

"TOO DIFFICULT TO CHANGE"

By

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TOO DIFFICULT TO CHANGE. (AN ALLEGORICAL STORY)

2 CHARACTERS

Peter: CEO of Small and Meaty Australia. Manufacturers of smallgoods and processed meats.

Peter is a middle-aged male. Been in the meat processing business for many years. Started on the shopfloor and worked his way up through the organisation. A "rough diamond" type character. Very smart and focused on the business but also able to mix well with all levels of an organisation. Not highly educated but very "street-smart".

Annamaria: 2IC to CEO. Middle-aged professional female in 2IC position to Peter. Very highly educated and many years of experience but not mixed with shopfloor personnel. Speaks in refined manner. Very polite.

LOCATIONS: 3

L1: PETERS OFFICE

L2: ANNAMARIAS OFFICE

L3: AIRPORT LOUNGE

FADE IN:

CEO'S CALL

PETER: CEO makes call from his office to 2IC. Middle aged male. Sitting at his desk. Dressed in dark suit, red tie, white shirt. Behind him is shelving with rows of books, folders, photos of family. Desk is cluttered with papers, folders, computer screen, keyboard, deskphone. Reaches forward and picks up phone. Dials number.

PETER

(Quietly, calmly)

Annamaria, Pete here

DISSOLVE TO SPLIT SCREEN:

PETER in half to right of screen

ANNAMARIA in half to left of screen

ANNAMARIA: 2IC to Peter. Middle aged female. Dressed in dark business ladies business suit. Sitting at neat and tidy desk. Pens in holder. Computer screen. Keyboard. Nothing on wall behind him. Family photo on desk.

ANNAMARIA

Yes Peter

PETER

Hey Anna, I have a project proposal here from that young James fellow over in Strategic Planning. Says he wants to change the way we smoke our ham and bacon. Know anything about it?

ANNAMARIA

Well only a little Peter. He seems to be onto something. Some new technologies have come out and he suggesting we should be on board with it. I've had a quick glance through the proposal and, without knowing the details, it looks promising.

PETER

Well you know me Anna, always looking for improvements to take cost out of the business. But I tell ya' I'm not bloody jumping into something that's not a proven winner. Remember we have a lot of investment and people involved in the Ham and Bacon smoking and to fiddle around at this stage of the game is fraught with bloody danger.

(Questioning attitude)

Don't those young fella's know the market is stuffed at the moment Anna? This is not the bloody time to be mucking around and changing things. Especially when those other bastards in this god-for-saken industry refuse to change either. Jeez, how are we supposed to make a dollar?

ANNAMARIA

Fully understand Peter. It's to be expected you know. We hire these young fellows straight from the Uni. They haven't had time to blend into the workplace and mold themselves to the way we do things.

PETER

(Firmly)

Look Annamaria. We paid a bloody mint for those Ham and Bacon Smokers. And what about the dosh we spent on tooling up. And all those people we sent off for training for Christ' sake, cost us a bloody fortune. It'll all be for nothing. For someone to suggest that there's a completely different way to do it seems bloody preposterous.

No Anna! The whole organisation is set up for the Smokers and the distribution down the line. It would stuff up our business model completely is we try and bloody change it.

ANNAMARIA

Well aware of that Peter however there is new technologies coming out all the time and he's

just suggesting that we look into it. Remember the Ham Smoker we replaced with the fully Automatic Ham and Bacon Smoker AND Slicer. Best thing we ever did.

PETER

I hear you Annie, I hear you. But let's not forget the people we had to let go cos' of it. Jesus, old Macca was with us for 36 bloody years. Crying shame to let him go. Don't breed blokes like Macca anymore. He knew his way around those Smokers, by Christ he did. Hardly needed a Maintenance Department with Macca around.

(Voice gets firmer)

It may have been old technology but at least you could understand it and fix the bloody thing if it stuffed up. This new stuff is like opening the bonnet of ya' car. Need a bloody science degree to fill up the windscreen washer.

And Annie, don't forget the hallybaloo it caused down the line. Bloody packers were up in arms remember! Products started coming off unevenly and they couldn't adjust the Auto-Packers quickly enough. Jeez, those guys and the union bastards hit the roof.

ANNAMARIA

Well young James's proposal is just that at the moment Peter. I know he shouldn't have sent a copy to the Board of Directors and the local papers and I'll make sure he knows that's not on.

What it has done is get the Ham and Bacon team a bit hot under the collar. They reckon there're doing alright and are arguing against it of course.

