

The Change Advantage

7 insights every leader needs to navigate and win in uncertainty

**F L O R I A N
I L G E N**

“Change is not easy, but it always pays off!”

The sentence is simple, confronting and at the same time as honest as it gets.

Yes, it's true. Change is not sexy. Period!

No matter what we are told. Even in my talk. I am that direct.

Change always comes with work. It costs time, nerves and energy.

But if we are completely honest with ourselves... in the end it has always been worth it.

You remember: the muscle only grows when we destroy the fibers. Of course, after one or two days everything hurts, we have a proper muscle soreness, but then we feel and see it. The muscle grows.

Very few businesses became successful by everything always working. Textbook companies without phases of mistakes and insights are as rare as a needle in a haystack.

Mistakes are part of it. Just like the insight that comes from them. And yes, even the pain of growth is part of the whole.

One of my valued mentors once said to me: friction is development. In the meantime I have understood it and I live it.

Change never looks sexy at the beginning. Only after the implementation and execution can we – provided we are objective – recognize what benefits we gain in the form of saved time, more focus on the important tasks and advantages for customers through the change.

We have to DO change in order to recognize and appreciate the benefits in the end.

Imagining and picturing how it could be rarely helps.

That would be like wanting to learn skiing by reading a book and hoping that afterwards I can glide down the slope in beautiful curves.

I have to go down the slope. At the beginning, however, it will first knock me onto my backside before I make the beautiful turns that not only look elegant but are also fun.

Then the sun shines as well. Well deserved.

Let's start with a lot of sun and desire for transformation.

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In my keynote you have already experienced three pillars of the change mindset. Today I present you four more that are essential for successful change.

But let's start again from the beginning. Maybe you still remember the talk. Speaking of which...

1. Selective Memory

Everything used to be better! The food, the conversations, the fax machine... OK, fun must be. Scientists found out that we like to romanticize and nostalgize things. We actually remember incorrectly and unconsciously distort the facts. That's just how it is.

No problem if it is about food, conversations and other things of the past. However, if we remember incorrectly in relation to our already achieved successes and forget many things that we previously accomplished, that is very much a problem.

That is why among others sales employees write a success journal. In this they record daily what they have already achieved. Even the small successes are written down. Thus they can always read it again and remind themselves what they have already mastered. That helps especially before new, bigger challenges.

We can derive a very strong key sentence from this context:

"What we remember determines how successful we are!"

You still have my example in the bar in mind?

You remember. Imagine we are in a bar and a sympathetic woman smiles at me, looks away mischievously and smiles at me again.

My only job as a man now is to approach the woman.

For that I have to walk the spatial distance between the woman and me and talk to her.

I can do that in two ways.

I can remember all the rejections that I have ever received in my life in such a situation with women. Through that my body posture unfortunately changes to my disadvantage. Due to nervousness waterfalls form under my armpits. As soon as I

arrive at the woman, only stammering comes out of my mouth and I wish that this conversation ends as quickly as possible. From her eyes I recognize: she wishes the same.

Or I remember all those smooth situations with women in which I had a relaxed and strong energy. In which the chemistry immediately matched, I touched the woman on the shoulder and immediately conjured a smile on her face. In which everything simply ran naturally and confidently with a lot of joy and ease and one saw each other again more often afterwards.

Both have been reality. Both situations were real and I have the possibility to remember both. My free choice. With the consequence that I will achieve different results in the here and now.

Maybe you are a woman and ask yourself what this example has to do with you... I am sure that you know situations in which you are standing in front of an important phone call. Be it in sales, shortly before a decision. Before a conversation with the boss, the employee or with a person who is very close to you, like your partner.

It is 100% the same concept.

What we remember determines how successful we are.

Use it. It pays off and you will notice that we have already experienced many positive changes in the past that did not look easy and sexy at the beginning. Only after we went through them.

