



Change: PART II

by Phyllis Ann Marshall

Last month we looked at the different types of changes that restaurants go through to keep up with fads and trends as well as the competition. We'll finish up in Part 2 discussing how to manage the changes.

There is a bell curve for restaurants. We have all observed those restaurant concepts that are growing, becoming more popular, expanding before our eyes and climbing up the left side of the bell curve. There are also those that are declining in sales and gradually descending the bell curve on the right side. Occasionally due to a disaster a restaurant will plummet, but generally the decline is slow,

sometimes painful and often overcome by inertia when it reaches a point of no return. The trick is to discern when and why a restaurant starts its decline and how to keep making subtle but constant changes, sometimes even dramatic changes so that it never reaches the point of no return. The new Claim Jumper at South Coast Plaza is a perfect example of a successful and very complete Make Over for re-branding.

Managing change is the secret. If the only constant is change, then we've got to learn how to adjust. The need to change and upgrade older restaurant concepts to maintain their popularity comes from the

changing preferences of our guests and the increasing competition as new restaurants raise the bar with impressive design and credentialed chefs that attract both the dining out public and the press. Somehow older restaurants must stay in the dining out Rolodex of an ever-expanding and changing customer base.


"Great leaders understand how to leverage the powers of positive change to keep their companies current, vibrant, and relevant", says the Nation' Restaurant News. "Conversely, change-resistant organizations often stagnate, failing to adapt their concepts or offerings until far too late".

"The ability to manage change, to be a change agent, is one of the 10 Dimensions of Executive Leadership identified as critical to success in the restaurant industry," says the Elliot Leadership Institute. Management guru Tom Peters, the Management by Objective guru, says simply "Change or die."

There is an organized system for the change process that includes: research, visualizing, brainstorming, prioritizing, organizing, planning, implementing, and stabilizing. Success is often in the ability of the leadership to empower the team, involve all departments and view the change as an opportunity to improve and fine-tune rather than create resistance and disrupt the flow of operations.

Change agents must listen to the guests and the restaurant employees, communicate the vision for growth, create change for the common good, explain the reasons, "sell the idea", add a bit of urgency, and help the organization become and remain flexible and willing to try new ideas.

Change is inevitable. Listen to Nike and Just Do It!

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Kimberly Novkov, Direct Territory Manager
Maple Leaf Farms
(714) 345-5664
knovkov@mapleleafarms.com