

Change is a Math Formula

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Here's the formula: $C(SQ) > R(C)$. For those non-math people like me, here is the English translation: Change happens when the cost of the status quo is greater than the risk of change.

I've been reading Alan Webber's "Rules of Thumb" and this one jumped out at me. Webber is a former Harvard Business Review editor and the founder of Fast Company magazine. Over his career he has made a practice of writing down lessons learned on 3x5 cards. His book is the

result of compiling the best of these lessons. I found it to be a great read with plenty of practical advice. Now, back to the change thing!

In over twenty-three years as a church staff member, and in the five years I've been a church development consultant, I have seen one constant: **change**. In church life, even though it is sometimes masked very well, change is an ever-current reality. Many times change involves deeply committed people who believe in their cause, are convinced they are right, and are prepared to sacrifice greatly, if that's what it takes to "win."

Most of the time they lose and sacrifice greatly.

It doesn't have to be that way – but most of the time it is. I have personal stories (and scars) to prove the point! It's not enough to be convinced that you are right – the other side is equally convince that it is right, too. If you turn change into an "it's him or me" decision, and you've announced you have staked your future on the decision, it's time to start packing your bags.

On the other hand, if you actually want to win, rather than becoming a martyr for your cause, there are some techniques and tactics you can learn that will change the math in your favor.

Make sure you are in the game for the long haul – if you care enough to fight, care enough to stay and fight. When change is involved, you will be fighting many of the same battles over and over. You've got to be there to fight them with your eye on the long-term.

Learn the other side's language and know its argument better than it does – this may require learning new ideas, words, and actions. But only when you understand your opposition's point of view will you be able to make your viewpoint all the more compelling.

It's not enough to be against something that's bad; you have to be for something that is better – if all you're offering is nothing, the old something, bad as it is, will win. Frustrated as you may be against the status quo, you need to work out all the details, arguments, and the economics of your much better alternative.

Look for allies – it's easy for change agents to paint themselves into a corner with their logic and find themselves all alone when they get there. Genuinely creative change cuts across all boundaries and offers you the opportunity to create new partners and allies.

Learning to make change is all about learning to do the math of change. Done right, it's not only a soft art; it's also a hard science.

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