

Change worth celebrating



Stephanie MacKendrick is president of Canadian Women in Communications. She may be reached at mackend@mackend@cwc-afc.com or (416) 363-1880, ext. 302.

Change is a peculiar beast. On one hand it can move with such speed that we are left feeling confused and overwhelmed. Yet, in other areas, change is a huge, unresponsive slow-moving behemoth.

I was thinking about the CWC Career Accelerator for New Media that we created in 2002. At the time, a great deal of the program's focus was on defining what "new media" was and providing introductory sessions to familiarize participants with the tentative beginnings of new content delivery mechanisms. It was mostly our broadcast members who were interested, but we had a few from the telecom side in the group, even though it seemed like a stretch at the time.

We ran the course again in 2004, and this time we had the ability to present some real-life case histories. We could call upon companies in the sector to share their new media strategies. There was a far greater cross-section of sectors represented. The 2002 theory of intensifying convergence had really gained momentum.

By 2006, when we last presented the program, our presenters included former participants who had realized projects whose seeds were sown during the program and were returning as faculty to share their learning. The participants represented a full cross-section of communications sectors. Even since then, there has been an explosion of user-generated content. Today's landscape is totally unrecognizable in 2002 terms.

Looking ahead to our program next

year, we will no doubt be discussing things that I can't even imagine right now. Suffice it to say, our days of introductions and explanations have given way to incubating projects, hatching deals and putting women into the mainstream of new modes of content delivery.

All this to say what has happened in five short years is truly mind boggling.

But not everything streaks by at warp speed. While we scramble to keep our members up to date on the dizzy transformation of content delivery, on the other hand we are pushing, pulling, urging, prodding and otherwise inching along as we support the advancement of our members into the senior executive ranks of the communications industry and encourage them to prepare for and pursue opportunities to sit on boards.

There is an inherently slower pace that comes with changing culture, whether in large organizations, nations or communities. And creating sustainable change takes even more time.

So I think it's all the more important to acknowledge progress and celebrate small victories rather than wait for some ultimate victory, which may be difficult to recognize when the time comes.

As I write, CWC has just finished its Annual Awards Gala Dinner, an occasion that is about acknowledging not just the accomplishments but also the cumulative change that has happened over time that equally deserves celebration.

It's worth noting the progress this year in the campaign to get more women onto corporate boards. The public sector in the communications industry has for the past several years been sustaining a 40% to 50% representation of women on their boards, while the private sector has lagged behind.

But there is good news this year. Of the organizations we track, the number of companies with no women on their boards is down to only two. That compares to 12 companies seven years ago when we began our tracking. We are optimistic that next year that number can be changed to zero. And getting rid of those zeros is a huge practical and symbolic improvement.

At this year's gala we recognized a record number of organizations that had either improved their stats or had reached a critical mass of women on their boards—three women or 25%. Critical mass is the key to sustainable change and when I saw that almost a third of our survey sample reporting progress with several more hovering just below that threshold, I knew that we were finally starting to see some significant momentum.

Malcolm Gladwell spoke eloquently about the issue of critical mass in his book *The Tipping Point*. I am hoping that what we are seeing is a tipping point within our sector on this issue.

The hard slogging is the early progress. If change is not a destination, but a journey, I am hopeful that we are approaching the crest of the hill and that we can, with continued effort, enjoy a period of cumulative progress and gathering speed.

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