**[EZ Speech Writers No. 14923]**

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Script for Mr. Scott Kiesling to be presented at the *“Shake It Up”* TEDx Charleston conference to be held at the Charleston Music Hall on October 18, 2017.

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**CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT . . . OR *ELSE!***

Good [morning/afternoon] ladies and gentlemen . . .

IT’S GREAT TO BE HERE AT THE “SHAKE IT UP” TEDx CHARLESTON CONFERENCE, AND I’VE GOTTA TELL YA THAT ONE THING ***I’D*** SURE LIKE TO SEE SHAKEN UP IS THAT OLD, TIME-HONORED AXIOM I’M SURE YOU’VE ALL HEARD: **IF IT AIN’T BROKE . . .** [POINT TO THE AUDIENCE TO PROMPT THEIR RESPONSE, WHICH WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE NEAR-UNISON “DON’T FIX IT”] **DON’T FIX IT.**

“DON’T FIX IT,” RIGHT . . . ? WHY SPEND MONEY WHEN YOU DON’T HAVE TO? WHY STEAL FROM PROFITS TO FIX PROB-LEMS YOU’RE NOT EVEN SURE YOU’VE GOT? WHY GO LOOK-ING FOR TROUBLE? AND THEN THERE’S THE PROBLEM THAT OUR WORKERS AND/OR OUR CUSTOMERS ARE VERY RESIS-TANT TO CHANGE. WHY ROCK THE BOAT WHEN THERE AP-PEARS NO PRESSING REASON TO DO SO? *“IF IT AIN’T BROKE, DON’T FIX IT!,”* RIGHT?

[BEAT]

WELL, FOR ANY BUSINESS THAT WANTS TO STAY IN BUS-INESS, AND *ESPECIALLY* FOR ANY BUSINESS THAT WANTS TO *GROW* ITS BUSINESS, THIS IDEA IS PURE, UNADULTERATED ***BULLSHIT*** [OR BULLCRAP OR HORSE PUCKEY, OR THE STRONGEST TERM YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH]***!***

I MEAN, WHAT COULD BE MORE CONTRARY, MORE ANTI-THETICAL TO THE “*SHAKE IT UP!*” THEME OF THIS CONFER-ENCE THAN *THIS* OLD MANTRA?

IT’S UTTER NONSENSE. FOR ISN’T THIS WIDELY-ACCEPTED “TRUISM” REALLY JUST A BARE-FACED ENDORSEMENT OF THE STATUS QUO, OF DOING NOTHING, OF STANDING PAT?

SURELY YOU ALL MUST REALIZE THAT THE *“IF IT AIN’T BROKE, DON’T FIX IT”* PHILOSOPHY IS THE MOST DANGEROUS PIECE OF BUSINESS CLAPTRAP TO COME DOWN THE PIKE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF BUSINESS ITSELF. JUST ASK THE MAK-ERS OF CHAFF CUTTERS, BUGGY WHIPS, SLIDE-RULES, AND POLAROID CAMERAS.

THE FACT IS THAT THE MAJORITY OF SUCCESSFUL BUSI-NESSES IN THE WORLD HAVE NEVER BOUGHT INTO THIS *“IF IT AIN’T BROKE, DON’T FIX IT”* CRAP IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND THEY HAVE, IN FACT, REJECTED IT OUT OF HAND, THROUGH-OUT TIME. WHY?

BECAUSE THEY’VE LEARNED — AND MORE IMPORTANTLY THEY’VE ***INTERNALIZED*** —THE *“FIRST LAW OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT,”* WHICH IS THAT . . . **NOTHING GOOD REMAINS GOOD UNLESS IT’S CONSTANTLY BEING IMPROVED!**

LET ME REPEAT THAT: ***NOTHING GOOD REMAINS GOOD UNLESS IT’S CONSTANTLY BEING IMPROVED.***

IN ANY COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE, STANDING PAT IS AL-MOST NEVER A VIABLE OPTION. WHAT’S “GOOD” TODAY, AND PERHAPS EVEN “GOOD ENOUGH” TOMORROW, MIGHT WELL BE EXTINCT BY THE END OF THE WEEK, IF NOBODY’S WATCH-ING THE STORE.

THE COMPETITION’S CERTAINLY NOT STANDING PAT, I GUARANTEE YOU!

THE MARKETPLACE ISN’T STANDING STILL EITHER. IT REMAINS THE EVER-MORPHING, MERCURIAL THING IT’S ALWAYS BEEN, WITH ITS EVER-CHANGING TASTES, EVOLVING SOCIAL ATTITUDES, SHIFTING BUYING HABITS, AND SO ON . . .

THE MARCH OF TECHNOLOGY SEEMS TO-QUICKEN BY THE DAY,TOO, MAKING US BOTH SMARTER AND DUMBER AT THE SAME TIME, AND BRINGING US PRODUCTS WHICH A DECADE AGO WE COULDN’T EVEN IMAGINE BUT NOW CAN’T SEEM TO LIVE WITHOUT.