Exactly that is what you can remember when you tell yourself or your employees and colleagues that we now have a new change.

This makes new changes easier and they happen with less resistance.

2. **Fearless Curiosity**

We can learn extremely much from children, things that we have unlearned through our upbringing, education, university and finally work.

What children carry within themselves the most besides their joy, creativity and innocence, what makes them heroes in training, is the pure and wonderful fearless curiosity.

Children are driven by intrinsic curiosity. They want to understand things. Of course the word "why" in endless loop can sometimes be annoying as a parent. They want to explore things, understand them and ultimately master them.

They are also not afraid of making mistakes. Mistakes are an emotional construct which only received a negative association through evaluation by authority figures. We have learned that mistakes are bad and that we therefore have to avoid them... at any price.

But it must be clear to us: no progress without mistakes. No muscle growth without tears in the fibers. No company growth without friction of insight.

Mistakes are good. We need them to become better.

That is why it is also essential that you remind yourself again and again:

“The only mistake is the one we do not learn from.”

Children learn extremely fast and do not possess the trained shame that comes along with mistakes.

This weighs on us and we are allowed to let it go again.

Mistakes happen, we learn from them, get up again, knock off the proverbial dust and continue. NEXT. Move on.

The Canadian ice hockey legend Wayne Gretzky said: You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.

Or more in the words that I love and apply for myself: If I do not ask, the answer is always NO!

No matter what it is about.

With the woman in the bar from above.

With the next customer.

With an upsell of an exclusive keynote.

The upgrade in the hotel.

The service you are not happy with.

Asking costs nothing, brings you forward and shows other people what you can do and where you stand.

Do not hide.

You have earned to be seen.

Children are incredibly curious and at the same time have no fear of making mistakes. Let us use that as a source of inspiration to experience again the joy of life and the exciting and thrilling aspects of our environment.

The worst thing that can happen is that it does not work.

NOT YET ;-)

3. **Extreme Ownership**

Jeff Bezos applied it when the Fire Phone flopped.

In 2014 he said in a press conference: "I take full responsibility for this." The audience, his employees and executives were more than surprised.

Extreme Ownership or radical personal responsibility, in German.

The term originally comes from Jocko Willink, a US Navy SEAL, who developed two important statements by which many leadership teams operate. Not only in the US military.

The first statement is as simple as it is memorable:

"I can only take 100% responsibility."

As soon as we try to share responsibility, we create a lack of clarity about who is responsible for what. My example from the talk was the classic bystander effect, in which an increasing number of witnesses leads to a decreasing willingness to intervene.

One person observes: direct action. High personal responsibility. Result achieved.

Many people observe a situation at the same time: people think about who should do what, shift responsibility and the task of acting away from themselves. Result: it gets filmed, nobody intervenes. Or if someone does, then far too late.

From business we know the meetings in which the elephant in the room is supposed to be addressed: "Someone should do something about that!"

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief and is happy that the topic has finally been addressed.

Unfortunately, nothing happens, because the talk was only about "someone." Nobody knows exactly what needs to be done and especially by whom.

If we take 100% responsibility, everything is clear. This creates certainty and other employees also feel the intrinsic drive and necessity to take responsibility, because they do not want to fall behind.

In this way, responsible employees are empowered and moved towards ownership.

Jocko's second statement is somewhat more direct and perhaps even more confronting:

“There are no bad teams, only bad leadership.”

Before I, as a competent leader, ask myself whether my team might not be motivated, it is essential to clarify whether I have communicated 100% what my expectations are regarding success and whether I have provided all the necessary resources.

If I can answer both positively, I have automatically achieved something very important.

I have expanded my radius of influence. In other words, the zone for which I am responsible has expanded.

What I mean by that becomes clear when we understand the following statement:

“If it is my fault, I can change it. If it is someone else’s fault, I am powerless.”

The greater my influence through personal responsibility, the more I have the steering wheel in my hands and can steer the ship of change in the right direction.

4. **Solid Teamwork**

Extreme Ownership lays the foundation. From the individual to the team. I must take personal responsibility in order to enrich the team through my role model function.

Teamwork begins when we leave our silos and no longer operate in the this-is-mine mindset. My area, my knowledge, my tasks. That used to work well. In times of AI and rapid change, such a mindset slows things down too much and is no longer sustainable. Not even in the most successful industries. In these I often give keynotes, because success has lulled further development to sleep. A very exciting topic!

By working together and tackling projects jointly, even across teams, and being open to exchange, challenges become easier.

Very few people manage to overcome heartbreak alone. If I speak with a second, external person, I quickly realize that my way of thinking and my stuckness can be softened by a second perspective.

Change often works similarly. Through interdisciplinary exchange, stuck situations loosen up and problems are solved together.

Through this form of communication, however, something unconscious and extremely valuable arises in the team. A currency is added to the entire team. Because you have solved a challenge together and through constructive feedback, TRUST is created.

Trust is the currency in change processes within a team.

Through enough of such proofs of team capability, a basic trust in the team is established over time, which is more than important for our future.

With all the unexpected changes that still lie ahead of us, we need exactly this form of trust in the team, because it gives us the certainty that we can achieve this together.

Proven trust is the lubricant that drives our mission forward in the VUCA world.

This makes transformation easier and more successful through a reduction of friction.

5. Opportunity through the Unexpected

If someone explains to us how good a change is, lists all the advantages and presents them, we are usually only moderately inspired by it. Surprising? Certainly not, if you understand how people work.

That is also clear: how are we supposed to consciously or, more importantly, subconsciously imagine what the new state will look like if we have not seen it yet?

Since it did not exist for us before, we also lack the imagination or the feeling for it. But above all, we do not yet know what is in it for us personally.

What's in it for me?!? Probably the most important question.

Spoiler alert: I only find change sexy if I see an obvious benefit for myself.

Unfortunately, this is not always clear and recognizable.

And sometimes the personal benefit is not yet visible.

I remember very well the time during COVID when I decided, out of necessity, to offer seminars on SEO. Via video call. Not exactly my domain as someone who loves the stage and interaction with the audience.

Background: for my shows and later for my talks, I collected video testimonials with a camera, in which participants reported how they experienced the performance. This was sometimes difficult, because participants were intimidated by the setup of the camera including light and microphone.

That was the case with live talks. In the online seminars, however, something completely different happened.

After the online seminars on digital visibility, I asked the group how they liked it, and at the beginning I did not even plan to record video testimonials.

But since the participants started to rave and delivered strong material, I immediately hit record.

It was super easy to get strong customer statements.

What was different?

During COVID, people were used to spending hours in front of the camera of their computer or laptop. The nervousness was gone, they had already consumed a lot of content, and it was the most natural thing to speak a testimonial into their own camera.

I did not expect that at the beginning. Not at all.

That every testimonial contributes to convincing and winning new customers is clear.

Initially, that was not my plan at all. Only through execution did I understand the new benefit.

Sometimes we simply have to go into change and let ourselves be surprised by what is really in it for us.

The benefit of the unexpected is one of the most exciting aspects of change.

And no, we do not have a guarantee that we will see this benefit immediately.

We simply have to try it.

Life remains exciting.

6. No Change without a Change Vision

85% of all change processes are carried out without a concrete and communicated vision for the change and fail for exactly this reason.

You probably remember the image of the elephant that is guided by the elephant rider.

The elephant is the subconscious, the rider is the conscious mind.

Here is the thing: in the elephant lies all the power, the emotion, the drive. The elephant must be motivated. It needs a strong why.

The elephant rider, on the other hand, does not need motivation. We do not need to be motivated to stop smoking or to do more sports.

Our elephant rider, the conscious mind, needs something else.

A clear direction. Direction. A plan of where things should go.

I always imagine that elephant and rider are standing on a plateau, waiting, and the rider asks himself: which of these peaks should we climb?

The rider needs it: logic, the what and how behind a change.

Exactly that is what a strong vision contains. We have to address the conscious, the logical part.

If we do not do that, something happens that we already know. If there is not enough information, too much information, or contradictory information, the conscious mind falls into a very unfortunate state.

Analysis paralysis!

We are paralyzed. We ask ourselves questions about where things should go, how we should implement things, and we block moving forward.

A clear vision overrides the disturbing analysis paralysis. It allows us to move forward confidently and with a concrete plan.

Every leader, every employee needs the knowledge of this essential vision and **MUST** be aligned with it.

The how and what of this change vision address the elephant rider, the conscious mind.

But what is still missing so that this transformation becomes a measurable success?

Of course... the subconscious, our elephant, which carries the elephant rider and ultimately determines whether it works.

You remember: only if both want to go in the same direction do we move forward and become successful.

Where the conscious mind needs a what and how, the elephant, the subconscious, needs a **WHY**.

A strong why.

The why must be something emotional. A true, strong reason for a change. Money and success are relevant, but they only serve a why in the short term.

What do we create with the change for other people? For the environment? What is the bigger purpose behind our mission? Here we are talking about creating a legacy.

That is powerful and acts directly on the subconscious.

It is the direct language of the subconscious. Emotions are the driver here.

So our goal is to create a vision for every major change that covers both the rational what and how and at the same time fulfills and serves the emotional why.

With that, we are more successful than 85% of all change processes.

7. **When Nothing Works Anymore. Get Your Motivation Back!**

Yes, it happens even to the best of us. We are exemplarily motivated for weeks, months, if not years, and suddenly it changes.

Usually it happens gradually.

It feels different than usual. We look at ourselves in the mirror, pause, or feel it in another way.

Something is missing.

It really happened. It happened to ME. We tell ourselves that it cannot be. After all the success and the steep rise over the years. But the fact is:

My motivation was gone!

And in my eyes even worse: the joy in the things was no longer visible and I could not feel it anymore.

The end of the world? By no means.

Is it a midlife crisis? Nope, you can have that much earlier.

I had this state in my third year of entrepreneurship. And at that time I was only 33. I hope that was not already 50% of my life...

In reality it was something completely different.

Austin Powers would say: I lost my mojo, babe!

For me, however, it had more to do with the business. The desire, joy and ease were suddenly gone and I panicked.

Back then I was unstoppable as a magician and mentalist with my shows and went all in. Driven by all the coaching, I did acquisition wherever possible.

Together with a team, we called companies and pitched my shows for Christmas parties and summer events.

The success was moderate. Shows, just like keynotes, are better positioned in pull marketing than in push marketing, because it is a date-based business.

We had to learn that first.

But back then I did not care, we kept calling, used all channels, fired from all barrels.

The negative side effect unfortunately was that the joy in what had always brought me the most joy decreased.

My art was no longer fun for me.

That was an absolute nightmare. And unimaginable for me. No desire anymore for the things that inspired me the most.

No mojo, no magic.

Thanks to another mentor who is very important to me, we were able to quickly get to the bottom of it and identified the problem. My focus shifted too much towards sales. I was not aware of it in the heat of the moment. But it had an effect... unfortunately.

My mentor asked me probably the most important question: WHY did you start?

As simple as it is effective.

I answered the question intuitively and casually.

Only then did it hit me.

Of course! My goal back then was to inspire and amaze people with my shows. Nothing else.

No sales, no accounting, no nonsense.

The core that drives me was the laughter, amazement and the unique time that I was allowed to give to curious spectators.

That was my biggest WHY back then.

Simple, clear and POWERFUL.

I quickly refocused on what I was created for and got it back when I outsourced the other things or completely let go of them.

I got my mojo back, baby!

Everything was fun again, the motivation was back and things became easier.

