In today's fast-paced, ever-changing environment, we must be prepared to pivot quickly. Doing things the way we've always done them just doesn't work anymore. Author Alan Deutschman popularized the business catchphrase, "Change or Die." And it's truer than ever – remaining stagnant is a recipe for extinction. But we all know, saying you're open to change is a lot easier than altering behaviors to adopt and embrace new technology, business models and processes. So how can you set your firm up for greater success in managing change?

Start with Culture

The success of organizational change is dependent not on having the best idea, but

itself. Author Jack Dixon said it best: "If you focus on results, you will never change. If you focus on change, you will get results."

Build Trust

Organizational changes – especially those designed to reduce costs and boost productivity – can negatively affect employee trust levels. Building trust is all about getting early buy-in at all levels of the organization. Rather than issuing a decree and expecting the organization to fall in line, build a strong case for change by articulating and communicating the problems and potential solutions.

The conversation should address why the change is necessary, how things will change and what will happen if the change is not implemented effectively. Spending time communicating the change, answering questions and clarifying issues can help employees understand and even be supportive of it.

Don't "Should" Yourself

When we look back on the past, we probably all have a laundry list of things we should have done. However, I would challenge you to set a goal of eliminating the word should from your vocabulary. If you simply take a look at what you want to accomplish including measurable results, analyze the obstacles to achieving those goals and paint the picture of the end result, you can now identify the easiest first step and do it. This creates momentum and will replace those things you should have done with things you've actually done.

Major Changes in Our Profession

Change is happening in the profession. Are you working to manage and adapt to it, or falling victim? Consider what is happening right now:

- The AICPA is launching a new version of the CPA Exam to ensure new CPAs are

  Big data, social media, and the cloud are disruptors in technology. Much of that change is coming from other professions and geographies. More data leads to greater risk of security breaches.
- Solution providers are shifting their focus and resources to the cloud. Are yours?
- In an attempt to enhance soft skills and diversity, some firms are hiring people with something other than accounting degrees – even to work on audits!

Change management is an indispensable part of today's landscape. And while you need to be prepared to pivot quickly, you also need to take the time to prepare your culture for change and build trust to have the basic support needed to go through with the change effort. Then forget about what "should" have happened in the past and start identifying what you want to accomplish and the actions you'll need to get there. Change starts first with a belief that it is necessary.

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