



On Leadership: Making Change 2010

Over the years, I have read a number of great management books. One of my favorites is, **Our Iceberg is Melting, Changing and succeeding under any Conditions**, by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber. If you haven't read this book you ought to add it to this summer's reading list. It is a cogent reminder of the importance of recognizing the *urgency to change* when needed and having the courage to *make the change* before real disaster occurs.

The author emphasizes the different skills of the team members involved in *making change*. And I so loved the way the group sent scouts to "test the waters". They brought back lessons learned which became a part of the near term and a longer term strategy. The strategy going forward included anticipating and removing obstacles along the way. The *scouting* phase also highlighted the importance of having a team of the "right" folks doing the right jobs. My favorite part of the book: *when the team looked at all the evidence and realized that the landscape was constantly changing*. At that point they decided to continually investigate and evolve their thinking so that they improved their ability to adapt to the constant change.

So, why do I think that this book is so timely? As I recall the leadership principles in this little book, I can't help but think about the continuing challenges that we all face in this new global economy. Companies (and organizations like ISA) are continually investigating and evolving to adapt to changes in their respective landscapes. The ones who figure this out will survive during this economic downturn. And if they continue the practice of investigating new ways of doing business, optimizing their resources, and evolving so that they can quickly adapt to change, they will survive for the foreseeable future.

The fact of the matter is that we should probably all take a step back and begin to think of ways that we can apply the principles of this little book to our efforts as volunteer leaders in *making change* at ISA. After all, we're aware of ISA's membership and revenue opportunities. Think for a moment about our charge as leaders of our departments and divisions. Have we put in place the right teams with the right skills to help us build a vision for the future of our divisions? Are we developing business plans that include a strategy that supports continual investigation and evolution? Have we identified new

opportunities to engage with the changing landscape of technical experts in our Society and the automation industry?

In the book, some penguins were afraid to venture out into new areas because they feared the unknown. Do we shy away from new technologies and methodologies because we don't understand how to use them or fear that their use might challenge the way we have learned to do things in the past? Are we still struggling when it comes to **making change**?

A case in point is related to how many of us have failed to completely embrace new technologies, especially Social Media. Oh, I know, I know... we have our websites, our newsletters, our Director's Message and our Symposia. And we offer a wealth of technical content, including the latest standards on our sites. These all add value and are of great benefit to the membership. In other words, we do a great job of **giving** our members what we believe to be the most important value-added benefits. But what more could/should we do?

How about starting a conversation? Recently a director expressed a desire to really figure out what the membership wants or expects to **receive** from the division. It was suggested that we might conduct a telephone survey – i.e. we would call a representative sample of the membership to ask questions. Answers would be recorded and tabulated; survey results would be distributed once all the data is collected.

A comment was made that using Blogs on the site or using Social Media tools (like Facebook and LinkedIn) to start a conversation about the division with the membership might be more effective today. This comment was met with immediate rebuttal. The response was something along the lines of: "I see no reason why we can't do a phone survey. We've done phone surveys in the past and they were very successful". The beauty of remembering the past is that we can learn from it – both from our successes and our mistakes. In reality, some of the questions we asked in our last phone survey may still be relevant (the same); however, the best ways to obtain the answers to those questions has changed. The difference is not so much "**what**" information we want but "**how**" we get it.

Our iceberg is melting! In case we haven't all noticed, our members want to interact with ISA. They want to both **answer** and **ask** the questions. How well we are able to interact with them may very well determine our future! Yes, members do still want to have access to those great standards libraries and those wonderful technical articles from experts in their field. And yes, they are interested in every related knowledge-sharing opportunity that's out there – including Automation Week, ISA Certifications, seminars, Symposia, etc. But they also want a conversation.....they want to be able to participate in real-time exchanges with their peers. They want to interact with others to both receive and contribute ideas, problems, opportunities, and the like.

In the book, **Our Iceberg is Melting**, some of the penguins just did not want to believe that *they had to move* – they did not grasp the urgency of the situation. Ok, so let's start with an admission. We're all a little afraid of the unknown. And for some of us, the Internet, Blogging, RSS feeds, and all of the Social Media stuff (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) are a little scary. And some of us don't understand the urgency – why do we have to change now? But we *must* step outside of our comfort zones.

There is a huge conversation that's taking place right now...even as I write this article. It involves people from around the world. They're "talking" to each other in real-time. And they're not on a conference call. They're a part of the conversation via their iPhone, iPad, Blackberry, Android, laptop, or desktop. And they want you and me to be a part of the conversation, too.

So how do we become more engaged? Make some friends on Facebook or connect with a colleague on LinkedIn. Follow your favorite friend, expert, or author on Twitter. Join an ISA group on LinkedIn or participate in a discussion; or better yet start a discussion of your own. If you're already an avid user of these Social Media tools, then volunteer to create a Facebook page or a LinkedIn group for your division.

Yes, it's true! *The only constant is change*. As ISA leaders, we must be advocates for *making change* - change that embraces new technologies like Facebook, LinkedIn, Skype, and Twitter. Why? Because this kind of change enhances our ability to reach and add value to ISA, our membership, and the automation industry at large.

Happy Scouting!

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