Such phases inevitably come in life. They are part of it. They make us more composed.

So ask yourself the question: WHY did I start?

This reconnects you with your original purpose. The core of your actions and your original decisions. Sometimes we forget them or drift away little by little.

Since everything is in flow and we constantly evolve, your why will also change over time. That is a good thing. As long as it becomes bigger and more powerful.

Where I used to inspire and amaze people, today I love inspiring participants to see change as change and to hand them transformation as a gift in a memorable mixture of entertainment, knowledge and motivation.

That motivates me. And you see: the entertainment, which I always enjoyed, has its place and its justification. Today more than ever.

Things seemingly arise by coincidence. But Max Frisch already said back then: coincidence? In the end it is always what is due that falls to you.

If things are not going well. Do not despair, ask yourself, or with the help of a coach: why did I start?

That helps you to be as close to yourself as you have not been for a long time.

My change pioneer, you now have 7 strong insights and pillars that will make you stronger, more composed and more confident in times of uncertainty and constant change.

I am very happy if you see the power and potential of change.

Sure, change never looks sexy at the beginning. That is part of it.

Be the mentalist of your life and look into the future to recognize what is in it for YOU in the next change that lies ahead of you and has not yet received your full attention.

You can do it.

And you know: change is like pottery. Our hands shape the clay, where the clay is the change. If we do not want to take on this task, the roles reverse. We become the clay and change shapes us. That is uncomfortable and not desirable.

In this sense, let's take it back into our hands and most of all: LET'S ROCK!

BONUS: As promised, three AI tools that I can highly recommend. We use n8n ourselves for our systems. Change is accelerating more and more. Use now the possibilities of AI that will change our work forever.

Make – The fast entry into real relief

If you want to start, start smart.

Make is one of the tools with which you see results immediately. Without major setup. Without technical hurdles that slow you down.

You connect your tools, define clear processes and suddenly things happen automatically that previously required your time, focus and energy.

A lead comes in, follow-up goes out.

An appointment is booked, confirmation, reminder and preparation run automatically.

At the beginning it almost feels too easy. It is.

And that is exactly where the strength lies.

Make is perfect if you want to build momentum quickly. If you want to see what is possible. If you want to take your first step out of the I-do-everything-myself mode.

Not perfect. But perfect to start.

<https://www.make.com/>

n8n – Build systems instead of completing tasks

Now it gets serious.

n8n is the tool that we use ourselves. And for good reason.

Here it is no longer just about automating individual processes. Here you build systems.

Systems that think along. Systems that scale. Systems that not only take work off your hands but reorganize it completely.

You can build complex logic. Integrate decisions. Include AI. Use data intelligently.

This is no longer if A then B.

This is: if A happens, analyze B, consider C, decide D and then execute E.

That is exactly what companies need today.

n8n gives you control. Depth. And above all the possibility to build real competitive advantages instead of just becoming a bit more efficient.

If you are serious about AI and automation, you cannot avoid this level.

<https://n8n.io/>

OpenClaw – When systems start to think on their own

And now comes the next level.

OpenClaw goes one step further.

Here you no longer build every single process. You define the goal and let the AI find the way to it.

That means: less control in detail, but more intelligence in the system.

Tasks are no longer just processed. They are interpreted, prioritized and solved independently.

This is a shift.

Away from classic automation. Toward real, autonomous systems.

Is it always perfect? No.

Is it exciting? Absolutely.

OpenClaw shows you where the journey is going.

And that is exactly why you should deal with it now. Not only when everyone else does.

Do not use these tools because they are nice to have.

Use them because they give you back time. Create focus. And open up the space for you to concentrate on what really matters.

Your business. Your impact. Your transformation.

<https://openclaw.ai/>

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for inspiring posts and further insights around change, leadership and AI.

This way we stay in touch.

See you soon, your Florian

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And because we all love clarity and eye level:

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