

## Making Change Happen

Any golfers out there? I changed my golf swing the other day, partly due to advice from the pro and partly due to me wanting to make a real step change with my game. It's now great on the driving range but I'm keen to see what happens in competition when I come under pressure. Will the new approach stand up or will I revert back to my old habits?

It's like that with change of any sort in people's careers. You start a new job, for example, and you have a brief window to reinvent yourself, to lose the poor practices, drop your baggage and avoid the previous mistakes you may have made in other roles. You have a chance to rebrand yourself, forge new relationships from scratch and to broaden your shoulders and truly grow into the role that you fought so hard for at interview.

After the first few weeks the pressure mounts, you need to deliver, you need to show that you can actually do what you were hired to do. It's so easy to slip back into your old ways when the pressure mounts. How can you keep your new swing, so to speak?

It's the same with delegates on business courses, the same with starry eyed, fired up conference attendees. The initial enthusiasm is present along with the desire to make change or do things differently. But back at the ranch it's a different story and under the weight of routine responsibilities the course work manual or delegate folder gets archived on the office shelf and nothing really changes.

The issue with many people who look to make personal change or improvement in their business behaviour is often not about awareness or discovery of the issue at hand, nor is it about ownership or intention to change - it's more about taking action, and sustaining that action over a period of time. So, take the first step, continue with subsequent steps and ultimately integrate the new behaviour into your repertoire so it becomes habitual and second nature.

In sport, this process often manifests itself as some kind of personal training programme that complements earlier sessions with an expert coach who encourages and provides focus, identifying good and bad practice - rather like my golf pro working in tandem with my weekly visits to ingrain the new swing pattern at the driving range. In business and career change, there needs to be the equivalent of this kind of 'personal training programme' to ensure sustained changes take place over a period of time. Maybe all it needs is commitment and practice- but how many delegates fresh out of an inspiring business seminar think about it this way? Or how many new starters taking on greater responsibilities with new companies will think about their new persona, practising and rehearsing various business scenarios in advance, and evaluating how their new 'brand' is working and adjusting behaviour accordingly. Not many I would guess.

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