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## Learning Organizations Part 2: Building an Entrepreneurial Attitude

by Marilyn Herasymowych MCE

“I believe traditional job security is gone, and not just in my Silicon Valley environs. I believe, along with British management guru Charles Handy, that a *career* tomorrow will most likely consist of a dozen jobs, on and off payrolls of large and small firms, in two or three industries. And I believe that people *can* cope with these changes.”

— Tom Peters, **Toward Perpetual Revolution** (1994)

It's the holiday season — and time to take stock of what you have accomplished throughout the year. Tom Peters, author of **The Tom Peters Seminar: Crazy Times Call for Crazy Organizations**, believes that everyone must take stock, on a

regular basis, of what he or she has learned, accomplished, and failed to accomplish. He calls it “replacing MBO [management by objective] and performance appraisal schemes with résumé-ing.”

William Bridges, author of **Job Shift**, states, “Today's organization is rapidly being transformed from a structure built out of jobs to a field of work being done.” Bridges goes on to say that “jobs are going away, not just until times improve, but for good.”

**The question is: What will replace the job?** The answer is: entrepreneurship. This means that people can no longer remain employees, simply going to work from nine to five. It means people getting the work done, in any way possible, at any hour, in any place. It really means people in organizations acting as entrepreneurs.

It is here that Peter Senge's first discipline, personal mastery, plays a role. People who constantly strive for personal mastery realize the results that matter most deeply to them. They are committed to lifelong learning, and they do work because they want to. All of these statements describe an entrepreneur.

According to Peters, if you ask entrepreneurs what they have done

in the last year, they can tell you:

- How many projects they have completed
- What they have learned from each project
- What they would do differently next time
- How many of those projects met with success, and why
- How many of those projects failed, and why
- What they did during the project that helped or hindered its success
- How working on each of the projects has made their company a better place to work

As well, entrepreneurs:

- Look into their futures and vividly imagine what success looks like
- Have fatter rolodexes because they make a point to meet new people
- Read voraciously to be in touch with the changing environment around them

- Treat each new contract as if it were their first, with joy and enthusiasm
- Keep investing in themselves because they recognize that if they stop investing in themselves, their knowledge depreciates
- Take learning, and personal and professional growth, seriously

**What does this mean for people working in organizations?** It means that you need to be doing the same things that entrepreneurs are doing. Tom Peters states that “you need to imagine yourself working through a series of projects, adding value for specific customers, internal and external.” To do this, you update your résumé every six months. In each new résumé, you describe:

- How many projects you have completed
- What you have learned from each project
- What you would do differently next time
- How many of those projects met with success, and why
- How many of those projects failed, and why
- What you did during the project that helped or hindered its success
- How working on each of the projects has made your company a better place to work

That’s not all. You also need to:

- Look into your future and vividly imagine what success looks like
- Develop a fatter rolodex by meeting new people every chance you get
- Read lots of books and articles on what is happening in this rapidly changing world
- Treat each new project or customer as if it were your first, with joy and enthusiasm
- Keep investing in yourself by taking courses, listening to others, and learning new ways to do things
- Take learning, and personal and professional growth, seriously

**Be careful.** Entrepreneurs are notorious for overdoing it, and not taking care of themselves, physically and mentally. Peters emphasizes that **renewal** is an important part of being successful. It means that each person takes breaks away from work to re-energize and to get a fresh perspective. Peters talks about renewal being:

- Standing by a photocopier, feeding in your sheets of paper
- Taking a walk outside in the fresh air
- Taking a two-hour break at midday, three times a week
- Taking a six-month sabbatical
- Making a life change for one year

- Starting a new major hobby
- Anything that gets you away from the routine that you are doing

Peters goes on to state that renewal is critical for **creativity** and **innovation**, “... seriously ... many of my best ideas have come while I stood by my old copier, feeding 75 pages, one at a (slow) time. Planned coffee breaks are one (good) thing, but I’m talking about something else, a *real* pause to refresh or redirect our brain waves.”

How do organizations build entrepreneurs within their structures? I’m not sure many organizations are capable of this kind of revolution. However, I do know that individuals within organizations are capable of acting as entrepreneurs. Whether organizations are willing to admit it or not, they need people who believe in what they are doing, people who strive for excellence, people who are dedicated to exceptional customer service, and people who act as entrepreneurs.

A new year is approaching. It’s a time to start fresh.

“Who will testify to your existence during the past 12 months?”  
— Tom Peters, **Toward Perpetual Revolution** (1994)

**MHA Institute Inc.**  
Unit 248, Suite 205  
259 Midpark Way SE  
Calgary, Alberta T2X 1M2 Canada

Phone: (403) 257-4597  
Fax: (403) 257-4649  
E-mail: [info@mhainstitute.ca](mailto:info@mhainstitute.ca)  
Web: [www.mhainstitute.ca](http://www.mhainstitute.ca)