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"A change is as good as a holiday," the judge for whom I was clerking reassured me at the end of my federal clerkship, right before I headed off into the 'real' world.

Early in my career, I made the decision to move from Santa Monica, Calif., to Nagano, Japan, and, years later, from Hong Kong to Universal City, Calif. — all in pursuit of career development opportunities. In both

cases, I faced a move not only across jobs but also across companies, industries, countries and cultures. Later, it became apparent that these moves played a key role in my personal and career development. In short, they prepared me to face change.

## Managing Change

BY MICHAEL CHANG

Whether you are traveling internationally for business for the first time, helping to incorporate a new office in a distant land, or have just made the move in-house, I thought to share some lessons in managing change on a global scale.

**1. Know your brand or develop one**

"In the new world of work, you are a brand. And to stand out and prosper, you must leverage your experience, way of thinking, ideas, skills and bragables to create a perception that there is no one in the marketplace quite like you. I call this process 'branding your brilliance.'" —Tom Peters

### 1. Know your brand or develop one

According to management consulting guru Tom Peters, branding is the art of discovering what sets you

apart, and this is something to be marketed shamelessly.

Marketing your skills, however, is a means to an end: The real goal is to make yourself valuable to your client by giving them something that only you can offer.

To illustrate: I was raised in a number of different cultures in several different countries. As a result, I speak a few languages. So an international career was a

natural choice. When we immigrated to the United States, I first learned English by watching "Bugs Bunny" and "Looney Tunes." So I became interested in American pop culture. Later, while in high school

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and college, I became interested in law, partly because I loved reading and writing, and loved the type of case study analysis that was part of my business law class. I enjoyed the thinking and reasoning that my

philosophy professors required. So I earned a JD, and now practice international law and international business in a very international setting — incidentally, at the movie studio that makes "Bugs Bunny," "Looney Tunes" and other beloved icons of American pop culture.

Understanding who you are, what you are good at and what makes you unique is one part of the equation. Understanding what the client or employer values is another important part.

### 2. Be willing to learn

With the global markets converging and economic borders disappearing, a period of change could be a good time to pick up a new skill, such as a new language.

A *Wall Street Journal* article titled "Learning Japanese, Once About Resumes, is Now About Cool," reports that most business students now take Chinese as a resume booster. Learning the Japanese language has also become a fashionable trend, if only to give students a leg up in the anime crowd for Generation Y (such as those just graduating college). In the article, a Japanese instructor at the University of Georgia laments: "They ask for help in translating Japanese pop-song lyrics and talk excitedly about the Japanese cartoon character Card Captor Sakura. And they blurt out colloquial Japanese expressions, like baka! (stupid), that they have learned from comics."

Trendiness aside, being able to speak another language could be a career booster. In every environment where I have run a deal, whether it's Tokyo, Shanghai or Los Angeles, the ability of lawyers to speak more than one language became a crucial ingredient in the success of the deal. Indeed, deals can, and often are, made



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or broken based on the dictates of the law. My own experience, however, is that a deal is more profound: Its success, just as often, turns on how well the personalities communicate.

**3. Know what you want**

While on a business trip to Kyoto, Japan, I stumbled upon a small mens' clothing store while looking for a jacket to wear to that night's work-related function. The salesperson gladly volunteered me in trying them on one by one. (He was the volunteer, and I was the victim.) I was really interested in a jacket that I could wear to work. Yet, he kept showing me a bunch of jackets that were more casual, for weekends off.

I was starting to wander when out of the blue he mentioned that he could give me a discount on a 20,000 Yen casual navy blue jacket I happened to be trying on (at his insis-

tence). He abruptly agreed to lower it to 19,000 Yen. I didn't ask him to lower it. I wasn't looking to bargain. Moreover, when I showed that I was ready to walk out the door, he promised immediately to reduce the navy blue jacket to 9,500 Yen — half the listed price. I was quite shocked and, like a good lawyer, asked him to repeat his offer in writing. He typed it out on a calculator and showed it to me. I was so impressed with his eagerness and the bargain I was getting that I almost bought in.

As I stepped back from the heat of the moment, I realized that I didn't really need another jacket taking up room in my suitcase. So I said thanks and walked away. Now, had I bought the jacket simply because it was inexpensive, I would have walked away with a bargain — a bargain that brought me something I wasn't looking for in the first place.

The lesson I learned was this: Know what you want and, perhaps more importantly, know what you don't want. It helps to stay even more focused on what you can and cannot live with during a time of change.

A change is as good as a holiday. The unfamiliarity and the unpredictable nature of life — changes often kick things up a notch and invigorate the soul. The Chinese and Japanese terms for "crisis" are identical. Embedded in the term, however, is the character for "opportunity." If change is the only constant, then we ought to embrace it as a positive force that could eventually lead to a positive outcome. 

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