

By Bill Guertin

*The 800-Pound Gorilla*

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## **Change: Sappy Sentimentalists Beware!**

You think you've got change going on in your workplace?

The astronomers of the world just laid off an entire planet.

The International Astronomical Union has rewritten the rules on what constitutes a planet, and have downgraded Pluto to "dwarf planet" status. Under the new IAU guidelines, other dwarf planets now include the asteroid Ceres, the newly-discovered 2003 UB313, and potentially dozens of others. It is the first time the solar system has been altered since Pluto was added in 1930, and will mean the rewriting of thousands of textbooks, charts, and maps.

Many people have expressed surprise and outrage over the decision. Apparently the former ninth rock from the sun has a fan club.

Jennifer Vaughn, spokesperson for the grassroots Planetary Society, isn't surprised. "Pluto is a planet we've known all our lives and suddenly it's gone," she said in an Associated Press interview. "People see it as a bit of a cultural loss."

Have you ever felt that way about a change?

A loss is felt. People are sad about losing a part of what they know. Some are quick to adopt the new, but sentimentalists turn to the comfortable, the familiar, the way it used to be.

When Major League Baseball began inter-league play during the regular season (American League vs. National League teams), baseball purists screamed. When Napster made downloadable music on the Internet available to everyone for free, the rock band Metallica sued them, creating a huge public spectacle. When a new fossil discovery disproved the existence of Allosaurus, the dinosaur books had to be rewritten.

The truth is, we're just not going to stop discovering and stretching. As we expand the borders of our knowledge and imagination, we're going to places we've never been, discovering new things, and changing the status quo in the process.

Today, inter-league baseball games draw thousands of additional fans, especially for cross-town rivalries like the Yankees and Mets. If it works at the box office, you can bet that it's here to stay.

The "digital sector" of music, which includes music downloads, cell phone ringtones, and subscription radio, is today valued at more than 3 times the value of the entire recorded music market, according to IFPI, an international music trade and licensing organization. Napster knew where the future was, and Metallica was holding on to the good old days.

Can you relate to that? Is there change going on in your world right now that you're resisting?

No matter what you do, how you do it, or who you do it with, it's important for you to understand and accept that change is inevitable. It's OK to be a little sad to see the old go away, but there is excitement and challenge in new ways of thinking.

You may not fully understand all the change that's going on around you. Be patient.

If Lars Ulrich, the drummer and founder of Metallica, had thought his decision through just a bit longer, he would have seen that it was better to become partners with the digital world than to fight it. Imagine how much money the band lost by digging their heels in the dirt instead of figuring out a way for the new to work for them.

Sentimentality is all right, but you can't let it stand in the way of the growth that is the common ingredient in all success. It is in change that new worlds can be discovered, new efficiencies proven, and new thinking tested.

Your new reality may be the best thing that's ever happened, if you take the time to understand it and try it on for size. Remember, the old ways were also the new ways at one time, too.

Maybe you think everything should stay the same.

If that's how you think, imagine living with the sound quality of the original telephone, the picture quality of the first TV, or the enormous size of the first Univac computer. Someone had to go out on a limb and change something to improve on it.

You can be sad about change for a little while. But don't let it consume you so completely that you can't see the good that comes from new thinking.

As Commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office in 1899, Charles H. Duell reportedly quit his job, stating that there was no need for additional patents. "Everything that can be invented," he wrote, "has already been invented," and the Patent Office should simply close and go away.

Perhaps he was just being sentimental too.

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