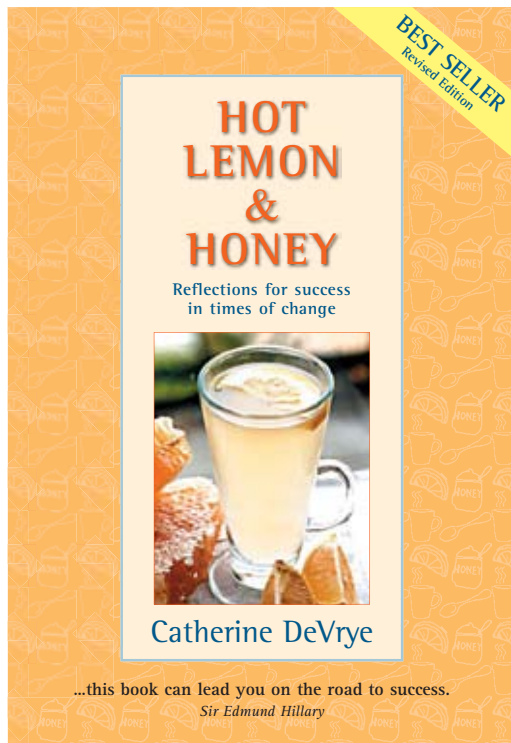




Chapter 14

Excerpt from
Hot Lemon & Honey

Written by
Catherine DeVrye



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‘Change is inevitable. Learning from change is optional.’

Catherine DeVrye



Do you sometimes feel that you're constantly banging your head against a wall only because it feels so good when you stop? Do you know people who, when faced with immovable objects, tasks or situations, never seem to stop banging their head against whatever imaginary brick wall is in their way? They never seem to learn. They never seem willing to adapt by looking at alternatives such as going around the brick wall rather than trying in vain to go through it.

It may be something as simple as a detour on a familiar, well-travelled road. I know a person who became incensed when repairs were being done to a street and they could no longer take their chosen route to work. One of his colleagues pointed out that she had inadvertently discovered that the alternative route was, in fact, shorter and contained one less set



of traffic lights, so she would continue using it, even once repairs to the old route were completed. Still, our complainer complained, becoming almost obsessed with the diversion and how the change in route had changed his routine.

This same person was always the one whinging at work as well, resisting new technology, an altered product line, a new manager or renovations to the office layout. You name it, he resisted it, either actively or passively. Sometimes the grumble would be only a low mumble; at other times, the gripe would continue long after everyone else had forgotten there had even been a change! It wasn't hard to see why this employee, who was highly qualified and technically competent, had been passed over for promotions. As his manager at the time, I felt obliged to point this out during a performance review.

I cited a joke about two guys who went to see *True Grit*. John Wayne, who never falls off his horse, did so in that movie. One of the men had seen it before, so he bet his buddy five dollars that John Wayne would fall off his horse. Naturally, his friend took the bet.

After they came out of the picture theatre, he reached into his pocket to pay his bet, muttering that he couldn't believe that John Wayne fell off his horse. His friend refused to accept his winnings, admitting that he'd seen the movie before and had tricked his friend into the bet. The other replied: 'Well, I'd seen it before too, but I couldn't believe he'd fall off twice!'

I thought this story was a light-hearted example about optional learning from changed circumstances. However, the analogy seemed to fall on deaf ears when it came to the problem employee, which prompted me to reflect that you could lead a horse to water but you couldn't make it drink! The only drinking this dud ever did was at the pub; a thirst for knowledge seemed nonexistent because he was as stubborn as a mule and didn't have the horse sense to see that his days in the organisation were numbered if his negative attitude continued.

Few of us welcome all changes. All of us make mistakes. But one of the biggest mistakes of all is to welcome no change whatsoever. With the advent of cars in the nineteenth century, it was inevitable that there would be a decline in the buggy whip market. Computers have replaced typewriters. Faxes have replaced telegrams and are likely to become obsolete themselves with the growth in electronic mail.

In the 1950s, IBM founder Thomas Watson stated that there would only be a global market for five computers! In the 1970s, the chairman of Digital boldly declared that there would never be computers in the home. Later, the founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates, stated that no user would require more than 640K of memory! Even these leaders of multinational corporations hadn't anticipated the changes in the technology market at the time. What made their organisations successful under their leadership was their ability to admit their predictions were wrong

and revise their strategies accordingly in a changing world.

Unlike the employee who refused to learn from change, these three men and countless other successful individuals had the horse sense—the common sense—to learn from the past to create a profitable future. They knew that change is a constant of any business.

Like the cowboy philosopher, Will Rogers, they also knew that even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just stand there. Without doubt, they knew that:

'Change is inevitable. Learning from change is optional.'



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Catherine DeVrye is also the author of the #1 best seller *Good Service is Good Business* and 5 other successful books. A former IBM executive and past winner of the Australian Executive Woman of the year award, DeVrye has spoken on five continents to a wide array of audiences from small business and Fortune 500 companies to government organisations and Olympic athletes. She has cycled over the Andes, climbed Mt Kilimanjaro and was honored to carry the Olympic torch on the day of the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

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