



292 Fifth Avenue • New York, NY 10001 • 212.714.3536 • www.smcddata.com



Making the Change Before its Too Late

Today's new business reality of "down sizing" by major corporations has resulted in a "wakeup call" for many people, forcing them to consider a career change fearing they will be "laid off." Working at the same company since graduating from school and expecting to continue to work until retirement age, they often face the new reality of being unemployed, and are either "too old to be hired" or "too young to retire." Some quickly get over the initial shock, adapt to the new reality, and utilize their past experience and become entrepreneurs, while others eventually find different jobs in the corporate world. Yet many people cave in under the pressure of being unemployed, give up and can't adapt to their new reality.

Not being able to face the new reality.

While attending a photography workshop in '06, I met a fellow photographer who was a manager at a large corporation, and one of 2000 people who were being "laid off" due to "down sizing." Working for this company for the past 30 years and being 18 months short of early retirement, his world "fell apart." The options he was given were: continue to work at lower pay and take a demotion, or be terminated immediately. Feeling he still had valuable services to offer, he offered his employer to stay on as a consultant for a daily fee.

Photographing for a week in an area without Cell Phone services, he used a pay phone every night to call his office voice mail, hoping to hear that his offer had been accepted. By the end of the workshop he still did not know if his offer had been accepted and had only 10 more days left on the job. Fearing his new reality, he spoke with a financial advisor about cashing part of his retirement fund and paying substantial penalties to subsidize his lost income for the next 18 months until he reached early retirement age.

Discussing his new reality, I asked him what options he has. To my surprise, he told me that he is an expert in his field and could be a consultant to other corporations. When I asked him why he doesn't use his expertise and become an independent consultant, he admitted he is afraid of marketing himself after being employed for 30 years and would rather wait for his early retirement.

"Leap of Faith and finding the Safety Net."

In '05 while attending a photography workshop in Alaska on a 50 foot charter boat, I finally faced my own grim reality. Owning a computer consulting firm for 25 years that provided programming services, I faced a new reality of declining market share. The outsourcing trends to the Far East had a devastating impact on the computer industry in the USA. Realizing that times were changing and I must redesign my business model, I spoke with my business mentor about it for two years, resisting his suggestions to give up my "old business



292 Fifth Avenue • New York, NY 10001 • 212.714.3536 • www.smcddata.com



model” to become an advisor to small business owners. “Foolish pride” is a destructive force and resulted in my refusing to listen to his advice. Recognizing the dilemma of giving up my 25 year old business model, my business mentor said: “your company is like your child and you can’t give it up. The reality is that times are changing and the ’80’s and ’90’s are gone forever. This is a very common issue business owner’s face, not being able to make logical decisions because they are emotionally involved.”

Photographing the magnificent scenery of Alaska’s inner passage with glaciers and wild life for 10 days, I realized that I must face my reality and change my business model. Speaking with my favorite photography teacher and the boat captain about my dilemma, they told me: “when you are ready, you will face your reality and will know what to do.”

Prior to becoming a well known nature photographer, my photography teacher had been a psychologist treating women with terminal breast cancer while supporting her two children in college. Being upset about her patients dying after losing the battle with cancer, she decided to give up her practice, opened a chocolate store and became a very successful business woman. After her children graduated from college she sold the chocolate store at a substantial profit, studied photography for 2 years with the masters, and became a very successful photography teacher in her own right whose workshops are so popular they are booked a year in advance. Speaking with her about her past, she told me: “I learned from my terminal patients how to love life, and not let obstacles stop me from doing what my heart desires.”

The boat captain had been a professor and the head of a biology department in a very well known university in California 25 years earlier. Not being happy with his reality resulted in a severe car accident that could have been fatal. After getting out of the hospital and recuperating, he went to his university, quit his job, gave up tenure and bought the charter boat and has never looked back.

Seeing my photography teacher and the boat captain who had changed careers and found their happiness, I realized I must face my reality and follow my business mentor’s advice. A week after returning home from my Alaska trip, I changed my 25 years business model from being a computer programming provider to being the “trusted advisor” who provides solutions and writes business articles that have been published in major web magazines. I also arranged that my associate of 25 years be hired by the software company I represent with the same salary and benefits I had provided, enabling me to “live with myself” knowing he would not have to pound the pavement looking for a new job. My decision resulted in ’06 being my best year in business since I established my consulting firm in 1980.

About the author:

Since 1980, Dani Kaplan has worked with Manufacturers, Distributors and Retailers helping them lower their Operating Costs, Mainstream the Operation and Control the Inventory. Dani can be reached at 212-714-3536 <http://www.smcddata.com/> His business mentor is Dan Schaefer, PHD can be reached at www.danschaeferphd.com