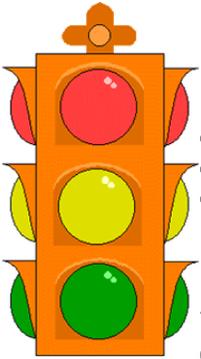


Work the new frontiers or back to the 18th century?



- Red for old rules, understand and maybe let go
- Yellow for the present - what do they mean for each of us
- Green for new possibilities to explore and embrace

Use your instant recognition of traffic lights to understand more about the meaning of work and the new rules for optimizing personal and organizational success. Are you leading change in your organization? You can use the "Colors of Change" model as a tool to help you work through the change process with others to achieve effective results.

What's happening out there?



Red for old rules

In the not-so-long ago old days some of the rules were:

- A university education is a guarantee of a good job
- If you do a good job, you'll have a job for life
- People who "hop" from job to job are not reliable
- By the time you're 60, you should be able to retire with the same standard of living
- The only people who lose their jobs are those who deserve to be fired

Sound familiar to you? Can you think of some more?

Long ago, most everyone participated in creating the group's wealth. People worked in the fields and cooperation among families, groups and communities was the norm. Some communities managed to continue in this way but for most people, the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century caused a dramatic change to our great-grandparents way of life. People moved off the land and into the factories and towns; the production line was created with its 3 M's of measurement, management and methods. Now, most of us worked for someone else and that was the way life was.



Yellow for the present - what do these changing rules mean for each of us?

Another profound change is occurring as we move from the factory and the production line to the new "knowledge" based world of work. Described by the management guru, Peter Drucker, in the following way.

"Knowledge workers own the means of production; the organizations own the tools of production. Neither by itself is capable of producing. Each needs the other. Knowledge workers can job-hop easily. That's why loyalty can't be bought with a paycheck. Organizations will have to earn loyalty by proving to workers that they can offer them exceptional opportunities to be effective." [Post-Capitalist Society](#) by Peter Drucker, 1993, Harper Business.

Put another way by Barbara Moses in her book [Career Intelligence](#), Stoddart Publishing, 1997, we are experiencing: -

- Loss of predictability
- Loss of security
- The "commodification" of self
- Loss of connection

There are many people today speaking and writing about the future of work. While it is obvious to most of us intellectually that the world is changing, it is still not easy for us to personally change our old ways of doing things. The more we feel we are being "done to", the more we tend to resist.

You have read about or know people who have been downsized, right-sized or relocated and while often traumatic, have rediscovered new talents, learnt new skills even become consultants. In some cases individuals have gone out on their own, setting up their own small businesses with the usual expected successes and failures from setting out on uncharted waters. What are some of those new areas to discover?



Green for new possibilities to explore and embrace

- Serial Careers
- The Endless Audition
- Life-long Learning
- Vendor-mindedness
- Resiliency

These relate to all the ways we fill our "basket of incomes" be it self-employment, employment or whatever combination of work we do. With lifelong learning, we see the shift from resource based wealth to knowledge-based wealth. Look out into the world especially the Far East. Singapore is often used as an example of this trend. The country is tiny, has almost no raw materials other than its highly educated population. The emphasis has been put on capitalizing on the knowledge between people's ears. Interestingly, Dr Edward de Bono's *Lateral Thinking* and in particular *Six Thinking Hats*® is widely used in Singapore as a way to improve the quality of thinking. Some of you familiar with the *Hats* know the power that this type of process can produce.

The gurus confirm this growing trend - a pioneering spirit not seen since the last century. With information being part of the currency of the time, businesses will never be the same again. New skills are needed to work in this different workplace. Skills such as communicating effectively, resolving differences, reaching consensus, being computer literate, knowing another language, a world view and being a team player figure largely in assisting us to move gracefully into the impending future.

There is a painful gap created as jobs in the traditional sectors disappear and the people affected cannot necessarily slot themselves into the new "knowledge and information" jobs. If you grew up in the traditional hierarchical organization, you will need to learn to rekindle that initiative you once had relate across groups of diverse people, learn to be part of a team and embrace education and learning as a way of life. A whole new set of key requirements almost requiring a personality transplant for some of us!

Are you ready to handle the new ways of doing things that lie ahead for you in the workplace?

[Have Jane design you a course for you](#)



Jane Durant is a workshop leader, consultant and coach and to a wide variety of organizations in North America and the United Kingdom. A supervisor herself for many years, since 1985 she has worked with hundreds of supervisors in customized programs. The ideas for this article came from Jane's second publication "[The Colors of Supervision](#)", a book about working with others. She will be talking about "[The Colors of Supervision](#)" at the IFTDO Conference in Kuala Lumpur in October this year. ***

Originally Published in  , Vancouver, Dateline: 07/20/97