



## **Are You a “Pace Keeper?” Reinvent Slower!**

*“When I was a child, I thought I could change the world in the blink of an eye.  
I now know I can change the world, but it takes time.”*

### **Don’t Rush!**

Do you remember dial-up internet? ...the phone sound through your modem (do you remember a modem?)... the answer, then the computer beeping and crackling noises. Some friends were talking the other evening about waiting on the car radio to “warm up” when they were young and riding with their parents. I admit I remembered it, too.

Recently I was coaching a group of managers and employees about making some sweeping changes in their organization. They had goals they wanted their office to reach. The hardest part in getting them to set short term goals was keeping them from working on the end goal. Slow down! The odds of making every change right away are slim and none.

### ***It takes time...***

We are comfortable living with immediate expectations and the desire to see changes take place right away. These expectations are all around us and they will hamper you in the long run if you get too comfortable with them. Once I had fast internet and email, I started expecting everyone else to have it and would get disappointed when someone didn’t answer an email within minutes of me writing them.

Our expectation level has been raised by a fast-paced immediate gratification culture we live in. I saw a Facebook post that read, “Ladies, if you want to know the temperament of the guy you are dating, give him slow internet and see how he reacts.”

Our lives are filled with immediate gratification... Fast WIFI internet, apps that send you news, financial reports and opinions as they are produced. Slow check-out lines in the store? No problem, you can use self-checkout to get home earlier. Traffic on the highway? No problem, you can use GPS in the car to find an alternate route to work.

If you work in a volunteer or government organization, you are faced with people who want their needs met immediately. I used to work in churches. Like any other group, they are filled with people who want things changed now, but not themselves. Governmental administrators, employees and council members will tell you the same... people want changes done NOW.

The problem is that most organizations don't move very fast. Also, I discovered that most employees didn't go into their business to deal with people demanding fast-paced changes. They want to meet needs but didn't expect to be fighting the very people they are serving.

*"We live in a world defined by the rapid pace of technological change."  
-Jerome Powell*

## **Set the Pace**

To reinvent your organization, you need to fight to keep a steady pace. You have to deal with the people who want change NOW, and the people who don't want any change at any time. How do you handle this?

Spend time gathering support and developing a plan of action. Ruthlessly eliminate every distraction in the organization that causes swift response before thought. Find people who agree with you that changes must be made but are patient. Then grab the reins and keep them all going the same speed... and be willing to slow them down when you see movement too fast.

Many historical figures have mistakenly allowed their desires to change their circumstances immediately and it doomed them. In WWII the Japanese high command had attacked the US Naval and Army air bases at Pearl Harbor. However, they failed to disable the American aircraft carriers or repair facilities. A few months after the attack, the Doolittle Raiders bombed Tokyo using an aircraft carrier.

Eager to end the war soon, the Imperial Japanese Navy's leaders came up with a plan to strike again. They were obsessed with wiping out the US aircraft carriers to achieve a fast victory. They hadn't figured on the preparedness of the US Navy and their leadership. The Battle of Midway wound up being a great victory for the Americans and turned the tide of war in their favor. All four Japanese aircraft carriers in the battle were destroyed. The US only lost one, sealing an American victory in the battle.

Mary Kay Ash said, "The speed of the leader is the speed of the gang." What are you trying to accomplish by making changes in your industry, office or company? Are you moving too fast? Do you have the patience to wait for the right time and slow down the pace?

*"You have to pace yourself.  
As a producer, you start with a concept and shepherd it through the script to the delivery of the film. It's a very long journey for an hour and 40 minutes of movie."  
-Peter Billingsley*

## **The Boiled Frog**

You've probably heard the example of, "The Frog in the Kettle." They say that if you place a frog in a kettle of boiling water, it will jump out immediately. But if you place the frog in water that is room temperature and slowly turn the heat up, the frog won't notice the difference and will die before it realizes it is being cooked!

Your job is possessing the patience to keep the pace steady. If you are satisfied with your goal and the team is satisfied, then you can develop a schedule for changes to be implemented. Rush it and you will pay the price.

I met with a church team years ago who planned to change their worship service format. They developed a praise band, new music and an upbeat order of worship. The Sunday came and they unplugged the old church organ.

Then the organist showed up... who had never been told that the organ would no longer be necessary. They compared their experience to a train wreck! Many people loved the organist and supported her, even though they had supported the changes. The process backfired and they spent months doing damage control.

*"We didn't have music videos. You weren't an overnight sensation. You had to work at it and learn your craft: how to take care of your voice, how to pace your concerts, all that trial and error."*  
-Aretha Franklin

## **Bridge the Gap**

Keep both your purpose and goal in mind so you won't get side-tracked. It will keep you patient even if the only results you can see are baby steps. Be slow to react and slow to take action. Don't be the proverbial "bull in a china shop." It takes time to go from where you are today to your destination in the future... it won't be tomorrow morning.

Imagine the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. It has two large pillars holding it in place. Between them are huge suspension cables and smaller cables holding up the road in place. One pillar is on the San Francisco side of the bay and the other is in Sausalito.

Your present circumstances are the first pillar. That is where you are today. The other pillar is your destination... where you want to be in a number of years when everything has been done to reinvent your organization. What will it take to get from the first pillar to the second? What did you do that led you to where you are today? What are the steps you will take to reach the second pillar?

But you aren't finished there. You're not across the bridge yet. What will it take as you proceed across to keep the changes in place? That is the purpose of the cables from the second pillar to the ground on the Sausalito side. They ground your journey to the new territory.

Keep the pace moving forward at a steady pace. Know when to apply the brakes gently... and

when to accelerate. Be a steady force to be reckoned with as your changes develop. Be someone who is a guide to others. Don't try to force your team to run faster than it is ready. This requires maturity and calm guidance.

Never lose sight of your goal; never lose your dream. You'll get there, but at a pace that everyone can follow within their comfort zones.

*"The only urgency I feel is to keep on, at a slow pace, with my journey."*  
*-Alessandro Michele*

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