some are new graduates seeking gainful employment. All are in the challenges of change.

When I challenge my audience, I ask them for three things; it’s what I call our W3: W1 – Who are you? W2 – What do you need? W3 – What are you willing to share?

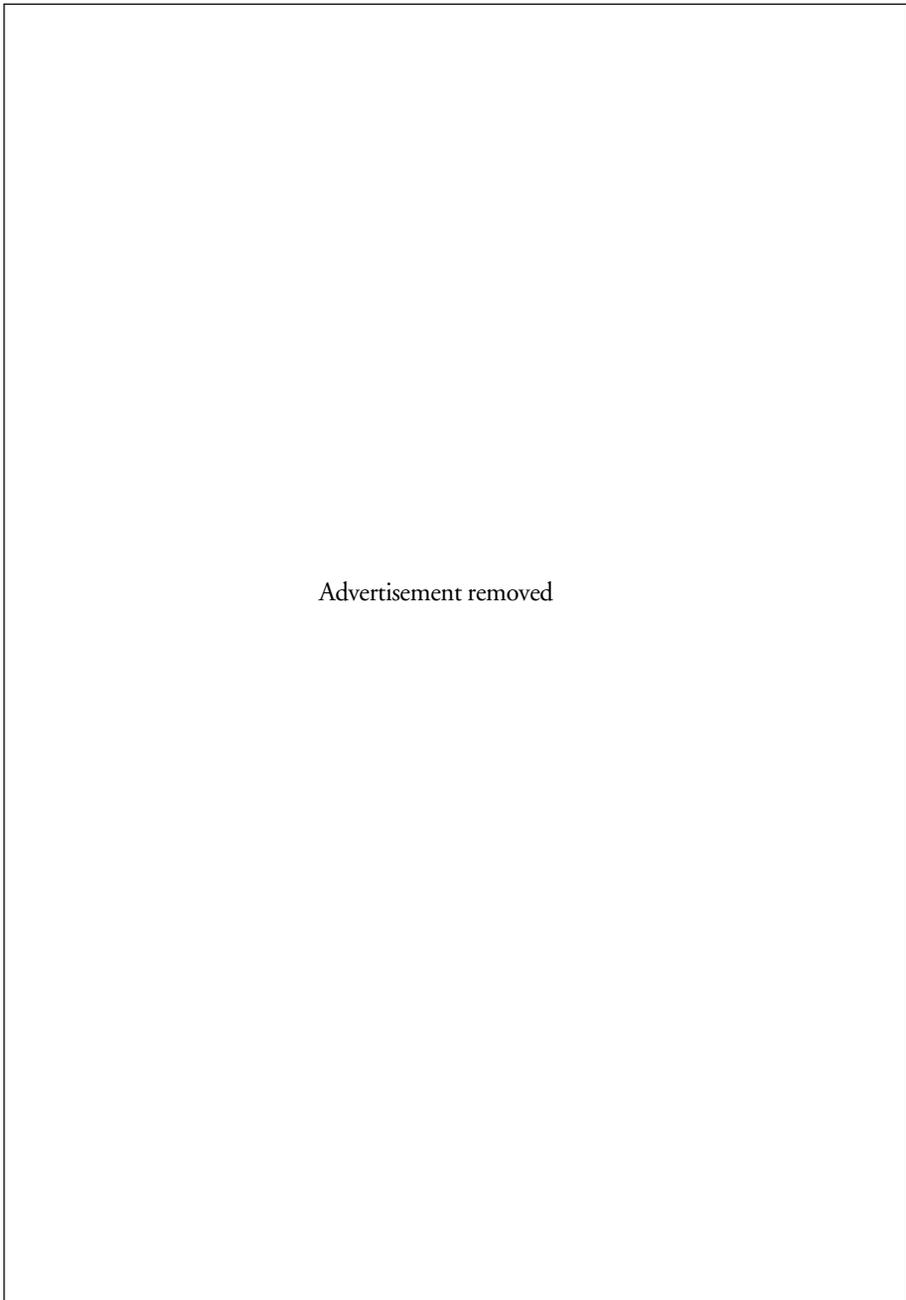
By giving some thought to your W3, your perception will change and all of a sudden you not only have a need, you have a gift that can be incredibly valuable to someone in your network. The challenge you have is to become excited about the changes and not to become fixated on your own needs. The challenges of change can be the most exciting and exhilarating time in your life. It gives you the chance to sit back, examine and reflect on what is important to you and to draft a plan that will lead you to your ultimate destination.

