

Shared by **Tom Asacker: author, innovator, change agent, provocateur**

## What do you do?

“So, what do you do?”

Whenever someone asks me that ice-breaker question, my instinct is to give a smartalecky response.

“Let’s see... I eat. I play. I laugh. I write. I wash dishes. I sh...”

But I resist. I know what they’re after.

“So, what’s your profession? What’s your job?”

I’ve been thinking about that seemingly benign question of late.

And not only do I think it’s passé, but I also believe it’s harmful.

Have you ever really thought about it?

It begs for a static, passionless answer.

“Oh, I’m a lawyer. I make bread. I own a gym. I’m a teacher.”

It’s a malignant question, which needs to be cut out of our discourse and replaced by a different one.

“So, what are you trying to change?”

We need to remind each other that the laws of impermanence rule the marketplace.

Just like they rule the Universe.

If we are not working hard to change things, we will be made irrelevant by someone who is.

There’s an old saying by G. K. Chesterton that hangs on my wall.

It reminds me to keep changing things.

“If you leave a thing alone, you leave it to a torrent of change.

If you leave a white post alone it will soon be a black post.

If you particularly want it to be white you must be always painting it again.

That is, you must be always having a revolution.”

Without intervention, without progressive change, without revolution, everything in our work and our lives gets worse.

We see it happening to organizations big and small, but most of us still don’t get it.

And I think it’s because we’re hypnotized.

Have you heard the term “functional stupidity?”

It’s a new management theory (great name, huh?).

It says that the absence of critical thinking in organizations creates unity.

And this consensus mindset helps improve productivity.

Instead of questioning things, people focus intently on the task at hand.

We are a nation overflowing with “functionally stupid” organizations.

We’re on autopilot.

We enthusiastically believe in the actions we take every day.

Whether or not they’re improving people’s lives and adding distinctive value.

It’s a delusion. A happy trance.

And we need to be knocked out of it.

By each other.

So, what is it exactly that you’re trying to change?

Catalyst for change, Tom Asacker has written several books including *The Business of Belief* and *Opportunity Screams*. He views today’s world of complexity and change as a large-scale manifestation of many emergent events and behaviors that require a new, coherent viewpoint to guide one’s actions.