

Order is an Illusion

We want order in our lives. We flee war and disruptions. Our businesses operate far better when everything is static. But order is an illusion. Instead, we have periods of order in a very disordered world and that order can quickly break down. The more complex our world gets, the more fragile it becomes. We do better to accept the chaos, ride the waves, and look for how to profit in disorder.

We are hardwired to want control and to have order in our lives. Many a parent have worked hard to train children so that some order happens (at some time). Our magazines showcase nice, neat, and ordered homes. But this is all an illusion. All we really are doing is to have a moment of order in a very disordered world.

Many people fear disorder. Many of our cities work hard to impose order on neighborhoods, individuals, and streets. The result is that thousands of people can drive on our highways with few accidents every day. Rarely do we have major explosions from improperly stored chemicals.

However, that order requires a lot of effort to create and maintain. We spend a lot of energy trying to maintain order. We build highways. We hire police and fire fighters to deal with order break downs. Cities and states have to work hard to prevent disorder.

We humans are able to use brain power to impose order for a short time on our worlds. As our world gets more and

more complex, it takes more and more concentrated effort to keep that order going.

Our pocket computers and phones are a prime example of complex order in a small package. They are also quite fragile. Drop a phone into a bucket of water and most of them will fail.

Those who have lived through a tornado or hurricane know the forces of destruction that exist in our world. Years of order disappear in a very short period of time.

On our west coast, we have imposed order on the environment in a huge way. The waterways of California and Washington rank among the largest in the world. We have

successfully stopped many forest fires and freed up large areas for people to build houses in. Yet, because of imposing that order, we have a far more fragile environment. This year's fires are proof of the increased fragility. We have far more intense fires and far more destructive ones than if we had allowed more frequent fires to happen.

We have to work together to build a small bubble of order. However, we also need to allow some disorder and randomness. Our society is stronger when we allow some disorder, natural disasters, and the inevitable breakdowns, and then, work together to overcome those events.

In today's uncertainty, we do best when we accept the disorder, surf the wave of a pattern we see for the moment, and be ready to leave that wave to find another as this one fades into randomness.

Order Takes A Lot of Work

The Value of Failure

Many people who have built successful companies have a history of failure prior to this success. They claim that they would not have been able to build this success without those prior failures and learning from them. Failure we learn from has a number of benefits: failure tells us what doesn't work, failure prunes distractions from our focus, and teaches a number of valuable lessons about what really counts in business. Most people need to fail and a new business mantra is "fail fast, fail often".

Failure is a great way to find out what doesn't work. When we attempt something and it doesn't work, we learn far more than when everything works smoothly.

Failure prunes distractions from us. Many times, a failure comes because we were distracted from the most important aspects. When we fail, we learn what is important and what items we can safely ignore the next time. Even a bankruptcy can teach valuable lessons about how some failures can cascade into a collapse.

We also learn the value of addressing failures early. Many a failure happens when a problem is allowed to linger. We often let personnel issues drag out because we don't want to face the conflict only to find that the problem has gotten worse and cost us in ways we never expected it to. We learn that we need to address important problems as soon as possible.

In many cases, we do not know what the customers really want. In such a situation, we need to offer something to customers and fail to sell. The act of asking someone to buy often allows us to find out what the customers really want. Failing fast means getting out to the customer quickly and cheaply so that we can find what we really need to provide.

Risky World

Electronic tools are not always the right way. A man in his 80s in France was annoyed by a fly and picked up an electronic fly swatter to go after it. Unfortunately, he had a leaking gas container in the house. The resulting explosion took out part of his house. The fate of the fly is unknown.

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