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When You're at the End of Your Rope, Let Go!*

Several years ago, I went on a weekend spiritual retreat. I had avoided going on this retreat for two years. Instinctively I knew I would be challenged about my need for control, so I avoided the inevitable by not going. I entered that retreat thinking to myself, "Patti Hathaway, you have really got yourself together. You have built a successful business. You have a wonderful husband and two adorable sons. You have managed your life well. What if you get challenged on this control issue and let go? What if you let go of managing your life and you lose everything you have worked so hard to gain? Could you live with yourself if you lost it all?" Those thoughts terrified me. Still I went.



For most of the women on this retreat, it was a simply positive mountaintop experience. As a result of my faulty thinking, I spent most of the weekend in the valley fighting for control over my soul. Could I give up that control? Near the very end of the weekend, I finally learned how to let go, to let God take over the reigns. It did not come easily or without a lot of personal pain. But what I did experience was a tremendous sense of relief, release, and peace.

To Control or Not to Control

I learned an important lesson that weekend. Giving up control isn't just a one-time event. For each of us in a change situation, dealing with our control needs will be ongoing. Organizational change is about what we control and what we don't control. It is about a struggle every single day to focus on the right things. Each of us can be a winner in change and feel a sense of personal power if we focus on certain things.

The Winner's Grid

There are basically three things we can focus on in change situations:

- (1) The things we Can Control,
- (2) The things we May Have Influence over, and
- (3) The things we Cannot Control.

	Can Control	May Have Influence	Cannot Control
Just Do It!	Game Face	Cheerleader	Hanger On
Let It Go!	Armchair Quarterback	"Boo" Bird	Graceful Exit



The Winner's Grid provides a map for taking more personal power in change situations. There are two ways we choose to act when it comes to the things we Cannot Control: (1) **Just do it!** by taking action on those things; OR (2) **Let it go.**



“Hanging on is a term used in sports for athletes who hang on beyond the time they really should have retired. It happens not only in sports, but even in the workplace.”

Let's examine the far right quadrant. In change situations, we primarily tend to focus on the last category: **Cannot Control**. Here are some examples of things that might belong in the **Cannot Control** category: company profit and loss; the market/economy; policies and procedures; management decisions; staffing levels; our supervisor (although I co-authored a book entitled *Managing Upward* so I disagree with this one); the business plan; time; the future; the weather. If you are taking action in areas you cannot control, you will feel frustrated and angry and become like the aging athlete or Hanger On. Hanging on is a term used in sports for athletes who hang on beyond the time they really should have retired. It happens not only in sports, but even in the workplace. We hang on to old vendettas, hang on to the old way of doing things, hang on to the fact that we cannot control certain things but we sure are going to try. As a result, we become angry, frustrated people. We are angry at the system. We are upset with the organization. We are frustrated with our boss. We're carrying a grudge against our co-worker. We're angry because

we've chosen to hang onto things that we have no control over. You can gain release and relief if you let go of situations and circumstances over which you have no control. You will experience firsthand the relief of a **Graceful Exit**. I had to learn to take a **Graceful Exit** at the retreat and let go of the supposed control I had over my life. What does the word "Exit" mean? It doesn't mean to jump the organizational ship, although I think in some cases that may be the best choice if a person cannot

let go of the things they don't control. What is meant by **Graceful Exit** is to let go gracefully. To "let go" of the areas over which you have no control. The word "grace" is not used much in our vocabulary.

Grace means "reprieve; a temporary exemption." Grace must be given by someone, it cannot be yanked from them. When we take a graceful exit, we voluntarily give up that which we cannot control. We need to learn how to gracefully exit and let go. In order to move into the future, we need to let go of the past. What have you been hanging onto? What is something that you need to gracefully exit out of in your job? You can't move forward into the future if you're still hanging on to the past.

It's like blowing up a balloon and then letting it go. When you release a balloon, you release and relieve the pressure. The same thing can happen at work when we recognize what we don't control and let go of our desire to control it. With organizational change, as with my control concerns at the retreat, it will probably be an everyday struggle for us to let go. Our challenge is to only "own" and take action on those things which we can control.



“I had to learn to take a Graceful Exit at the retreat and let go of the supposed control I had over my life.”

*Excerpted from Chapter 7 of Patti's upcoming book, *Untying the 'Not's' of Change (Before You're Fit to be Tied)*

The CHANGE AGENT Highlights:

This Spring, Patti is developing a Customer Service workshop for a large bank's national desktop staff (the people who fix your computers). She will be training not only the technicians but also all the supervisors and lead technicians in how to do on-the-spot coaching of their technicians to improve service delivery. After the workshop, Patti will go out on service calls with the technician and supervisor to watch how they are implementing the customer service and coaching skills they learned. She will observe and coach the supervisors after they give the technician feedback. This exciting new program option provides a hands-on system which will greatly increase the on-the-job implementation of customer service and supervisory skills: Training-> Practice Skills in workshop-> Implement Skills in workplace (both technicians and supervisors)-> Patti Coach the Supervisor-> Implement Suggestions on Next Call->Debrief.

On the Home Front:



If it's Winter, it must be basketball season at our home. Both boys are playing in a recreational basketball league and having a ball! Bryan and Drew will also be competing in an upcoming church Grand Prix Race (with pinewood derby cars). Or should I say, Jim will be competing in the contest? Bryan won first place in the race car design for four years running so there is a lot of pressure for Jim to win another trophy for him. Of course, making two cars requires that Jim fill his basement workshop with all the best wood-working equipment. I've thought for many years that these Grand Prix races are really just another way for the Dads to compete and do male-bonding with each other. Me? I just open the event by singing the national anthem and cheering my boys on . . . what better place for a mom to be!

Satisfied Client Quote:

"Thank you for the fabulous job you have done in customizing your training for our specific needs at Fifth Third Bank. We have never had an external speaker receive such high ratings from nearly 800 employees and managers. We are confident that your practical skills spiced with humor and a jolt of reality from our customers' perspective will reap a positive bottom-line impact for our bank."

R. Daniel Sadlier
President and CEO
Fifth Third Bank, Western Ohio



**Patti Hathaway,
Certified Speaking
Professional, is known
as The CHANGE AGENTSM**

who guarantees your satisfaction with every program she presents. She tailors her content based on researching your organization's needs and delivers superb content with high energy, humor and visuals. Patti's expert balance between serious concepts and humorous illustrations raises audience receptivity, creating tremendous impact. Patti Hathaway effects change that impacts bottom-line returns. She cuts across all levels of your organization to give your people the no-nonsense direction they need to deal with today's rapidly changing environment.

**Changing
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