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Both Sides Now: Vendors and Librarians — Reinvention

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It will come as no surprise to those of you who know me that I have a profound love of music. That devotion began when I was 12 years old. At that time, my parents bought me a record player for my birthday. When a neighborhood friend found out about the purchase of the record player, her son brought me the Top 10 records of the day as a gift. I repeatedly played those 45s, memorized all the pertinent information contained on the label about the music on those records and began a lifetime of collecting vinyl which continues to this day.

Usually, when we have guests at our house, I am prompted to show my record collection and even play a few tunes on the stereo and/or the Seeburg jukebox. Recently, one of my friends asked me about the records I had pertaining to **Rod Stewart**. A long-time favorite of mine, **Rod** has gone from a 60's garage band rocker to a solo singing career to a span-dex wearing disco singer to now, where he is the Great American Songbook crooner. He has consistently reinvented himself over his many decades as performer. And each time it looks like **Rod's** career is coming to an end, he totally reinvents himself and becomes a success all over again. He is the poster child for "reinvention."

In any profession, the road to accomplishment is filled with potholes, diversions and often strewn with people who may not have your best interests at heart. The successful person reads the writings on the wall and deals with all those diversions and adapts themselves accordingly.

Pat Riley, one of the most successful coaches in the history of professional basketball, wrote about reinvention in his book, *The Winner Within: A Life Plan for Team Players*. **Pat** came from humble beginnings in Schenectady, New York to win many championships as a player and coach and deservedly was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2008 in recognition of his incredible achievements on and off the court. I have read his book, referred to it many times and have found it an invaluable resource during my years as a successful sales executive in the information industry as I, too, consistently reinvented myself to adapt to whatever situation was in front of me.

In the book, **Riley** talks about the inevitable changes that we all have to cope with, both in our professional and personal lives. He calls those challenges "thunderbolts from the sky" as a description of the changes that life throws at all of us. Even though many of these thunderbolts appear at the worst possible moments of our lives, we need to recognize how to cope with them and then overcome them, as well. My advice to people who are frustrated with the curve balls that life throws at them is, "Don't get mad; get ahead!"

Reinvention in the ever evolving career of a salesperson and/or information professional

is the process by which a person takes stock of where they are, where they think they are going in their current position and where they would like to be in the future. Sometimes that means taking a few steps back for the promise of advancing many steps forward in the future. Sometimes that means taking a lateral step and sometimes it means rolling the dice and taking a leap of faith forward into a situation with incredible upside potential. None of these possibilities are wrong and none of them may be right. Only the person making the decision knows and experiences what is right. However, standing still is not an option!

We are living in an environment that is changing by the minute. If you or your organization is conducting business today in the exact same manner that it was even six months ago, you are probably falling behind the curve and will most certainly be overtaken by your competitors.

Each year, I take part in a symposium at the **Library School at Catholic University** conducted by my dear friend, **Prof. Bruce Rosenstein**. My role, as well as other people from our industry who attend, is taking time to speak to graduating students who are examining their employment options in anticipation of leaving the University to explore the job market. We talk about the realities of the marketplace and give advice as to how to proceed. And while many of the students have their sights set on a library career, I always speak about all the possibilities of considering a profession serving the library community as opposed to working within a library structure. Whether it is a job in training users on an aggregators' platform, or working at a major information industry's customer service department or even being a library database salesperson, there are many opportunities available.

I bring up these possibilities so that it becomes apparent that as one progresses in a librarianship career, that they are aware that, 1) Reinventions will inevitably take place and thus be aware that, 2) There are many avenues to travel if you are willing to reassess yourself. In any business or any library, reinvention is not a luxury, it's necessity.

In my career, my first twenty years of employment was with one company. I rose in the ranks from sales rep to VP of Sales. Along the way, the company was bought and sold five times. This is where I learned the fine art of reinvention because every time a new owner took control, I had to prove my worth all over again. My past achievements under the previous administration were of little interest to

the new management team. My choice each time was either to prove myself yet again or leave the company. When it became apparent to me that the latest purchaser of the company represented a team of executives not to my liking, I left on my own accord not wishing to prove my worth yet again.

While it was a relief to leave there, at the same time it was a scary proposition when I tendered my resignation after 20 years at the same company. I knew that I would have to experience some degree of discomfort as I made my way in a brave new world. However, in retrospect, I learned more about myself, enjoyed more success professionally and monetarily and as a result achieved more in the subsequent 20 years than I had in the previous 20.

Quite frankly, some ventures I chose failed, while others succeeded beyond my expectations.

What's so interesting about reinventing yourself is that you take all the lessons learned from your previous and current positions and apply them to a new opportunity. Never take for granted that everyone is conducting their operations the same as you are. Even the most basic of procedures that you use each day (and take for granted) may not be part of the

framework somewhere else. Introducing those new ideas that you knew from the past will certainly go a long way in ensuring success at the new place of employment.

Ultimately, you cannot fight the concept of "change." New technologies, new colleagues, new procedures are the daily facts of life. The pace of conducting business today is not an evolution, it is a revolution and to survive and thrive, the future will be owned by the people who have learned to read the writings on the wall and adapt themselves to whatever new environment is thrust upon them.

The late, great **Sam Cooke**, wrote and performed a song called "A Change Is Gonna Come." This 1964 R&B hit is among the most recognizable pop songs associated with the African American Civil Rights Movement. And although **Mr. Cooke** did not have libraries or sales in mind when he wrote it, the message of the title is quite clear. Those who understand this concept will be successful. 🐾

Mike is currently the Managing Partner of Gruenberg Consulting, LLC, a firm he founded in January 2012 after a successful career as a senior sales executive in the information industry. His firm is devoted to provide clients with sales

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*staff analysis, market research, executive coaching, trade show preparedness, product placement and best practices advice for improving negotiation skills for librarians and salespeople. His book, “**Buying and Selling Information: A Guide for Information Professionals and Salespeople to Build Mutual Success**” has become the definitive book on negotiation skills and is available on Amazon, Information Today in print and eBook, Amazon Kindle, B&N Nook, Kobo, Apple iBooks, OverDrive, 3M Cloud Library, Gale (GVRL), MyiLibrary, ebrary, EBSCO, Blio, and Chegg. www.gruenbergconsulting.com*