

17. Change, innovation and ambition

Are you raising a child for a career in business? Here is an appropriate bedtime story.

Once upon a time, a fellow named [Ray Kroc](#) entered a restaurant, owned by a family of Scottish descent, to eat some burgers. He liked their organization, the food, the table design, procedures for paying, in a word the whole business model. So he offered to buy the restaurant, all the technology and know-how. After they agreed on the price and other terms, he promised that the restaurant would keep its original name.

The McDonald family began as small entrepreneurs who built the first restaurant on a \$20,000 bank loan. When the business took off, they increased the number of restaurants to three. There were ten tables at each location, and the family considered it the perfect size for their business, one they would be pleased with until retirement. But, like most entrepreneurs, they were risk-sensitive. If one day, for whatever reason, the demand for hamburgers dropped, the business could go bankrupt. So they decided to sell, for the right price.

Mr. Kroc was able to foresee the great potential of their business model. After the takeover, he turned it into a global franchise and it experienced rapid growth. Soon, there were 30,000 McDonald's restaurants worldwide, and the company developed one of the most valuable brands in history.

What is the point of that true fairy tale? The same project may run high or low, depending on the vision and ambition of the person in charge. Obviously, ambitious people can extract much more from an idea than unambitious ones, as shown by the McDonald's example.

Most successful change agents and innovators have an ability to think big. They are unsatisfied with average results, tiny projects or modest effects. Their expectations are great. They are pushed by a strong need to "shoot high" and go for the stars. It is important to know that ambition is closely related to the potential results of an innovative solution. Ambitious people manage to extract as much of an idea, a project or entrepreneurial initiative as possible, and more.

Even some countries are characterized by a business culture and environment lacking ambition. People are too frightened to think big and they quickly settle for modest goals. Of course, there are exceptions, but most businessmen decide to focus on the local market, hoping to get political support in creating a monopoly. Survival is their major concern. Staying alive is the name of the game — global ambitions are simply too much. Lacking self-confidence, courage and readiness to change, they don't dare to think big. Consequently, such an attitude prevents them from ever becoming a global success.

There is an old saying: *If you want to do something, you will find a way; if you don't, you will find an excuse!* "If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right" is a saying attributed to Henry Ford. Shifting the blame is always easier than rolling up one's sleeves and getting the work done. Instead of facing a challenge, most people build piles of excuses, i.e., the idea will be rejected and misunderstood, the market is too small, and government support to innovation is just empty words...

Lack of belief in oneself, lack of ambition and low expectations are the enemies of success in any creative endeavor. The winners must be convinced they are the best; they should never cease to believe that. If we are the best, and we fail, it must be an exception. The next time we are going to win, as usual. What if it's the other way around? The losers face every situation with an inferiority complex, expecting things to go wrong. Aiming low, they are pleased with a substandard performance. If we get something right, it must be an exception. The next time we are going to lose, as usual.

In order to win out there, you have to win in your mind first! If you feel like a winner and think like a winner, you become a winner! On the other hand, if you surrender before the game has started, your chances to succeed are worth next to nothing.

Some people always win; others always lose. Why is that? The following ideas describe the [difference in attitudes](#): After making a mistake a winner readily admits it by saying: "I was wrong." A loser tries to blame somebody else, saying "It wasn't my fault." A winner thanks his good luck for winning, even when luck had no part in the matter. Whenever he fails, a loser claims that he didn't have enough luck. A winner works smarter and manages time better. A loser is always busy, solving unimportant problems and spending time to analyze his failures. Winners study a problem in order to solve it. Losers try to ignore the problem or save it for later. A winner says he is sorry and tries to correct what he did wrong. A loser says he is sorry, but does the same thing all over again. A winner knows when to fight and when to compromise. A loser makes unnecessary compromises and fights for things that are not worth fighting for. A winner says: "I am good, but not as good as I should be." A loser says: "I am better than most people." A winner looks up, heading in that direction. A loser looks down on those who are below. A winner respects people who are better than him and tries to learn from them. A loser envies people who are better than him and attempts to bring them down. A winner says: "There must be a better way to do this." A loser says: "It has always been done this way."

True innovators and change masters must aim high and think big. You don't know what you can get away with until you try!