IN EVERY NOOK AND CRANY OF EVERY BUSINESS: ***THINGS CHANGE!*** AND THEY’RE CHANGING ALL THE TIME. WHAT DISTINGUISHES *SUCCESSFUL* BUSINESSES IS THAT THEY’RE THE ONES WHO’RE STRUCTURED FOR CHANGE, WHO’RE READY FOR IT, AND WHO KNOW HOW TO EXPLOIT IT.

BUT HOW DOES ANY COMPANY OR ANY KIND OF ENTERPRISE *EXPLOIT* CHANGE?

BY ANTICIPATING IT . . . BY TOOLING UP FOR IT . . . BY BUILD-ING FLEXIBILITY AND ADROITNESS INTO EVERY PHASE OF THE OPERATION SO THAT THEY CAN RESPOND TO CHANGE WITH MISSING A BEAT. BUT THEY DO IT ***MAINLY*** BY CREATING A **CORPORATE CULTURE OF** **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**, A CULTURE THAT’S ANIMATED BY ONE, SINGLE, OVERARCHING, GUIDING PRINCIPLE WHICH IS, TO TURN THAT OLD ADAGE ON ITS HEAD:

**IF IT AIN’T BROKE . . . *FIX IT ANYWAY!*”**

THIS “NEVER-STAND-PAT” APPROACH IS THE *ONLY* ONE THAT WORKS IN BUSINESS, AND “*FIX IT ANYWAY*” IS THE PERFECT ARTICULATION OF THE CONTINUOUS-IMPROVEMENT MIND-SET.

AND WHEN YOU’RE OPERATING FROM THAT KIND OF MIND-SET, YOU’LL START LOOKING FOR PLACES WHERE THINGS *MIGHT* BREAK, AND FIX THEM BEFORE THAT TINY CRACK BECOMES A COSTLY CALAMITY.

YOU’LL UPDATE YOUR FIVE-YEAR PLAN EVERY SIX MONTHS BECAUSE THE WORLD’S CHANGING TO QUICKLY FOR ANNUAL REVIEWS TO BE ADEQUATE ANY MORE.

YOU’LL EVALUATE EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR BUSINESS, NOT JUST ONCE, NOW AND THEN, WHEN IT OCCURS TO YOU OR WHEN IT’S CONVENIENT. YOU’LL INSPECT EVERY PRODUCT, EVERY PRODUCTION LINE, EVERY POLICY AND PROCEDURE AND QUESTION HOW IT MIGHT BE IMPROVED.

AND YOU’LL GET EVERYONE IN THE COMPANY INTO THE ACT. YOU’LL MAKE SURE THAT EVERY EMPLOYEE, UP AND DOWN THE ORG CHART, FEELS ENCOURAGED AND EMPOWERED TO ASK THINGS LIKE, FOR EXAMPLE: HOW CAN MY DEPARTMENT **DO THINGS BETTER**, MORE EFFICIENTLY, MORE ECONOMIC-ALLY?

WHAT **NEW PRODUCTS** CAN WE INVENT OR WHAT NEW SERVICES MIGHT WE BRING TO THE MARKET?

WHAT’S OUR **COMPETITION** DOING? WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THEM?

HOW CAN WE STREAMLINE OUR **PROCESSES AND PROCE-DURES** TO SAVE MONEY, BOOST EMPLOYEE MORALE, AND ENHANCE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION?

WHAT **NEW MARKETS** MIGHT WE EXPLOIT? WHAT MATURE MARKETS SHOULD WE CONSIDER ABANDONING?

WHAT KINDS OF **NEW MATERIALS** CAN WE USE TO MAKE A BETTER, CHEAPER, LIGHTER, MORE DURABLE PRODUCT?

THIS KIND OF WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IS IN ITSELF A HUGE BENEFIT TO THE COMPANY BECAUSE IT SO EFFEC-TIVELY BOOSTS EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND ENHANCES EMPLOYEE LOYALTY. AND WHILE THE ENLIGHTENED BUSI-NESS LEADER OBVIOUSLY CAN’T *IMPLEMENT* EVERY SUG--GESTION A MOTIVATED WORKFORCE MIGHT SUBMIT, HE OR SHE NONETHELESS ***READS*** ALL OF THEM.

AND HE READS THEM ALL BECAUSE HE REALIZES THAT: **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PLAYING CATCH-UP AND LEADING THE PACK.** IT’S ALMOST UNIVERSALLY TRUE IN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY TODAY THAT IF YOU’RE NOT MOVING FOR-WARD, YOU’RE MOST PROBABLY FALLING BEHIND. A WELL-FUNCTIONING AND ROBUST CONTINUOUS-IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM IS THE BEST INSURANCE AGAINST THE FULCRUM TIPPING THE WRONG WAY, FOR IT ENABLES YOUR COMPANY TO WEATHER THE EVER-CHURNING WINDS OF CHANGE WITHOUT BEING DESTROYED BY THEM.

[PAUSE; THEN, REFLECTIVELY]

YOU KNOW, BACK IN THE 1980’S, THERE WERE SIX MAJOR NATIONAL BOARD GAME MANUFACTURERS — MILTON BRAD-LY, HASBRO, SELCHOW AND RIGHTER (THE SCRABBLE® COM-PANY) PARKER BROTHERS, COLECO, AND MATTEL. TODAY, THERE’RE ONLY TWO — HASBRO AND MATTEL.

