



**Y**ou are a successful food service professional. Perhaps you have been doing your job for a number of years. You might be a dietician, a cook, a supplier or administrator. In some cases, you have many employees reporting to you, or might even own a small business. In other cases, you are on the "front lines" and have learned over the years to skillfully work with a variety of colleagues to provide great service. You represent the variety of faces of success of your profession... and you are ripe for failure.

As was learned the hard way at the Walt Disney Company, success breeds arrogance and arrogance can lead to complacency. Complacency can come in many forms and one of them is the one-trick-pony. In other words, you ride your successes-to-date well beyond their effective life spans. It

beyond the one-trick-pony is to level with yourself and recognize that, quite possibly, the way you currently conduct business is out of date. Perhaps your customers or employees would like services that you don't currently provide. Quite possibly having the biggest or oldest name in the community might not be the key to holding onto existing, or attracting new customers or employees. Join the club. In order to remain the same (successful!), we all must change.

**Lessons From Disney**

At Disney, we had our one-trick-pony and his name was "Herbie the Lovebug." Do you remember him? Adorable little Volkswagen who appeared on screen with Buddy Hackett, Dean Jones and Suzanne Pleshette. The trouble was there was nothing beyond "Herbie the

were not embraced. Instead, there was a tremendous force to stay the course and avoid upsetting the applecart. The results were disastrous. After years of creative neglect and turning out box-office flops like: "Tron," "The Black Hole" and "Baby," (do you even remember these?), Disney stock took a nosedive and the company was targeted by several financiers who attempted several hostile takeovers from 1983-1984.

**From "Davey Crockett" to "Finding Nemo:" Embracing Change**

In spite of the scare, the Disney organization was not taken over or broken up, as was the case with so many companies targeted in the 80's. In fact, the takeover attempts served as a wonderful wake-up call for the company. In the years following the takeover attempts, the company enjoyed some of its most successful times. The reason? As a strategy to move into the future, the Board of Directors recruited some executives who weren't afraid of either the ghost of Walt or the legacy of company. To be sure, they respected the tremendous successes of their predecessors. They also believed strongly that respecting the legacy of an organization didn't mean staying in the past.

The renewed emphasis on creativity and challenging the "sacred cows" of the past enabled the company to explore new approaches. Instead of the same, tired formulas for script writing, the company hired the talent that created such blockbuster hits as: "The Lion King," "The Little Mermaid" and, most recently, "Finding Nemo." This meant letting go of certain decision-making criteria that had been extremely successful...in it's day. From 1937-1979, Walt Disney Productions had an unparalleled string of hits with the movies and television shows it produced.

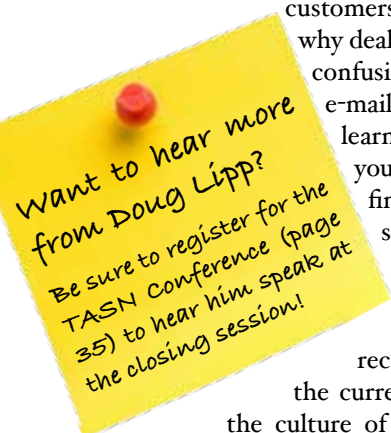
**Embrace Change...**

**In Order to Remain the Same**

might be that creative way you manage your team relationships, or it could be the way you have traditionally served and supported your customers. For example, why deal with all of that confusing internet, e-mail, or on-line learning stuff when you have done just fine without it for so many years? Why should you think of the impact of recent legislation, the current demands of the culture of your students, or even the needs of your younger employees? Why consider the influence any of these things have had on your business regarding issues of service, food selection or even kitchen layout? Why change now? Great question. The key to getting

Lovebug" except: "Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo," or "Herbie Goes Bananas." To put it bluntly, Herbie was getting a little long in the tooth, but no one at Disney Studios had the guts to pull the plug on the Herbie franchise. Why? There were various factors, but the most compelling arguments of the day were a combination of risk aversion: "What would Walt think?" and arrogance: "We're Disney, we know better than our customers about their wants and needs". This combination was a recipe for disaster. Too many people at the highest levels of the company were facing the past and wondering if Walt Disney himself would approve of a different direction. In spite of the fact that this was during the 1970's and early 80's and Walt was long gone.

During this period, the concepts of change, creativity and innovation





This was over 40 years of knock-the-ball-out-of-the-park success and how dare anyone suggest making any changes to the recipe!

The creative team to take some calculated risks with such things as: product development, marketing, sales and drought from 1979 to 1984 marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. Had it not been for the willingness of the new management the use of technology, the company could very well have vanished. No one is immune to changes in the marketplace. No one has all of the answers.



## Even Monkeys Fall From Trees

### Even Monkeys Fall From Trees

This an old Japanese proverb that captures the essence of what Disney faced. It is what any organization and any leader ultimately faces. It means that regardless of how capable or skilled we are, sooner or later, we all lose our balance and make mistakes. Let's think about this for a moment, have you ever heard of a monkey falling from a tree? Probably not, but we have all observed remarkably capable people and heard of successful companies making mistakes.

How about yourself, which skill or ability are you particularly proud of? Is that skill as valuable now as it once was? Is it possible that the same qualities that have helped you succeed are now a hindrance that can lead you to "falling from your tree"?

It is important to learn from our successes and mistakes and apply that learning to the areas of leadership and customer service, whether it is service to your employees or your customers.

### The World is Changing, Are You?

Many companies and organizations embark on new initiatives to improve any number of things, including: their service, product quality, production methods and leadership. However, the sad reality is that is that too many fail in their attempts. All too often, these change initiatives are started with much fanfare and public pronouncements, yet end up in the ever-growing junk pile of "Flavor of the Month" programs. What might have been an inherently good initiative loses

popular or organizational support and falls into the category of a waste of

time and money; Someone's "kick," spending run amok. Within a few months, the old attitudes and destructive behavior patterns return.

Change in and of itself is not difficult. The challenge is in sustaining the change and weaving it into the cultural fabric of your team. To embark on a journey of sustained change requires answering two vital questions:

- 1) It is the right change?
- 2) Are support systems and supportive people in place to give it a chance to succeed?

Certainly, there are many sub-sections to each these questions; life is never this simple. With that said, it is important to avoid making any process too cumbersome to implement, much less sustain. The exercise that follows is a simple, yet extremely effective tool for implementing and sustaining change.

## What Can You: Start, Stop, Continue?

Think of and list as many ways you would like to improve your ability to consistently provide exceptional service to your internal and external customers. What can you do that is an improvement over current practices? What should you start, stop or continue?

**Challenge every existing area of your approach to your job, your team or organization as a whole.**

**Start:** What do you as an individual, team or organization want to Start doing that will be an improvement over your current approach? What can you do that is more up to date from the perspective of your customers or employees?

**Stop:** What have you identified as unacceptable, either for your customer or employee groups, that you need to Stop?

**Continue:** What are your strengths? How can you ensure the maintenance of these strengths in light of the changes you are planning to make? It helps you avoid "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" that so often accompanies change initiatives. What should you Continue?

The opportunities to put these ideas into practice are many. The benefits of managing the change process proactively, compared to the consequences of having change forced upon you, should convince anyone to let go of defenses he or she has about not dealing with this important issue.

## Where do you stand? 🍏