

Solving Hot-Rivet Syndrome

Sir Isaac Newton – the English mathematician, astronomer and physicist – said it: “Everything continues in a state of rest unless it is compelled to change by forces impressed upon it.”

An example ...

In the book *Everybody's Business* by Milton Moskowitz, a most unusual, and practical, reason for change in a well-known product is described.

Picture a scene from the Old West, sometime in the 1870s. Weary cowboys in dusty Levi's gather around a blazing campfire after a day on the open range.

The lonely howl of a coyote counterpoints the notes of a guitar as the moon floats serenely overhead.

Suddenly, a bellow of pain shatters the night as a cowpoke leaps away from the fire, dancing in agony. Hot-Rivet Syndrome has claimed another victim.

In those days, Levi's were made, as they had been from the first days of Levi Strauss, with copper rivets at stress points to provide extra strength. On those original Levi's – model 501 – the crotch rivet was the critical one. So when cowboys crouched too long beside the campfire, the rivet grew uncomfortably hot.

For years, the brave men of the West suffered this curious occupational hazard. Then, in 1933, Walter Haas Sr., president of Levi Strauss, went camping in his Levi 501s.



He was crouched by a crackling campfire in the High Sierras, drinking in the pure mountain air, when he fell prey to Hot-Rivet Syndrome. He consulted with professional wranglers in his party. Had they suffered the same mishap?

An impassioned Yes! was the reply. Haas vowed that the offending rivet must go, and at their next meeting, the board of directors voted it into extinction.

While the Levi's were meant to bring comfort to those who wore them, the unintended consequences proved to be anything but comfortable. The unintended consequences in our healthcare and hospitality professions occur when what was once familiar now feels different in the heat of the moment. In the past few years, we've been subjected to new realities and stresses that did not previously exist.

(more)

Here are three important things to know about your stress points that will help you avoid Hot-Rivet Syndrome and keep it from hurting you:

1. ***Stress points will challenge you; manage them.*** There is no one-size-fits-all approach. After suffering the horrible indignity of Hot-Rivet Syndrome, Haas decided that the copper rivets must go. Until you take action, don't blame the fire.
2. ***Stress points will stretch you; grow from them.*** While the natural tendency is to avoid and remove stress points, do not miss the teachable moments they bring. At the time when Hot-Rivet Syndrome was occurring, Levi's had been made the same way for years.
3. ***Stress points can burn you; rise above them.*** Too often in business, we tend to get comfortable and crouch too long by the very things that can harm us. The fires get too hot when we crouch too long near those who stoke the flames of politics and gossip. It is when you move from the fire that you understand the strength of the rivet is dependent upon the character of the cowpoke.

When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy (Psalm 94:19 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter