



Inspire extraordinary performance in yourself and others

Embrace Chaos

## Embrace Chaos to Unleash Creative and Innovative Solutions.

Manage chaos and complexity? Most managers are hoping to survive or better yet, eliminate chaos. In fact, chaos and complexity can be useful in unlocking unproductive processes and replacing them with innovative solutions. Certainly, the successful manager doesn't go out of his way to create complexity or cause an increase in the chaos factor. However, plenty of complexity and chaos will find you whether you like it or not. These chaotic cycles can be harnessed to bring into organization superior solutions and processes. We see change happening at an even faster rate, with more stress, quicker decisions, less time, and more work to accomplish every week. The things we are doing in attempt to control our time, our organizations and our life, are not really working effectively, are they? We create new organizational charts in the hope that operations will run smoother. We fine tune position descriptions and job responsibilities for our people, write procedures to improve overall work flow, and attempt to take control of our time, people, and processes. There must be a better way!

### We've All Experienced Chaos

While working with clients and as a senior manager at Hewlett Packard and Agilent, I found many of my weeks quite chaotic. I had lots to do, many interruptions, changed plans, broken processes, and in addition, employees invariably did the unexpected. Sometimes I would sit down on Friday afternoon, look back at my calendar, my to-do list and my high-level plans, and ask myself, "What happened to the week?" It was as if a tornado went right through my week and tore through my master plan and my attempts at organizational control and order. I observed that many of the great ideas my teams would develop surprisingly, never got accepted by the larger organization. New ideas or procedures had to break through a force field of how the company had previously done things. I also observed that most of the new, great ideas were usually developed outside of formal, established processes. The study of emergence in business has grown from the Complexity Sciences as a way to describe order forming from many independent parts without someone or something directing the newly formed order.

### The Leader's Week Follows Complex Emergent Patterns

Many of the complex issues and challenges for the leader will move from steady state to a chaotic state and then to some new steady state. This cycle is a good thing. If you are in a fast-paced competitive market and this internal cycle stops, then you are in big trouble. Established policies and practices are very hard to change. When I trained in martial arts, I learned that it was much easier to move an opponent if he was already in motion. I could utilize his energy and motion and redirect it to where I wanted it to go. If my opponent was not in motion, it

took a lot more energy for me to get him to move. So, how can these concepts be used during the typical chaotic week?

### Release Yourself from the Struggle of the Chaotic Week

Approaching the week with an appreciation of chaos and complexity, and realizing you can't control everything is very freeing and powerful. Most breakthrough ideas will not come from the official planning process. More likely, breakthrough ideas will emerge without a master plan in place. This will happen when the need and energy are sufficient to unfreeze them from their current, chaotic state.

Steps to using natural, chaotic cycles to your benefit:

1. Observe the complexity, chaos, and change cycles in your organization
2. Identify and note the patterns that form
3. Observe in yourself any level of resistance to change, and identify why you might be resistant to these changes
4. Evaluate and make a conscious choice. Is what is emerging good for the organization? Remember, the best ideas many times emerge from people closest to the issues. Also consider that this new way of doing things will become difficult to change once it is the new frozen state.
5. Choose to let the new idea emerge and become the new procedure, or personally get involved and add your input to the newly emerging process. The organization is most accepting of new ideas during a time of chaos.

You as a leader must be cautious and observant about your own personal need for equilibrium that keeps current ideas frozen. These may be the very ideas or structures you've created in the past or feel most comfortable with. But, the external environment is always changing. Create an environment that is open to the cycles of nature, life, and work and utilize the new ideas that will emerge thanks to chaos.

### Embrace Your Chaotic Week!

Approach your week with a respectable appreciation of chaos and complexity along with the realization that total control isn't a viable goal. Managers must be cognizant of their own personal need for equilibrium which in turn functions to keep current ideas frozen firmly in place. You can't predict or design where the next great ideas will come from.

Give us a call at (719) 359-5132 to find out how we can assist you and your managers navigate successfully through chaotic times. We are dedicated to improving your leadership and business results.