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Try a Personal Experiment!

Here are a few tips to help you get past personal inertia.

1. **Decide on something new to try.** Pick one idea or opportunity at a time. Set some personal criteria in advance to help you decide if the change is positive.
2. **Really give it a shot.** Set a trial period and give it your all. Notice any patterns or results you are seeing but withhold judgment until your trial period is up.
3. **Accept help.** You can't be a pro at everything, so be willing to learn from someone who can teach you. (In my case, my 15 year old daughter is helping me learn how to use the iPad.)
4. **Reflect on your experience.** After you've worked with it for a while consider its impact on you, your work or life style, and your customers. Did it deliver what you hoped? Were there any surprises? Do the advantages outweigh the costs?
5. **ONLY THEN, decide if this is for you.** Now is the time to be selective, to decide what you will keep or discard.

The beginning of a New Year is a great time to try something new. Why not challenge an old habit of yours? ☐

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When Old Habits Die Hard

By Cathy Perme

I recently bought an Apple iPad and was irked to find only a half-sheet of paper with any instructions about how to use it. Where is the manual, I thought? Even after getting it up and running, I continue to find myself short of patience about how to make it work at times. I want my manual! Thus is my dilemma in working with new-generation computers, which are supposed to be completely intuitive. I've been so well programmed in the past to cater to the intricacies and whims of computers and their software that have no idea how to be intuitive with them now.

Which brings me to wonder, in what other parts of my life do old habits die hard? As a change agent, I pride myself on being able to spot trends, embrace change, and help others steer through theirs. However, I notice that the more experience I have, the more "set in my ways" I get. I'd like to think that means there are just more neurons that need to be "synced up" with new ideas in my brain. At the same time, I have an uneasy feeling that I just might be (shall I dare say it?) resistant to change.

My colleague, Ian Sutherland*, an internal change manager in the UK, describes two kinds of resistance to change – active resistance and inertia. Sometimes resistance to change is active, in which a person really objects to what is being proposed. More often it is inertia, which is resistance to changing the status quo. Let's face it, it is just easier to stay the way we are.

The problem with inertia, both in organizations and ourselves, is that the world can pass us by before we even notice it. To stay nimble and sharp we need to continually grow. That means challenging old habits (or organizational cultures) now and then to see if they still apply.

At the same time, it is important to balance the need for change and growth with what is critical and sacrosanct. Old habits *became* habits for good reason; that may still hold true. We need to be critical and guard those that still add value and support. These anchors will help us embrace the other aspects that change.

So how can we both embrace change and honor what we already know? Both personally and organizationally, it is about being willing to experiment. Being proactive about trying something new, reflecting on your experience with it, and making clear decisions to keep or discard it gives you more power to steer your own course in a changing world.

It is also important to be prepared to invest in the experiment. To make anything new work will obviously require effort and time, but may also need some financial investment for training, equipment, or support. In a wider sense, investment may also mean helping others who may be challenged by the changes we make.

This world will keep changing, so to stand still is not a sustainable proposition. Instead we need to keep looking at constructive changes that we can make, and not let ourselves or organizations become inert again. ☐

**Cathy is currently collaborating on a book to be published this year with Ian Sutherland. Coming from different countries, different work environments, and indeed different views on change, they have challenged each other's perspectives and habits, and mutually gained as a result.*