

What to do about change in your work life

by Gloria Welton

One thing that is a guarantee in this life is change. Everyday change in the world, at home, and in the workplace can be both negative and positive, but it is what you do with the experiences that counts.

Embracing the Waves of Change: Resiliency in the Midst of Transition was the topic of a recent conference held by the **PEI Career Development Association**. Guest speaker **John Newman** and facilitator **Joan McDonald** captivated an audience of about 70 people with their positive approach to dealing with change. The audience consisted of career counsellors, practitioners and others who work directly or indirectly with people who are job seeking and career planning.



John Newman's life and work journey

In 1968, after answering a farm worker advertisement, John, his wife, son, and family dog left their home in England and came to Nova Scotia with \$7.00 to their name. John soon realized his love for farming and eventually bought his own farm. "At 25 years old, I felt I had the world by the tail," says John. "But my good fortune took a turn for the worse about seven years later when I was diagnosed with farmer's lung disease. My wife and I were devastated. This forced change upon us. We had to sell the farm."

Take a job even if it is not your dream job

"When my health improved and I could go back to work, I had to find a job to pay the bills," says John. "So I worked in a job that I considered quite a setback but I put all the effort I could into it."

John says when you are trying to get back on your feet, take a job even if you know it is not your dream job. It gets you back out meeting people and exploring your possibilities.

Never sell yourself short

From there he made enough contacts to eventually get a job with a vocational school as an agricultural mechanics instructor. "Not a bad job for someone who left school at age 14," John says with a smile. "To my surprise, I discovered that I loved to teach as much as I loved farming. I put all of my energy and attention into being the best teacher I could be even if it meant trying new methods in a traditional education setting."

You can't take stress home with you

"Soon change had its way of affecting my work life again and I ended up resigning from that teaching job. I took another job that was a chance to master something completely different. This job was at a grain elevator company in Halifax. I was fascinated by how much I learned as I traveled around the world for this company.

"After a while, the job description shifted and I was given the job of breaking the union which organized the company's workers. This ended up being the most stressful job of my life."

John says that at the end of the day you have to put stress down - you can't take it home with you. But it seemed to catch up with him and he believes the stress was a contributing factor in being diagnosed with cancer.

Never give up hope

"As a result of the cancer I required severe medical treatment. I got to the point where I wondered if life was worth living. My doctor gave me three months to live but I am here today to tell you that was 15 years ago."

As his health improved, John gradually found his place in the workforce again. He found yet another passion - carpentry. He and his family eventually found their way to PEI. Life has gone full circle, and now he spends his time on his daughter and son-in-law's farm being that much needed extra helping hand.

"Seize the day, be aware of your options, and take chances in the belief that things will work out for the better," says John. "Always put your best foot forward. Most of all remember that time flies, so really try to enjoy your life and your work."

"Now I have been blessed with two granddaughters and I put in a full day's work doing what I love."



Joan McDonald talked about tools and strategies

Joan capitalized on John's powerful message by providing some tools and strategies to deal with life changes. She has had a variety of work experiences over the course of about 30 years, including social work, managing a sheltered workshop for people with disabilities, college instructing, and being a learning consultant with the provincial government. Now she operates her own consulting company called **Inverlie Consulting**.

There are two paths

Joan says that we can learn from change or it can sweep us away. "We can get quite lopsided in our thinking when faced with a life change. Only seeing the downside leads to stress and negativity. If we can see the upsides of the change, and we link it to what we most value, life can be much more satisfying."

Forced changes are the greatest opportunity to learn

"Believe it or not, the greatest learning that can take place in our lives and the lives of job seekers and career changers is through unexpected changes," said Joan.

"In our work lives, jobs can be lost, companies can downsize, and changes in the workplace can affect us tremendously. But with the right support, people can be steered back on track and in many cases the journey leads them closer to their dreams.

"When forced to make a change, people may decide to open their own business, go back to school, change careers, change work locations or explore other options that may lead to greater success in the end."

For more information about **Inverlie Consulting**, contact **Joan McDonald** at 569-3944 or email joan@inverlieconsulting.ca
Visit www.inverlieconsulting.ca

12EJ

For more information about **PEI Career Development Association**, contact **Phyllis Pitre**, Chairperson, at 892-9149 ext. 227.
Visit www.peicda.ca

June 2010

www.employmentjourney.com

