

CHAPTER ONE

Change or Die.

I know. It sounds pretty dire.

But you don't need to worry, because if you're still reading this it means you're inspired by my challenge and are ready to do what it takes to make real change, per my very explicit warning at the beginning of this book.

So, we're all good. Right?

Okay. But in the likely event that you need help in convincing your board, staff, funders and/or other stakeholders to hop aboard the *Change or Die Express*, here's something you can give them to chew on:

Let's start with your local video store -

Oh, wait –

You don't have a local video store. I don't either. No one does.

They used to be around every corner, but then, POOF, they all disappeared. I guess that's because they didn't understand the math:

Massive innovation and change to the landscape + refusal to acknowledge said change = giant “Going out of Business” banner

I guess those video stores thought we'd always be loyal. I guess they didn't think they needed a plan for when we'd inevitably ditch our VHS and DVD players for whatever innovation was just around the bend that made video tapes obsolete.

I guess they thought we'd still prefer to:

Throw on a sweatshirt (the one with the least amount of *schmutz* on it) fight horrible weather conditions/traffic/crowded parking lots to get there within their hours of operation, browse endlessly through aisle after aisle of videos (praying that when we finally settled on one it would be in stock), rewind the tape and return it to the store before incurring a late fee...

...Rather than just simply subscribing to Netflix.

Shocking that they got that wrong! Who'd have thought that:

Spotify would replace the MP3 Player and iPod...

...which usurped the CD...

...which displaced the record album...

...that was played on the stereo, which eradicated the record player...

...which ate the phonograph...

...that my father bought for two zuzim.

“Chad gadya, chad gadya.”

These obsolete products, and every other product in the universe that has been, or ever will be improved upon, are no longer relevant, because things changed. Many of the owners of these businesses didn't/couldn't/wouldn't change along with them. Period.

However, Bubble People, who live in the Jewish Bubblesphere, don't always see the similarities. After all, some argue that they're completely different situations. They contend that comparing the awesomeness of Judaism and the Jewish people to a video store is outrageous.

Okay, okay! They might have a point. Video stores and Jewish organizations ARE very different indeed. After all...

...One offered something everyone liked, wanted, and needed. And then one day, things changed, and people got what they liked, wanted and needed from somewhere else. So, they stopped coming, and those places started going out of business.

Eventually, so did video stores.

Okay, so here's the deal. People are people. And that goes for Jewish people just as much as everyone else. **Today, loyalty, guilt and a sense of obligation don't go quite as far as they used to with most people.** That goes for Jewish people, too.

Gone are the days when joining a Temple/Synagogue/Shul, giving to the Jewish Federation and taking part in the Purim Carnival is "just what you do."

We all know Dan. He grew up at Congregation Everytown. He has fond memories of going to services with his family and running around with his friends at the Kiddush afterwards. But now, membership is down. The services haven't changed in decades. There are almost no kids for his kids to run around with. It's not surprising that he and his wife decided not to renew their membership.

People today don't have the time or tolerance for products, services, businesses, or organizations that dig their heels in and refuse to change. We live in a world where we can customize every experience. We're used to getting things the way we want them. And if we don't get what we want - (shrug, oh well!) - we'll move on. We will just search for another product, service, business, or organization out there that has figured out how to deliver precisely what we're looking for.

Once again, as we've already covered – but let's reiterate to be sure it has sunk in –

The same thing applies to Jewish organizations.

Just like sharks have to keep swimming to stay alive, *Jewish organizations must continue to innovate or they will die.*

But that's not to say that Jewish people are suddenly going to stop being Jewish. They won't. At least most won't. At least not right way. But, just like everything else, new delivery systems for giving people what they like, want and need are emerging every day. The question is, what will come along to fill in the gaps that bring a sense of tradition, meaning, and community to Jewish people?

What about your organization? Will it be among those delivery systems?

In order to have a fighting chance, it's critical that you first convince yourself that the old ways of doing things have to change. But that's not enough. It's even more critical that you convince everyone else who needs convincing (decision-makers, board members, funders, stakeholders). Because the sooner your organization climbs aboard

the *Change or Die Express*, the more likely it is that your organization will keep the passengers you have and possibly even pick up more along the way!