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Overcoming Fear Of Change

By Ethan Banks

Change is hard, and no change is harder than a technology change. (OK, maybe diapers are worse.)

Why is technology change hard? Because you already put a ton of effort into making the old stuff work: banging on equipment with virtual hammers, making late night trips to the vending machine, sitting through vendor support calls, and volleying newly invented expletives.

Implement new technology? Debug the vendor's crappy code for them? Suffer from stress because an executive can't access Twitter from the toilet after the changeover? Go through all that pain again? No thanks.

Yet, change in technology is inevitable. That's the way of the industry. Keep up or lose a competitive advantage.

So how can technology practitioners overcome their (entirely rational) fear of change?

For starters, **suppress the instinct to reject the unfamiliar**. Let the curious side of your personality--the side that perhaps got you into tech to begin with--surface instead. Be open minded.

Once you're truly open-minded, **work on dispelling fears and doubts**. Talk with peers who've already worked with the technology you're considering. Ask fact-finding questions, not leading questions where you hope to uncover a horror story that justifies predetermined negativity. Remember, you're supposed to be open-minded.

Another way to dispel fears is to **read**. Get an idea of what a proposed new technology does and how it works.

Start with marketing whitepapers. Sure, they're mostly awful, but also important in the sense that you grasp how the vendor positions the technology. From there, see what actual documentation you can find on the product or protocol. Don't overlook IETF documents; there may be RFCs or drafts behind the tech you're researching.

Next is to lab. **Really lab. Give yourself permission to utterly destroy this thing you're testing**. If you didn't break stuff, you don't know what the product can't do. Finding limits is a necessary step in dispelling doubt.

When you've sufficiently labbed, apply what you now know about the technology to your current business use case. How is that business function getting done today, if at all? How will the technology you've familiarized yourself with apply to that use case? If old tech is getting the job done today, map the way the old tech works to the new tech. Your goal is to demystify. Put all the pieces together in your mind.

By now, you should have some confidence about the new technology. Nothing's for certain, and technology is fickle. Fair enough. However, once doubt is

removed by reading, researching, and considering the use case, you are in a position as a technologist to be fairly sure how implementing the new technology is going to go.

Confidence works in a couple of ways. You might be confident that the tech **will** work. On the other hand, you might be confident that the technology **won't** work, and not just because you're averse to change. You'll have concrete evidence of the technology's poor fit for your company.

Assuming the new tech is a go, **evangelize**. You did your part in the best interests of the company. Now, bring others along with you, so that they share your confidence. Create a context of confidence among your team that the new technology is workable. Implementation might not be perfectly smooth (is it ever?), but knowing you can reach the goal helps everyone believe that any rough patches are temporary. Hope is crucial during the transition phase.

Speaking of the transition, it should be gentle if possible. Roll out to a test group. End users break things in inventive ways that inspire admiration of their creativity. When the test group has run out of ways to inspire you, continue the roll out. That gentle roll out eliminates the fear of a hard cutover.

In summary, follow a process to make the new technology your trusted friend instead of a loathsome interloper. After all, every technology was new at one point in time.

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Thanks, Internet!

Amusing tidbits from the ever-cranking engine of social media:



Internets Of Interest

All sorts of Internet flotsam and jetsam washes up on our shores. Here's a few that caught our attention.

ISP Design - Building production MPLS networks with IP Infusion's OcNOS - StubArea51

Kevin Myers, writing at StubArea51, shares details about building out a small MPLS network using whitebox routers and a disaggregated network OS--in this case, OcNOS from IP Infusion. While the article is more of an overview of working with whitebox gear and disaggregation than a full deep dive, he does provide useful introductory material, a routing diagram, and config examples from his lab. If you're looking to play around with whitebox, check out this post.

[LINK](#)

How to be the lazy sysadmin - Opensource.com

This post isn't about being lazy. It's really about how to be efficient and proactive so that you don't end up making more work for yourself down the line. And while it's directly aimed at sysadmins, the general principles and specific tips offered in this post apply to just about any IT discipline. Also, this post contains my new favorite acronym: LBK, or Look Busy Kit. It comes from an early job the author had, where employees spent more time pretending to look busy than on anything actually productive.

[LINK](#)

Product News

We get briefed on new products and other tech news. Sometimes they're worth writing about.

Gigamon Acquires SaaS Security Startup For Network Analytics

Gigamon has acquired [Icebrg](#), a security startup that collects and analyzes network metadata to detect attacks and help security teams investigate incidents.

Icebrg uses on-premises sensors to collect packet metadata from switches and routers, and then sends that data to its cloud platform. Customers then access the data from a portal for analysis and investigation.

[LINK](#)

Juniper Reveals Details Of 400GbE Router And Switch Roadmap

Juniper has announced product details for forthcoming routers and switches that will support 400GbE. Products are expected to ship in the second half of 2018 and the first half of 2019.

Juniper is targeting carriers, service providers, cloud-scale companies and large enterprises. It positions the gear for use cases including backbone routing, peering, data center interconnect (DCI), and large-scale data center fabrics.

[LINK](#)

BiB 51 Nyansa Networks Analytics for SD-WANs and Campus

Nyansa is taking performance management and network assurance is relatively unknown sub-genre of network analytics. First generation analytics companies tend to focus on simpler things like visibility into applications, or replay, or reaction purposes. Many analytics products just focus on these limited functions but scale them up to something very large.

[LINK](#)

The End Bit

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