What is the Buzz about Change?

You endured long hours of study, tough labs, and hard exams as a software engineer student. Now you are in the real world and rising to a higher economic status. Nice car, comfortable house, good neighborhood, and an invitation to the neighborhood party. This is where you will meet your new neighbors — the banker, the lawyer, maybe a dentist or an architect.

Within the first hour you realize your invitation was based on your economic qualifications. The next hour you discover your continued membership is hinging on social acceptance. The final hour reveals that your association with innovative technology is the only idiosyncrasy that separates you from the parvenus in silence on the couch across the room. If the neighbors knew how passive your profession is on innovation you would be past the couch and out the door.

Look at this month's theme, "Managing Change In Your Culture." We are at the heart of a revolution in the way the world does business. How do we address change? We talk of adapting, managing, structuring, and surviving. Boring.

Most software books, journals, and consultants preach the Capability Maturity Model and continuous process improvement. Although useful and necessary, this is not innovation. It is house cleaning, putting in place what should have been there in the first place. At best we are remodeling, but no one is talking about designing a new software house that is more efficient and effective.

If there are innovators out there they are drowned out by the flood of change clones trying to organize, structure, and help you cope with change. It is all becoming repetitive — the IDEAL Model, successful steps to change, managing technology change, technology change management. Today, if you want to be a change management consultant, you simply head to Kinko's for some business cards, develop a model or two, and declare yourself open for business. It is as if all anyone wants to do is polish the already-chiseled Mount Rushmore. Let us move on to Stone Mountain or Crazy Horse!

Where are the innovative changes, the ideas that create value, new customers, and new markets rather than new IDEF models? Where are the innovations that impress customers, not just the boss?

The recipe for innovation requires a cup of creativity and a dash of discipline. It appears we have swapped the formula. We are fixated on the discipline or management aspect with little consideration for creativity. Harvard professor John P. Kotter, author of *Leading Change*, points out that, "the engine that drives change is leadership." He cautions that, "a pure managerial mindset inevitably fails [to implement change], regardless of the quality of people."

Could it be most of our executives, while good managers, lack leadership skills? Many were promoted based on software engineering skills that parallel management rather than leadership skills. They can keep the status quo running smoothly but may lack the skills to define the future and align people to realize that future.

Perhaps we should look to the bee. The beehive is a model of organization, structure, and industry yet a hive's survival depends on maverick bees known as scouts. Scout bees forego the traditional process-oriented roles that a queen, worker, or drone fulfills. They leave the crowded hive and wander around the fields finding new sources of nectar that assure the hive's continued success.

Are you leading change or managing it? Are your engineering scouts searching for innovations that assure your long-term survival or merely improving the status quo?

"The major advances in civilization are processes which all but wreck the society in which they occur," observed mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. Once you have captured that process in IDEF0 and achieved your desired maturity level, start destroying it. Enjoy the party.

— *Gary Petersen, TRI-COR Industries*

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