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Change Agents: An Introduction

***Editor's note:** This column marks the first of Jeffrey Hayzlett's contributions to Marketing News. Here he sets the stage for the change-agent-based insights that he'll share in the future by offering a short synopsis of his latest book, *Running the Gauntlet: Essential Business Lessons to Lead, Drive Change, and Grow Profits*.*

Driving change in any business is going to be tough. Trying to convince the naysayers alone can sometimes feel like defeat, but I implore you: Look beyond the obstructionists who refuse to recognize that change is required. Push, and then keep on pushing. To be an agent of change, you must not relent.

First, let's be clear on what an agent of change really is. It's not just adapting to new technologies in the marketplace or changing for the sake of change. As a change agent, you know that your company must adapt or die, so you strive to achieve a better result, not just a different one. You can't forget who you are and what you stand for, and risk destroying your value proposition. Changing for the sake of change will result in you taking steps that ignore all of the tools that you have to sell your product or service, failing to reach the customer on the most personal level and creating plans that are bigger than necessary.

Successful and smart marketers understand that you need to approach the gauntlet of change cautiously. (Or, in cowboy parlance, never approach a horse from the back or a bull from the front.) Start with baby steps and be clear on where you're heading. Determine what kind of change you need. What is it you want to get out of the business? If you can't see the end goals yourself, talk to other leaders or bring in a change agent from the outside who can look at things with fresh eyes and a different perspective.

A very simple first step to effect change in your business is to reflect on the presentation and mood of the company. Presentation is one of the key areas that change agents attack first to transform a bad mood because you can't be cool and look like Elmer Fudd! Start from the inside. I like to literally clean a business when I start working there, the floors, walls, ceilings—heck, even the bathrooms. Presentation is the easiest to change and the easiest to dismiss or ignore.

Simply put, bad mood can ruin a company faster than bad business. For marketers, mood is everything. You change the mood, you change the attitude, you change the culture. Consider how you feel



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in new clothes: You can't help but feel better and more confident, so look neat, fit your brand promise and improve your confidence starting from within. Don't just focus on your department, though: Address presentation company-wide and ensure that your team—and everyone else—knows that you're paying attention.

The mood that you instigate within your business will naturally transfer to your branding and external presentation. Take your social media presence, for example: What do your Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Google+ profiles look like? Do your people represent your company online with inappropriate photos that don't represent your brand value or do their profiles have professional corporate headshots with your logo? Taking pride in employees' personal presentations will reflect well on your overall brand position, so lead by example and set the tone for the rest of your team.

Beyond social media, consider making simple cosmetic changes to your business that can speak volumes and naturally carry the momentum of change throughout your

organization. Consider updating your logo to reflect the products or services that you're selling. When I was CMO of Kodak, our branding still reflected the consumer-focused, film-era-based company that we were rapidly moving away from. The business was moving from traditional to digital, and fast, so we needed to update our corporate image to reflect that. Show your customers that you are committed to the evolution of your business.

Remember, driving change is going to feel like running the gauntlet, so recruit an army to stand behind you and support the changes that you're trying to effect. Stand by your beliefs, know your path at all costs and make sure that you have the right tools to fight for your cause.

Start small, pay attention to the details and make the change happen. If the clock on the wall is set incorrectly, don't complain that the time is wrong. Step up and change it. That's how change in business gets started: Someone sees a need, takes the challenge personally, and acts. **m**