PETER

(Questioning)

Can they come up with something to negate the

need to change? You know, do it with less energy or waste or less of that horrible stink that comes off those machines?

Or what about reducing the wood burning? People are forever whingeing about using too many trees and deforestation and the like. Bloody hell! We have a process to run and people want their ham and bacon smoked using the best bloody trees we can get.

ANNAMARIA

Interesting you should mention that Peter. It seems the Smokers have come up with an idea that may reduce the stink. They proposed it a few months ago and we tossed some funds from the maintenance budget their way to try it out. Well they did try it. It sounds great in theory it seems to be a bit harder to do than they first thought.

PETER

Christ that little project. Didn't even know we were still pursuing it. Hell, Anna. We had better get cracking on some more funds for them. Can't let something like a bit of a smell be the death of the Ham and Bacon Smoking. Jesus, it's the backbone of this whole organisation.

(Questioning)

Annamaria, do we have some good people not doing much at the moment we could bung in there to help get things moving along? Someone we can trust that won't sprout off too much?

ANNAMARIA

I think we could probably get some of the older guys to tackle it. Those young fella's we can keep busy on the day-to-day.

PETER

Sounds beaut. Get cracking on it and keep me informed. Catch ya!

Peter hangs up the phone.

DISSOLVE TO SINGLE SCREEN

Peter leans back in chair. Looks to the ceiling.

PETER

(Resigned)

Bugger me.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

BLANK BLACK SCREEN

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERING

{3 WEEKS LATER}

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

Peter: CEO in same dark suit. Blue shirt. Green tie.
Sitting at same desk. Items on desk moved around.
Phone rings. Leans forward. Picks up phone.

PETER

Hello, Peter speaking.

DISSOLVE TO SPLIT SCREEN:

ANNAMARIA in half to right of screen

PETER in half to left of screen

ANNAMARIA

Hi Peter, it's Annamaria. Just a quick call to
give you a follow-up on our discussion a few
weeks ago. The one about the possible
improvements to the H&B Smoking process.

PETER

Jeez Annie, I forgot about that. Been busier than
a three-legged horse in a steeplechase. OK what's

the gos'.

ANNAMARIA

Well Peter, we did as you suggested and threw some extra funds to the Smokers and I got old Thommo and Simpson the boffins to look into it. They pushed things along quite a bit actually however, the best they could come up with was that they could reduce the stink but it was going to add a lot of cost to the whole process. Thommo keep's insisting that they can do better but will require more time and funds.

PETER

(Angrily with raised voice)

I bloody knew it! You get these old slide-rule jokers involved and all they want is time and dosh. Just trying to get themselves a bloody job till they retire. Bugger me.

(Calms down and lowers voice)

You know that proposal from young James made it to the BOD Annie. Silly old farts blathered on they had a legal obligation to pass this on to shareholders. Jeez' I couldn't bloody believe it. Now everybody knows about this new technology and fully expect us to bloody do something about it.

ANNAMARIA

Well maybe we should Peter.

PETER

(Angrily. Raised voice)

Jesus Annie! Not you too. I cop enough from those tree-hugging hippie bastards over at Strategic Planning. Why the hell did we start that department up for anyway? Full of suggestions but no good ideas.

All they ever talk about is bloody trees and asking why we cut so many down. For christ's sake! We don't chop the bloody things down. We just buy the wood from those bastards that do. Why don't they pick on them?

ANNAMARIA

Look Peter, I've had the team review James' proposal and it looks pretty good actually. I think he's onto something. His proposal is well put together, looks like it will work OK, resolves most of the issues we have with the current Smokers. And the best thing is it uses fewer trees and removes the stink from the process.

PETER

(Firmly)

What are you saying Annamaria? Jesus! We can't shutdown the H&B Smoking process. We'll look like idiots. It was us that pushed it through all those years ago and to close up now would not look good for yours truly. It'll cost the company a fortune to retrench all those workers.

(Questioning)

Wouldn't it be better to keep going as long as we can and put up with the stink? Maybe old Thommo and Simpson can come up with something in the meantime.

ANNAMARIA

Well I suppose we could. We can always delay it and just keep saying we are investing funds in improving the stink and using less wood. That seems to keep shareholders happy. As long as we look like we are doing something even if we know it's a dead loss.

PETER

Jeez' Annie. You're starting to sound like me. Ha! 'bout bloody time.

