

# Managing Extreme Change: From IBM Retail Conference

## Are You the Change You Want to See?

For those who attended the [IBM Retail User Group Conference](#) in May, you listened to Dr. James Canton speak on *Managing Extreme Change*. He prefaced his talk by asking how many in the crowd “live for change.” Not surprisingly, very few retailers responded. In fact, most let out an uncomfortable laugh as if to say, “are you joking?”

Honestly, who truly wants to adjust and relearn their craft anyway? Especially when you have mastered it...Plus, it is WAY easier to do things the way they have always been done! Too bad the reality of the world intervenes.

Being part of the Internet generation, all I have ever known is change. The idea of change does not scare me in the least bit; in fact, it excites me! I think many in my generation would agree, and Dr. Canton would label us as innovative leaders. In order to be an innovator, one must experiment, be courageous, and incur risk (not to say this does not cause problems at times). Everyone has these capabilities, yet for most they are not innate.

Other leadership styles include the Adaptor, Traditionalist, and Maintainer. While the Traditionalist and Innovator are extremists, the Adaptor and Maintainer even out the spectrum. An Adaptor is not afraid of change, and can be an enabler. Yet, not to the same extreme as the Innovator. The Maintainer is often the first to be resistant of change, nonetheless often says “yes,” when in fact meaning “no.” Have you thought about where you fit in on this spectrum? Does it really matter? James Canton said it perfectly, it does matter. “Adapt or die,” the choice is yours.

So, what if you do not know how to adapt? This is not a stupid question, but you must be open to learning how. Unlike the 75 year old who refuses to use cell phone technology, you have to be willing to embrace change. Canton laid out **change management** in 7 easy steps.

First, **Become a Fast Learner**.

Second, **Explore Edge Cultures**. Attending trade shows in other industries, reading blogs, and appearing or participating in events outside your comfort zone and realm will help you grow.

Third, **Experiment**. Try new things and learn how to deliver better value.

Fourth, you must **have the courage to innovate**. If you are not an innovator,

mold yourself into one. Anyone can find courage within.

Fifth, **Celebrate radicals** and the people with the wild ideas both inside and out of your organization. Do you think people believed the employee at IBM who first proposed this thing we call E-Business??

Sixth, **act with agility**. Organizations that are stagnant and slow to adapt miss a lot of opportunities. People do not want to be first to adapt, but they also don't want to be last. Be ready to move when the time is right for you.

And finally number seven, **make smart choices**. Not every change is going to be the best decision for your company, obviously. Think smart.

Canton believes if you participate in half of these keys to managing extreme change, the rest will follow you. The winners of the game are the ones who embrace this model. It's up to you.

Visit the [Institute for Global Futures](#) to learn more about Dr. Canton.