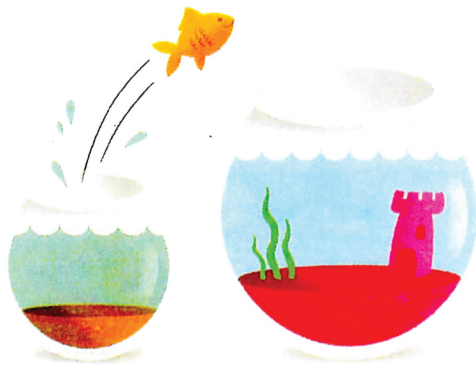




## End well, begin well

How to move your business  
to the next level

It may seem counterintuitive to begin with the end – but that is how good beginnings usually begin. I am not being esoteric or mystical about this. The simple fact of life, and of business, is that the reason people or organizations get stuck has more to do with their difficulty in dealing with “endings” than with “beginnings”. It may seem like human nature to hang on to the familiar, the tested and true, even though the “tested and true” may mean bankrupting oneself emotionally or one’s business financially. But it’s not just human nature – it’s neurotic.



Remember the movie “Cast Away”? (If not, it’s worth seeing just to learn about dealing with “endings”.) In the movie, the main character (played by Tom Hanks) succeeds in surviving alone on a tiny island for four years, after his plane crashes in the middle of the ocean. The turning point comes

when Hanks decides to build a makeshift raft and leave his island home – a difficult decision since his chances of survival on the open ocean are slim to none. However, consider his choices: a) die alone on a forsaken island or b) die alone on a raft, albeit sooner. Hanks picks “b” and decides to let go of his safe haven, in spite of his fears. He would never have seriously considered building his escape raft and actually sail away had he not first *let go* of the idea of staying in his now all-too familiar situation, his tested and true.

One of the reasons people resist change is that change ultimately brings “endings”, and these usually involve losses, even if the change represents something we view as good. So if you are undergoing, or about to undergo any type of major change in your business, or your life – whether by design or circumstance – begin by asking yourself some questions like: “What is really ending? What am I (or my team, staff, etc.) losing? Is it the familiar way of doing things, meaningful work, money, power, influence, relationships, etc.?” Endings rarely obliterate everything that was familiar to us. There is transferable learning, experience we can recycle, processes that can be recuperated, and so on. There is a place for some of the “old” in the new order of things. The key becomes how you replace parts of what was lost, how you discard other parts; in essence, how you remodel yourself or the way you’ve been operating your business and use the endings brought about by the change to build something better, stronger, more profitable, etc.

With all endings comes a time of mourning. Business leaders often miss that – “mourning” is not part of the business psyche. And heaven forbid there’s a dip in employee morale because of endings! “Tell them to get over it and focus on the new vision,” I often hear senior executives explain to managers behind closed doors. The truth of the matter is that most people will go through a wide range of emotions when mourning a loss – from denial, to anger, to depression – before they reach acceptance. Productivity, in a work setting, usually fluctuates and reflects these emotions, if the transition is not well managed by the organization’s leaders.

There are many strategies and initiatives people and organizations can use to manage endings and their associated losses. Otherwise, there is little or no movement forward to accept the change. When was the last time you saw a trapeze artist grasp the bar ahead of him without *letting go* of the one behind? New beginnings begin with good endings – your business and staff depend on this to thrive on change and to succeed. **PB**

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*Before creating Transition Consulting Services, Hani Kafoury spent more than 27 years in the corporate world. His experience spans family-owned businesses to multinationals, where he worked his way from a sales representative to senior leadership positions in sales, marketing, government relations, communications and corporate affairs.*