(Professional tone)

Right! Issue story to site newsletter and the local dishrags that the company is continuing to invest in the development of new technology to further reduce the stink from the H&B Smokers.

(Return to normal tone)

That'll keep the bastards happy for a while.
Alright Anna, keep me up-to-date with any news.
Catch ya!

Hang up phone.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

BLANK BLACK SCREEN

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERING

(2 WEEKS LATER)

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

Peter; CEO: Sitting at his desk. Dressed in dark suit. Blue tie. Pink shirt. Reaches forward and picks up phone. Dials number.

PETER

(Quietly, calmly)

Annamaria, Pete here

DISSOLVE TO SPLIT SCREEN:

PETER in half to right of screen

ANNAMARIA in half to left of screen

ANNAMARIA: 2IC to Peter. Dressed in smart ladies business suit. Phone to ear.

ANNAMARIA

Hello Peter.

PETER

Got some more news for you Anna. Just come out of a BOD meeting and the old farts

have taken a different tack on this bloody
H&B stink business.

They've got a few new blokes on the Board
and now they've changed their bloody minds
on what we should do.

Firstly we chuck less dollars at it and we
remove one of the slide-rule boffins.
Seems they want us to stick with the old
smoking process and reduce, but not stop,
the investment in reducing the stink.

ANNAMARIA

That's good news Peter.

PETER

Yeah, too right! So we can continue using the old
Ham and Bacon Smokers for the foreseeable future
and if anybody whinges we can rightly say we are
still investing to make further improvement. Win
Win!

ANNAMARIA

Yeah, that's great Peter, but we still got the
problem with the stink.

PETER

That's true. How about we tell 'em it's good for
their bloody immune system and helps clear the
sinuses. Make your hair grow better or something
along those lines.

ANNAMARIA

No worries, I'll get PR to work on it.

PETER

Good'o Annie. I'll keep you up-to-date. Catch ya!

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

BLANK BLACK SCREEN

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERING

{1 WEEK LATER}

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

Peter; CEO: Sitting in Airport first-class lounge. Dressed in dark suit. Purple tie. Blue shirt. Reaches into coat pocket and takes out mobile phone. Dials number.

PETER

(Quietly, calmly)

G'day Anna, Peter here

DISSOLVE TO SPLIT SCREEN:

PETER in half to right of screen

ANNAMARIA in half to left of screen

ANNAMARIA: 2IC to Peter. Sitting at desk. Dressed in open pale yellow shirt. Phone in hand.

ANNAMARIA

Hello Peter.

PETER

Got a minute Anna?

ANNAMARIA

Of course Peter.

PETER

(Angry voice but not raised in volume)

Jesus Annie, You're not gonna believe this. Those bastards over at Sweetmeats Galore in N-bloody-Z have actually replaced all their bloody Smokers with machines the same as what young James was proposing. It's making those backward bastards look good.

ANNAMARIA

Christ, how did they get onto that?

PETER

Well it seems like every prick and his dog knows about these new machines and the whiny Kiwis are putting them in. H&B Smokers are shutting down left, right and bloody centre. And their putting in the papers how wonderful it is having a process that uses fewer trees and has no bloody stink.

Jesus H Christ! You hardly have a process if you don't have the stink. What about their immune systems, sinuses and balding issues? Bloody idiots!

ANNAMARIA

Well Peter, what do you suggest we do now?

PETER

(in a resigned manner)

OK. Let's drag out James' proposal and have another look. Hopefully we still have a copy of it. I'll get it straight to the Board again with some added flowering. The old farts will most likely say yes this time if we want to keep up with the Kiwis. Make us look like right dills if we don't.

Not that we bloody want to mind you.

ANNAMARIA

OK will do. The delay will put us a bit behind compared to the Kiwis but we should be able to PR our way out of it.

PETER

Good stuff Annie. Place won't be the bloody same without the Smokers ya' know. Jeez I reckon there are a lot of people around here that will even miss the bloody stink. Such is life. Catch ya!

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

BLANK BLACK SCREEN

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERING

{1 HOUR LATER}

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

PETER; CEO: Sitting in Airport lounge eating a meal.
Dressed in dark suit. Purple tie. Blue shirt. Reaches into
pocket and takes out mobile phone. Dials number.

PETER

(Excitedly)

G'day Annie, Pete here again. I just
thought of something.

DISSOLVE TO SPLIT SCREEN:

PETER in half to right of screen

ANNAMARIA in half to left of screen

ANNAMARIA: Sitting at desk. Dressed in open yellow shirt.
Phone in hand.

