George Eliot, a female novelist who used a male pen name to ensure her works would be taken seriously in nineteenth century England, is often credited for this quote: “It’s never too late to be what you might have been.” Most people say, “Change is fine with me as long as it involves someone else.”

Doing things differently troubles us, especially when we are hemmed in by comfortable habits. It’s easier to ask others to change than to ask ourselves to accept or implement change. Change forces us to think, plan and make decisions. Change brings with it commitment and risks, which is why resistance to change is almost instinctive.

So why change? Why learn how to cope with change?

Here’s a story to illustrate the importance of being open to change.
One night at sea, a ship’s captain saw what he thought were the lights of another ship heading toward him. He had his signalman send a message to the other ship. “Change your course 10 degrees south.” The reply came back, “Change your course 10 degrees north.”

The ship’s captain answered, “I am a captain. Change your course south.

Another reply came back, “Well, I’m a seaman first class. Change your course north.”

The captain became angry. “I said change your course south. I’m on a battleship!”

To which the reply came back, “And I say change your course north. I’m in a lighthouse.”

FORGET JOHN GALT, WHO IS FAITH POPCORN?

According to trend guru Faith Popcorn, change is happening exponentially faster than it ever has. The respected marketing consultant predicts in her bestselling book *The Popcorn Report* that in the future you will: “Own your own android. You won’t see humans driving buses, at super-market checkouts, or serving up fast (slow) food. They’ll be replaced by colonies of androids who can walk your dog or fight your war.” She’s also said that 1950s slang will make a big comeback and that advances in genetics will allow people to custom design pets with bits of their own DNA so their dogs and cats resemble them.

Conceptually, Faith Popcorn might live in a radically changed world; however, we have to learn how to deal with our radically changing world. Yet people do their best to avoid change. People who fail to react to change end up like the man who bought a barometer, and when he hung it up on the wall, it predicted a hurricane. He took it back complaining that it was broken.
There had never been a hurricane in New England before. The next day his house was blown away by the great hurricane of 1939.

We can be blown away if we don’t react to the changes happening around us. In general, we’re not taught how to specifically deal with change, even though taking of charge of change has been proven to greatly enhance one’s chances for success. Entrepreneurs have gotten rich by changing things. If you’re a fan of the History Channel, chances are you’ve watched the four-part miniseries *Men Men Who Built America*, a docudrama that was first broadcast in the fall of 2012. The series focuses on Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, and Henry Ford, and tells how their industrial innovations and business empires revolutionized and, as alluded to in the title, “built” America.

Make a list of the things we do and use every day that seemed farfetched or utterly impossible just a decade ago. Did you ever think or imagine...you’d be able to walk up to a vending machine and buy your afternoon snacks with your phone? Could you have predicted that your car could park itself, or tell you where to go, or that you’d take pictures and videos with your phone and then send it halfway around the world and receive a response within seconds?

All that to say, when we rescript our thoughts to reduce fear and embrace change, we open the door for growth and innovation. Opportunities present themselves as a result of our willingness to reconsider the norm. Some experts call this skill Change Vitality. In business circles, the buzzword is Change Management.

Here, in this book, coping with change is the first of six essential attributes needed for high performance in the workplace. Coping with change is our first priority because the other five attributes orbit around it.

Changing in an entrenched culture, such as the work environment, is a tough task, one of the toughest both managers and workers face. In their book *Blue Ocean Strategy*, W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne cite four major hurdles organizations are confronted with when trying to institute broad changes. First, people must have some understanding of why the
change is needed. The second consideration is limited resources. Inevitably, changing an organization will involve shifting resources away from some areas and towards others. The third hurdle is motivation. Workers have to want to make the change. Finally, institutional politics come into play. Although change is not easy, it is a vital part of any growth process.

**TODAY IS NOT YESTERDAY**

Today is not yesterday, especially in business. People who prosper during any decade have always been those with the ability to respond to change quickly and effectively. The fact is, those of us who are not independently wealthy or sitting on a trust fund want to make a decent living from our careers or businesses. This means we must not only keep up with the latest technology, we must also keep up with the inescapable social media environment of today’s fast-paced world, which can be overwhelming.

For some, in terms of technology and social media, cutting edge means falling off the cliff of confusion. *Should I? Of course I should, but where do I start? Perhaps I could hire a virtual assistant.* These are the thoughts of many of today’s business leaders. You might feel if you aren’t on Facebook and LinkedIn and Tweeting 27/4, you risk becoming a social and professional dinosaur. The bottom line of that somewhat stressful fact is that we must significantly increase our change management skills to increase our performance capability. And with today’s accelerated rate of change, everyone in business needs to know how to manage change in order to thrive.

**Change Management: (n):** an approach to shifting/transitioning individuals, teams and, in general, organizations from a current state to a desired future state. It is an organizational process aimed at helping change stakeholders to accept and embrace changes in their business environment or individuals in their personal lives.

The information revolution is here to stay but, thankfully, information is not scarce. Let’s say you want to organize your thoughts about social media. Search for this information on Pinterest and you’ll find numerous boards filled with social media and digital technology resources. What if all
you need to know is some sizing for digitizing your social media content? Boom! Search for social-media-sizing-cheat-sheet. It’s all out there on the internet. Or, take advantage of the very helpful (and free to use) website canva.com to create properly sized media.

To prosper in the 21st century, you must use 21st century tools. If you’re reluctant to learn about technology or afraid you can’t do it by yourself, find a tutorial, enroll in a Teachable or Skillshare course, or check out what’s available at Lynda.com where you can experience an enjoyable private online learning experience. Online, in jammies—it’s not a bad way to expand your horizons.

Change is something you cannot escape. Admit it and accept it. Whether it occurs in your work world or personal life, change comes with its own set of challenges. Learn how to embrace and then manage change. It may sound simple when put this way, but these are the necessary steps to maximizing your potential.

So, let’s see. Have you accepted the following?

• You are not what you once were (nor do you want to be).

• Today is not yesterday.

• People who prosper are those who accept and welcome change.

If after accepting that change is here to stay and that change doesn’t stop coming at us, then coping with change becomes a non-negotiable reality. Now you’re ready to delve into the other five essential attributes, all of which will conveniently reinforce and enhance your change vitality.