The US and world economy have taken a beating over the last few years. They have been at the brink, recovered then wandered more into uncertainty. Just a few months ago, it was announced that several major corporations are reporting profits for the first time in many quarters, but unemployment statistics in the United States (and the world) are still at all-time highs. Now some economists seem ready to declare the recession officially over. It isn’t for many, though.

I won’t argue with you that these times are tumultuous for business. They are rough and many people have found themselves out of work, out of business and out of luck. I meet them every day. I can also tell you that many people have to face challenges that they would have never have faced had things remained unchanged.

Without any doubt had I not had the difficult times in my life, I wouldn’t be the strong person I am today. Had I not changed colleges, I wouldn’t have met the people I know now who are major influences in my life. Had I not decided to quit my previous occupation, I wouldn’t be enjoying what I do now for a living. Had my business not fallen on desperate times, I wouldn’t be “The Reinvention Strategist™.” You get the idea…

Each of those changes was difficult and not comfortable to make. They often came as a result of a change in my life or environment that I had no control over. But they HAD to be made if I was to evolve into the person I became. You can’t choose your environment. You choose how you react to what is going on in your environment. You either choose to act positively or negatively. Either way, it’s all your choice.

In 1964 singer-songwriter Bob Dylan produced the ground-breaking, “The Times They Are a-Changin’,” based on the tumultuous times in the civil rights struggle, social upheaval, political atmosphere and the folk music movement. When asked why he wrote the song as an appeal for
politicians to heed his call, Dylan’s response was, “Well, you know, it seems to be what the people like to hear.” He was responding to a changing environment he had observed in the culture and industry he worked in. What do people “like to hear” from you and your business?

I made a decision almost a year and a half ago to change my focus as well. I didn’t want to do business the same way again. Rather than work with everyone to help them make changes in their lives that they didn’t want to make I shifted. Now I only work with people who want to reinvent themselves in a challenging economy. And fortunately for me, every economy has challenges in it.

You choose how you react to the economy. You can either wait, wait and further wait for the economic “boom” to come back to where it was over two years ago or you can choose to act on what is different about it now and make your own difference. It may not be a comfortable decision right now, but it’s all your choice. Oh, and for those who opt to wait, you should know that the economy won’t return to its previous state. It has morphed into something different…and continues to change every day.

If you don’t reinvent yourself in the next year you may be extinct in two years.

It can happen. It already has to Circuit City, Pontiac, Schlitz, Gateway computers, Aloha Airlines, Mervyns and many others. The vultures are gathering for AIG, the Gap, Palm, Blockbuster, Borders and Eddie Bauer. Many other businesses closed their doors for the last time while you were reading this. They couldn’t adapt to a challenging, changing economy and they got swept away with no loyal customer base to support them or their brands. They failed to create a culture that would stand the test of a changing economy, changing consumer base or changing times. They’ll never work in this business world again. Even cities, counties and states are facing the same realities.

Many more organizations have changed successfully. They were faced with a choice and they chose reinvention over extinction. Companies like Arch Pharmalabs, Novell, Autodesk, Domino’s, Unimark, IBM, Godiva, The Mathis Group (me of course) and many, many more reinvented themselves and carved out new industries and market niches.

It’s A Whole New Ball Game

The world has been changed forever. Consumers are savvier, less patient and have higher expectations. You can’t dish out the same products and services you were offering just two years ago and expect to succeed. Medical facilities and companies are facing a set of changes from the government and their patients unparalleled in history. Banks and financial lending institutions are facing new compliance laws and restrictions on lending that they know will change their business models forever.
Constant improvements in communications and media are changing the way we receive news and making reporters more answerable to a more intelligent customer. Book publishers are facing the advent of electronic readers that could spell the end of the hard and soft cover published book in the next decade (Remember how vinyl was replaced by CDs, replaced by mp3’s?). Municipal, county, state and national governments can’t do business the way they traditionally did through increasing the tax base. People are more mobile than ever and will simply move where they aren’t taxed as much (Hello Florida – goodbye New York). You can’t afford to be comfortable with these changes in consumers and the public.

Your employees know they are a great value to your business. In a survey published in Delta’s Sky Magazine this summer it was reported that the millennial generation (born 1982 - 2000) has a better knack for finding creative solutions to workplace challenges, and for turning to their social networks for assistance. They feel they are entitled to ask for and expect more from their work. They are more prone to seek a job they find more fulfilling and not care for one that doesn’t fulfill them. You can’t manage them according to the old “team” standard. Forcing them will only make them look elsewhere for the position that fulfills them. They are independent and have no loyalty to outmoded/outdated systems and strategies. You can’t afford to be comfortable with the changing workplace expectations.

These are realities that few are willing to face. Is it all bad news? Not if you maintain the right perspective. No matter what you do, you are faced with difficulties every day that by your choice you run from, hide from or deny;

OR

that by your alternative choice you embrace, tackle and conquer. It has nothing to do with what is going on around you, but what is going on INSIDE of you.

Enjoy the journey. Find a comfortable place to prepare to become UNcomfortable as you move toward a more UNcertain future… but one controlled by YOU!

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Jim Mathis, CSP is The Reinvention Strategist™, an international Certified Speaking Professional and author. To subscribe to his free personal and professional development newsletter, please send an email to: subscribe@jimmathis.com with the word SUBSCRIBE in the subject. An electronic copy will be sent out to you every month. For more information on how Jim and his programs can benefit your organization or group, please call 888-688-0220, or visit his web site: www.jimmathis.com.