



Leading Higher Means Change and Change Is Scary

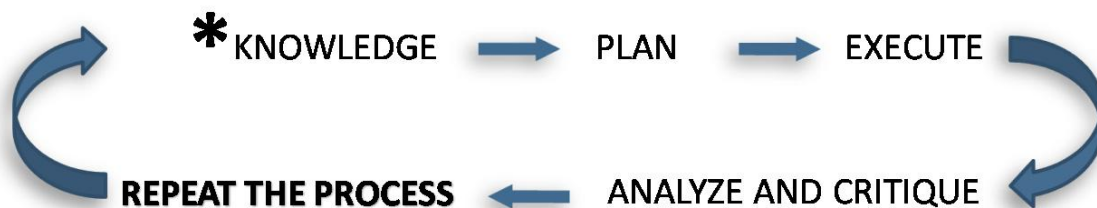
Perhaps you've heard the expression: *No change means 'No Change.'* And, there, in those five words, is the definition of insanity that emerged in the 1990's.

"Insanity is doing the same thing today that you did yesterday and expecting different results." Change involves behaving or acting differently than we have in the past. But we have to let go or give up the old way and step out in a new way, trusting that the change we make is going to work out.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to hear Dr. Jerry Linenger (Capt. USN Ret.) speak about his four and a half-month adventure as a NASA astronaut onboard the Russian space station Mir. Dr. Linenger said that one of the greatest challenges he ever faced was during his space walk when he had to let go of his "white knuckled" grip and float in space. The natural fear he had was that once he let go he would fall away and fly through space or fall back to earth. Forcing himself to look at the situation objectively, he realized he had to trust his training and knowledge in order to overcome his fears.

To his credit, he was able to adapt and change his mindset from fear to faith and act on what he believed to be truth. He overcame his greatest fears, stepped out and began his walk. Within minutes, he went from experiencing stark terror to one of the most glorious events of his life. Likewise, in order for us to change, we must begin to act based on truth knowledge, not on our old habits, fears, and feelings.

But behavioral changes are usually not one-time events; rather they are a process. The five step process starts with knowledge or awareness (in business we call it management information). Next comes a plan (which includes the decision), and then we take action (execute), get feedback, analyze and critique, gain new insights, refine the plan and then execute again. When I do individual coaching, I use this model as a way to focus on the individual's development process.



Top athletes practice, practice and practice. Likewise we must practice to grow to a higher level of leadership performance. Each cycle around the model above gives us more experience and more confidence and makes the new behavior "feel" more natural. In this



way, each cycle in the process lifts us to a higher level. It takes courage to let go and walk in the weightlessness of space. Likewise, it takes courage to let go and walk into the new and unnatural behaviors that we need to develop to be the leaders that we can be and that our people deserve.

This article is adapted from [Leading Talents, Leading Teams](#) by Lee Ellis.