



Lifelong learning

The most effective way to deal with change and profit from it, says **Annabel Short**, is to accept it and embrace the need for lifelong learning

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Life is a learning process – the entire thing. Although at times you might feel like you know it all, you will always be learning something new. And if you are no longer learning – what are you living for?

You might not like it but change will happen. And often, changes happen quickly – sometimes overnight.

In the professional world, this is most commonly seen in areas such as medicine, teaching and marketing, industries that are always changing.

In medicine, new technology arrives that changes the way certain procedures are done or new research allows changes in how doctors prescribe medication.

Teachers have a different group of students each year with different needs and who respond to different learning methods, requiring teachers to change the way they teach every year.

For marketing, new social media sites come as the internet grows and improves, leading marketers to learn how best to utilise new avenues.

Our own professions and industries will always be changing, so it is vital that we stay current and learn to adapt.

As your industry changes, and you are required to be more adaptable, keep one thing in mind. The key to being adaptable is being open to learning.

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Your goal should be to always know more – more than you did a few years ago and more than you did even just yesterday.

Because technology, your industry and the overall nature of your job are always changing, you will always be learning. So the key to being adaptable is just remaining open to learning new things. As things change, just accept it and be excited to learn – you are bettering yourself and those around you by learning new things about your career.

And remember, learning is a lifelong progression.

Even the things you were once an expert in will continue to change, so you can never truly master something if you are not willing to continue growing and changing with it.

So, how do you stay current in a rapidly changing business environment?

Well, I wish I could tell you it is just one simple step but the reality is...There isn't.

Learning new things and staying current in your industry takes time and effort. But if you find yourself struggling to adapt to the rapidly changing business environment, let me offer you a helping hand:

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How can you adapt to the changes if you do not even understand them? Develop a good understanding of what the change entails, why it is happening, and how it will affect you



Start by making yourself aware of your situation

Your situation is also constantly changing and I think this is often something people forget. They get in their same old habits and forget to look around them and remind themselves things are changing.

Becoming aware of your surroundings is also part of the importance of lifelong learning.

Take a moment to evaluate your surroundings and ask yourself the following questions:

What is the purpose of my job?

What is the overall mission of my unit?

What are my roles and responsibilities in our success?

What obstacles stand in my/our way?

What does my supervisor expect of me?

What resources do I have available to me?

You can learn a lot about business and industry changes just by evaluating your surroundings. You can determine areas where things are changing, how that affects you and what you should be doing to better incorporate the changes into your methods for better overall success.

If there are some of these questions you are unable to answer then it is time to get learning. Start researching the answer and ask your boss about them.



Understand a changing industry

This is where the importance of lifelong learning really plays a key role in staying current in a changing industry.

How can you adapt to the changes if you do not even understand them? Develop a good understanding of what the change entails, why it is happening, and how it will affect you.

This is also a great opportunity to learn how the change can help you become better at your job. Don't fall victim to rumours and hear-say, do your research and learn about the changes that are taking place for yourself.

Stop and ask yourself a few more questions:

Will this change my team's dynamic?

Will this change my main job duties?

Do I know how to perform the skills and tasks necessary to stay up-to-date with these changes?



Focus on building your skills and continuing to learn

It simply cannot be expressed enough... Learning is the key to adapting to a rapidly changing industry. In order to be adequately prepared for changes, it is important to continue building your skills. You must always be prepared for what's next, stay one step ahead of the game and continue changing with the industry.

Take the iPhone, for example. It remains an iPhone through and through but with each new model come a few changes. So, while you might still know the basics of an iPhone, you still need to encompass new technology in your skills in order to use the latest model effectively.

For example, you need to adapt to a fingerprint scanner instead of a lock code. Or you need to adapt to using AirDrop for easier communication between iPhones as opposed to just email.

Now compare this to a job like marketing.

You know the basics of marketing – get the word out about your clients and their products and let people know why they should purchase them.

But what happens when new marketing avenues come out?

New social media is always emerging and can be the perfect place for targeting a specific demographic. So while you might know how to market, you still need to continue to learn about the avenues that you can market through.

If you want to maintain your value in the marketplace, you must never stop learning. While your employer might offer occasional training and/or pay for occasional education classes, do not wait solely for these opportunities. Take the initiative to begin the learning process on your own, showing your dedication to the industry and to your growth within your company.

While improving your skills is beneficial, you also should consider adding to your skills. It never hurts to learn something new, right? After all, you never know when you might need it. Make a goal to add a new skill to your character traits every so often – this will improve your marketability and encourage lifelong learning.

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Wrapping it up

Continuous learning is just a part of life – in order to avoid being sedentary in one industry and one position, we must continue to learn new things.

By learning new things, such as getting involved with changing technology and fully understanding it, learning new skills and always working to improve your work ethic and abilities, you will be able to adjust easily to the rapidly changing business environment.

All organisations will face change at some point. Therefore, it is essential to your success that you practice lifelong learning in various areas.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Annabelle Short is a writer and blogger. She writes for Wunderlabel and splits her time between London and Los Angeles and has worked with many companies providing guidance and advice on finance-related topics.