ANNAMARIA

Hello Peter. I'm listening.

PETER

Look Annamaria. These new processes that James
has proposed. Same ones the Kiwis have put in.
Have these things been properly tried and tested?

What I mean is there even the slightest hint that
not everything is kosher with them?

ANNAMARIA

Bit hard to say exactly. They have been around
for a while and seem to do what they claim. I
haven't heard anything that discredits them in
any way.

In what way were you thinking? Reliability?

Running costs?

PETER

No, no. Not those. Young James' paper clearly shows 'em to be cheap to operate and run pretty much non-bloody-stop.

No Annie. I was thinking about any potential health issues? Safety, that sort of stuff.

ANNAMARIA

Health and Safety? Jeez! I don't know actually. Surely they've been tested to Reg's? Haven't they? I couldn't imagine the authorities allowing 'em to go in without passing the proper regulations.

PETER

Well you'd think so. But have they been fully tested for long-term effects Anna? That's what I want to know. And I reckon anybody working with 'em, or even bloody near 'em, would want to know. Catch my drift?

ANNAMARIA

Yes, yes I think I do. If people got sus' on safety issues then the unions would be on to it pretty quickly. Probably put a stop to putting 'em in I'd say.

PETER

Exactly Annie' exactly. If the slightest sniff of an issue gets out then the whole thing would look dodgy as.

ANNAMARIA

Ok I'm with you. Any suggestions on how we can spread the word?

PETER

Well I'm thinking we spin it amongst the operators first, especially the ones that would be out the door if we put the

machines in. I reckon they'll be looking for any potential issues pretty bloody smartly. Anything to stop 'em going in.

(Laughing)

I reckon they'll be feeling sick before we even start the things up. Ha!

ANNAMARIA

They'll be onto the unions before you know it. Great idea Peter. Unions won't like it either I'd say.

How about we discretely pass some funding on to union blokes at the Kiwis place? You know, buy a few tickets to the next union dinner! Then drop a hint there could be issues?

PETER

Jeez Annie. That's bloody brilliant. You'll have my job next you sly fox.

ANNAMARIA

Ha. I'll get the ball rolling and get back to you.

PETER

Ok Annie. Do the best you can. We'll save a fortune if we can stop 'em going in or delaying the bloody things.

Gotta' make the bastards think the world will end if we stop using wood and trees to smoke our meats. Mind you it might end if we don't stop. But that's not our problem. Let the pollies and the boffins worry about that. Not us! We've got money to make. Catch ya'!

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

BLANK BLACK SCREEN

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERING

{2 WEEKS LATER}

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

ANNAMARIA: 2IC calls PETER CEO: Sitting at desk.
Picks up phone. Dials number.

DISSOLVE TO SPLIT SCREEN

ANNAMARIA ON LEFT OF SCREEN: PETER ON RIGHT OF SCREEN

ANNAMARIA

Hello Peter. Annamaria here.

PETER

G'day there Annie' mate. Hope you've got
some good news for me.

ANNAMARIA

No worries Peter. It's all good. The crap has hit
the fan with the Kiwis. The unions have jumped in
hard and claim the new process hasn't been tested
properly and potentially could have problems with
health and safety in the future.

Ha! All the science guys are going ape over it.
Reckon there's nothing wrong with the process and
they cannot possibly cause any harm. Unions are
counter-claiming that the issues might be far
into the future. Much longer than the testing
that was done.

Christ it's got so bad the Kiwis may have to even
shut down the ones that are already running.

PETER

Annamaria! You are bloody kidding me!
That's amazing. Worked out better than
expected. Jesus H Christ Annie. You're a
bloody genius.

ANNAMARIA

Thanks Peter. I can't take all the credit. We're
all in this together.

Ok, what's happening now is self-perpetuating. The knobs in the press have got involved and are putting it up there on the front pages. This has got everyone talking about it. And no one seems all that interested in putting any more new processes in. So that's a positive.

PETER

Too right that's a positive. Should be able to stretch this out for quite a while. At least till you and I are due for retirement and sipping coldies and bubbly with our feet up. Catch my drift?

ANNAMARIA

Absolutely Peter. Well I have to go. Have to attend a union benefit dinner in NZ.

PETER

Ha! That's bloody hilarious. Don't forget the chequebook. Ha! Catch ya!

ANNAMARIA

See ya' Peter.

FADE OUT:

THE END