THINGS CHANGED.

MANY OF YOU WILL REMEMBER THAT THERE USED TO BE *THREE* PRIVATE-SECTOR GIANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL DELIVERY BUSINESS — FEDERAL EXPRESS, UPS, AND DHL. NOW THERE’RE ONLY TWO.

THINGS CHANGED.

WHEN PORTABLE PHONES WERE FIRST INTRODUCED ON THE MARKET IN THE LATE ‘70’S — THEY WEREN’T CALLED CELL-PHONES BACK THEN — THEY LOOKED LIKE, AND WEIGHED AS MUCH AS, A BRICK. NOW,YOU CAN FIT A DOZEN OF TODAY’S SLEEKEST CELLPHONES INTO THE SAME CUBIC SPACE.

MY HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED!

TECHNOLOGY, IN ALMOST *EVERY* BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, OR MARKET IS CHANGING AND EVOLVING AND IMPROVING AT A SUCH A DIZZYING PACE! I’VE BEEN TOLD — AND I RATHER TEND TO BELIEVE IT — THAT THE CELLPHONES SOME OF US CARRY NOW HAVE AS MUCH COMPUTING POWER NOT ONLY OF THE ORIGI-NAL MERCURY-7 CAPSULE, BUT OF THE ENTIRE LAUNCH AND CONTROL OPERATION AT CAPE CANAVERAL.

WOW . . . WHAT A CHANGE!

I’D BE WILLING TO BET THAT NOT ONE IN 20 OF YOU IN THIS ROOM HAD EVER HEARD OF, LET ALONE EATEN, A CHIPOTLE PEPPER BEFORE A RESTAURANT NAMED FOR IT OPENED ITS DOORS TO THE PUBLIC A FEW YEARS AGO. NOW, THE KIDS ARE PUTTING CHIPOTLES ON THEIR PP&Js!

THINGS CHANGE — THOUGH I THINK KIDS’ TASTES HAVE *ALWAYS* BEEN KINDA WEIRD, DON’T YOU?!

AND ARE YOU OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER WHEN ARTIFICIAL SWEETNERS LIKE ASPERTAME AND SACCHARINE WERE HAIL-ED AS THE DIETER’S DELIGHT AND THE DENTIST’S FRIEND? WELL, WE’VE FINALLY COME TO OUR SENSES AND NOW SEE THESE SUBSTANCES FOR THE CHEMICAL HAZARDS THEY ARE.

THANK *GOODNESS* THINGS CHANGE!

AND OF COURSE, OUR NEIGHBORHOODS ARE CHANGING CON-STANTLY. A NEIGHBORHOOD GETS OLDER. A NEIGH-BORHOOD GETS YOUNGER. IT’S ETHNIC MIX CHANGES — SOMETIMES FASTER THAN THE PEOPLE THERE WOULD LIKE. IT’S SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE TRENDS POORER, THEN TWO YEARS LATER IT STARTS TRENDING RICHER.

THINGS ARE ALWAYS CHANGING.

AND THEN THERE’S THE GOVERNMENT.

IN ALMOST EVERY BUSINESS, INDUSTRY, AND PROFESSION I KNOW, THE PANOPLY OF GOVERNMENTAL RULES AND REGU-LATIONS . . . REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES . . . FEES AND LICENSES, AND THE LIKE, THAT BUSINESSES HAVE TO DEAL WITH IS NOT ONLY EVER-CHANGING, IT’S SOMETIMES OVERWHELMING, AND OFTEN SELF-CONTRADICTORY. AND IF YOUR BUSINESS INVOLVES TRANSACTIONS WITH OVERSEAS ENTITIES, YOU’RE FACED WITH EVEN MORE LEVELS OF COM-PLLIANCE PROTOCOLS, SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO CHANGE ON A MONTHLY BASIS.

THINGS ARE *ALWAYS* CHANGING IN THE GOVERNMENT.

WHAT CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IS ALL ABOUT IS **STAYING AHEAD OF THE CHANGES** THAT AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS.

IT’S ABOUT KEEPING ABREAST, BY ALL MEANS POSSIBLE, OF EVERYTHING THAT’S GOING ON IN YOUR INDUSTRY AND IN YOUR MARKETPLACE (AND INSIDE YOUR OWN COMPANY, TOO).

AND IT’S ABOUT SEEING TO IT THAT ALL THIS VITAL INTEL IS SHARED THROUGHOUT THE ORGANIZATION IN A MANNER THAT ALLOWS OTHERS THERE TO RETRIEVE IT QUICKLY AND USE IT EASILY.

IN A REAL SENSE, CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IS NOTHING MORE — ***OR*** LESS —THAN **TAKING THE TIME TO THINK AND TO PLAN** AHEAD. IT’S AVOIDING FIRES INSTEAD OF PUTTING ‘EM OUT. IT’S MEETING THE FUTURE HEAD-ON. AND IT’S NEVER, ***EVER*** BEING SATISFIED WITH THE STATUS QUO.

THANKS FOR LISTENING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

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