The journey is one you need not take alone. There are many coaches, trainers, and facilitators who can help you determine your needs and act as a guide as you move forward. But first you must determine that you are ready to take that first step – the one that says, “I am inspired, stimulated and I look forward to the challenging journey before me.”

My clients must not only be inspired, they must be willing to work as I guide them along their path to a successful change in their situation. Somehow, I have become what I call a Corporate Guidance Counsellor. My clients, many of whom have been in my audiences around the world, are now seeking guidance for many of their challenges. Because of my methods of handling those challenges, the changes are positive, profitable and profound.

We have developed a process that not only provides us with the information we need, but also provides the client with the insight they need about themselves to move forward, to focus on their challenges and to find the best path to take them on their journey of discovery.

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While it might sound rather difficult to believe, we all know what we want in life. It just takes a little time to put it into words that can generate a plan of action. As a guide, a mentor if you like, my role is to help you design that action plan and avoid the pitfalls that might otherwise stop you from reaching your destination.

The tools we use include mind-mapping, and determining your communication style. We uncover the skills and talents that many of you take for granted. Our first session is taped so that you can refer to it when you begin your follow through on your action plan. We ask you to fill out a Mind Map, which is available on our Web site in advance. This helps us, help you.

The questions on the AHA Mind Map include:

1. *What do I like to do?*
2. *What am I good at?*
3. *What are my strengths?*
4. *What are my weaknesses?*
5. *What are my hobbies/interests?*
6. *What associations do I belong to?*
7. *Who do I know – my friends associates, neighbours; who do they know?*
8. *What special skills do I have?*
9. *Am I a volunteer, do I have a charity of choice?*
10. *What is my wildest dream, if money, time, and talent had no bearing on my dream?*

If you are experiencing the challenges of change, and want to focus on the journey of self-discovery, that will take to get to your next destination, do your W3 and fill out a Mind Map. You will be amazed at what you learn about yourself.

On your journey, learn to think laterally. There is more than one way to get to your destination. For those who find it difficult to determine just what lateral thinking is all about, imagine that you have locked yourself out of your house. What do you do? Ask friends and neighbours what they would do in a similar situation. You will be amazed at the number of answers that differ from what you would do. That, my friends, is a simple definition of lateral thinking. There is always more than one way to get in!

To accept the challenges and make the necessary changes, the following are the steps to take:

Develop a plan. Whatever your needs, they are best satisfied by developing a strategy. Your plan should include what you want to accomplish, and what organizations or associations would best satisfy the plan's execu-

tion. Remember W3 – what are you willing to share?

Research the people you hope to contact. Who do you know? Who do they know? What do you have in common? People like people who are like themselves. Remember your W3!

Learn to listen. Don't dominate the conversation. Find out the needs of others. Don't try to sell – find out what people want to buy. It's easier to fill a need, than to create one. Share your resources.

Learn to network effectively. Determine your communication style. Use that knowledge wisely; team up with others who have the strengths that you need to network effectively. Remember your W3!

Follow up. Find out the best way to communicate with those you meet and follow up promptly. Try to find your common denominator, use caution when following up, make sure you have a gift of someone or something that will be valuable to the receiver. Make sure your meeting is memorable and that follow-up solidifies that meeting.

Success in the challenges of change is when preparedness meets opportunity. Being prepared is the single most important part of your challenge. Where you go and who you work with is up to you. Don't try to do everything yourself. Join a support group, take a re-

fresh course, ask for help – trade talents. It's okay to sell your strengths and buy your weaknesses.

If you want to check out all of the above, visit our Web site www.connectuscanada.com and begin your journey. Our Corporate Guidance Counsellor program works with you. We help you develop the plan, research your needs, make introductions, determine your communication style, and guide you on your journey of discovery. We will even take you on a "Walk Through the Forest," which helps us determine where you've been, where you are, and where you are going. It's a trip you won't want to miss! **SBCM**

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Canada, the company designs, develops and delivers training programs. Link and Think, Walk in the Forest, AHA - Your Mind Map of Self Discovery, and W3 are just a few of the programs that will help you handle the Challenges of Change. Donna can be reached at dmesser@connectuscanada.com as well as at editor@businesswomancanada.com.

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Don't miss Donna Messer at the Small Business Information Expo on Sunday, November 25, 12 Noon, as she speaks about the importance of Networking. See the SBIE Expo Guide Insert in this magazine for details about this and other topical presentations.

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