

# Managing Change in Today's Fast-paced Commercial Retail/Restaurant World

Recap by Steve Olson

**The brain is hard-wired to follow the path of least resistance.** Events that result in change often cause stress and conflicted reactions for those who are impacted by them as not everyone is as adept at dealing with change.

A panel of commercial construction executives took a hard look at how things work in the fast-paced commercial retail and restaurant worlds. Moderated by CESO President Steve Olson, the group included Jennifer Striepling, VP of Design for Domestic and International, Bloomin' Brands, and Tom Kowalski, Executive Creative Director for CESO.

As change moves people out of their comfort zone, the brain's natural inclination is to resist in order to avoid perceived threats, minimize energy usage, and find ways to maximize rewards.

So, how as an organization do we overcome these obstacles to positively impact project or organizational changes? First, your primary focus should be getting people onboard by balancing the creative change process with the necessary communication, expectation setting, and management. If you are not communicating "why" things need to change, you have little hope of getting support from others to pull it off.

Striepling walked attendees through the various layers of change she has implemented on the four major BBI concepts: Carrabba's Italian Grill Remodels, Bonfish Grill Remodels, Outback Steakhouse New Concepts and Exterior Remodels, and Fleming's Prime Steakhouse.

"The process to evaluate locations and decide on where to implement change is one important component," Striepling says, "but equally important is navigating the



Steve Olson, president, CESO Inc.



Tom Kowalski, Executive Creative Director and Jennifer P Striepling, Vice President of Design, Bloomin' Brands Inc.

programs, while others are better at handling the changes and surprises that occur in a remodel program.

Finally, the international market presents its own challenges with cultural impacts, language barriers, and travel requirements.

Kowalski layered into the discussion with his own perspective on change related to branding and prototyping. As CESO's "Creative Genius", Kowalski is usually contacted when people recognize their need for change, and his efforts focus first on understanding their story followed by being authentic in the response to the opportunities for improvement. It is his goal to find the unique proposition that will be the catalyst for change.

As an example, Church's Chicken recently sent out a press release announcing they had engaged CESO to assist them in a global brand repositioning. This project represents great change for Church's as the organization

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internal and external stakeholders to ensure that the greater team understands the program goals and necessary speed-to-market parameters to make it all happen."

As career paths progress, more time should be spent identifying and leveraging the talents of others in executing a vision and that starts with matching up the right people with the right opportunities. Some are better suited to work on new restaurant

had to assess where they are in the fast-casual market as well as where they are heading.

As it wants to position itself as a global brand, Church's, with CESO's assistance, is navigating how to highlight their values and align brand messaging across global markets.

As demonstrated by Bloomin' Brands and CESO, change can be profound and transformative and brings new possibilities and opportunities. **CCR**

Steve Olson, AIA, is president of CESO Inc.