



Glain Roberts-McCabe
*sat down with Roundtable
Member, **Marc Guay**, Past
President of PepsiCo Foods
Canada, who shares his
perspective on the how to
keep a team optimistic in
times of turbulence.*

Mentoring **MATTERS**

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Our industry is facing a vast amount of change and uncertainty. What can I do to keep my team optimistic about the future, despite all of this external turbulence?

“ Change: Make it your friend, not your foe”

Change has been a fact of life in business ever since businesses have been around. As a matter of fact, at one of the companies where I worked for many years, we used the old adage: “ The only thing we know for sure around here is that change itself is the only thing that will never change!” This helped us create a culture that embraced change, sought to take advantage of it and, ultimately, use it as a competitive tool. What is critical to understand is the inevitability of change and the notion that successful teams seek to control it and not be controlled by it. Here are a few thoughts on change, how it affects people in organizations and what leadership can do to thrive on it.

Change can come at us in two different forms: driven by “internal forces”, what we’ll call “ controllable change” and “external forces”, or “uncontrollable change”. Neither form of change is easy to deal with. However, by definition, organizations are usually better equipped to deal with controllable change. And, being adept at leading “controllable change” has the benefit of helping to prepare teams and organizations to handle more unpredictable, complex and frightening change driven by external forces.

So, let’s start by looking at leading “**controllable change**”. Change in compensation structure is an example of controllable change that can affect everyone in the deepest, most sensitive way. Another example is a merger or the acquisition of another business causing job changes, redefinition of tasks, gaining interesting new colleagues but also losing close ones. These types of changes can cause significant disruption such as loss of focus, water cooler rumour-mongering and ultimately poison the culture of once successful organizations. Because they are internally driven, leadership can prepare the organization for these types of changes. Here are some of things to consider in this regard:

Develop and execute a well thought out plan.

There are many great models to help leaders implement change smoothly and effectively. At PepsiCo, we used Dr John Kotter’s 8-Step Process For Leading Change. It helped us to execute change properly and train our leaders on valuable skills to create a culture that embraced change.

Create change when there is none.

To keep our change leadership skills sharp, when there was little or no change happening, we created it ourselves. We made change our friend in the name of always “finding a better way to do things”, throwing out the old saying “If ain’t broken, don’t fix it!”

Then there is “**uncontrollable change**”. It happens around us all the time and it varies from “internal driven change” in that there is very little we, as an individual or a corporation, can do to prevent it from occurring. In business, these changes can come from “close-in” partners, like customers or suppliers and even employees. They can also come from more “distant sources” like competitors or governments. Finally, as we all know, in recent years, the advent of new, disruptive technologies has not only brought about great changes in every aspects of life and business...but the pace at which these changes have occurred has been unprecedented in history.

Some “uncontrollable changes” can be predicted. For example, big demographic shifts that happen over time or the advent of social media have had a profound effect on many fronts for the vast majority of Canadian organizations. One of the many responsibilities of a leader is to look around the corner, see what’s coming and prepare the organization for it. This is an opportunity to bring a degree of control to those changes that might otherwise be seen as uncontrollable. Some things to consider in this regard:

Pay attention to trends.

I always found it to be one of the most stimulating and challenging parts of my job to examine trends and how they would eventually impact our business. In order to do this effectively, it is important to create processes that allow you to look outside of your day-to-day affairs.

Engage others in planning and developing strategies.

Engage your people in the business of developing strategies for defending revenue streams or market share against any threats, and also to turn these changes into advantages to stay ahead of the competition. This not only leads to a better plan, but also ensures broad engagement and ownership, both of which are critical in having an optimistic outlook for the future.

In summary, change is never easy...whether it is controllable or not. However, as a leader, one can prepare their team(s) to thrive on and be optimistic about change. In my experience, this can be done by creating a culture that embraces change, investing in change leadership building skills across the organization and committing broad resources to strategic planning. I will close with the following thought for you and your teams : "If you don't like change, you'll like being irrelevant even less!"



Marc Guay is the recently retired President of PepsiCo Foods Canada. He assumed the role in 2009, following the merger of PepsiCo's Frito Lay and Quaker Divisions. Prior to that he had been leading the Frito Lay Canada Organization. Marc's extensive career at PepsiCo spanned over 29 years, working primarily in Sales and General Management roles across many different markets both in Canada and the United States.

As a believer in retiring "to something", not "from something", Marc continues to stay active with Board and Executive Coaching/Advisory work. He currently is Chair of the Board of Food Banks Canada, and also sits on the Boards of Breast Cancer Society of Canada and Metro Inc.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.