

Die-hard Doubter or Daring Doer?

Marilyn Lustgarten

Leaders entrenched in pursuing what has worked in the past have brought formerly successful companies to their knees. Some have been arrogant, some unethical, but more than a few have been what I call die-hard doubters.

A die-hard doubter is strongly determined to resist substantive change - dyed-in-the-wool unwilling to do anything that isn't already firmly established. Oh, they may attempt to appear flexible, but for the most part they are doubtful of any possibility of positive results of trying something new, even in the face of overwhelming evidence. Here's an example: I recently received a call from the regional head of a company that was experiencing extraordinary turnover of sales representatives and he wanted to know if we could meet right away to talk about how to turn the situation around. At the meeting I asked him to tell me what he was currently doing to hire and retain people, as well as what he thought might not be working so well if those efforts were resulting in constant churn. He explained how he spent one day a week every week interviewing people who he knew weren't telling him the truth or going to be successful in the job, hired them anyway, and then typically fired them a few weeks later because they couldn't cut it. "Sounds like a pretty frustrating and time consuming cycle", I said, "Would you consider doing something differently to get different results?" "No", he said, "I'm satisfied with my process and overall, it work's pretty well for me." I knew then that the only change in that situation would be what I was going to toss into the turnpike toll basket on my way back to the office!

Companies that thrive are led by resilient leaders who know when it's time to shift gears and are persistent in influencing others to follow them in creating transformational change. I call them daring doers.

A daring doer admits he or she doesn't have all the answers or know exactly what's going to happen, but recognizes that nothing in business stays the same, and even yesterday's best idea won't cut it tomorrow. Daring doers are fearless in eliminating the status quo, and relentless in creating new value and pursuing excellence in its delivery. Not to be confused with leaders who latch onto the "program of the month" and mistake it for real change, daring doers do well what works well until no one has to tell them that something radically different needs to take its place. They also bounce back quickly and positively with their sleeves rolled up when something unexpected or out of their control, like the economy, threatens to set them back.

Resilience is a state of being at a given point in time and it is possible to be more or less capable of accepting change and responding to challenges depending on circumstances and motivation. Research has shown that there are specific beliefs, traits and benchmarks for resilience that can be acquired through awareness, making different choices and focused commitment. I've known leaders, as well as entire organizations, that have gone from "why me?" to "why not!" after taking critical stock of their situation, learning effective ways to overcome obstacles and making a concerted effort to accept the dare and do.

It was Helen Keller who once said, *"While they were saying among themselves it cannot be done, it was done."* When faced with what seems like an overwhelming challenge, it is ultimately every leader's choice to doubt or do what is possible.

Coach and consultant, Marilyn Lustgarten, helps executives and entrepreneurs deliver better business results through more effective leadership. Contact her at The Star Makers Group
www.starmakersgroup.com

2009 The Star Makers Group LLC All rights reserved.