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## A Recipe for Change

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# A Recipe for Change

Helping people get unstuck from everyday problems is part of Seaton's job description.



Patrick Seaton's passion is change. Or, more precisely, "helping people successfully manage change," as he describes it. The 1987 Wesleyan graduate is founder and president of Innovative Management Tools (IMT), which he describes as "a provider of creative solutions" to help organizations respond to "change events" such as "downsizings, restructurings, strategic growth initiatives, mergers and acquisitions, and even seemingly simple changes."

"IMT helps clients ranging from small businesses to large corporations manage change more meaningfully, productively, and profitably," Seaton says.

"In general terms, we do two things," he elaborates. "We help people successfully plan for, manage, and implement change initiatives and we also give individuals simple tools to help them and their teams get 'unstuck' from everyday problems."

Seaton's fascination with change management dates back to his work at the former Best Power of Necedah, Wis., a provider of power protection services, where he held various managerial and staff positions from 1988 to 1997.

When Seaton heard a comment from a Best Power co-worker lamenting the fact of "wearing too many hats," it inspired him to contemplate the vital roles that employees play in organizational change. "I started to think about ways for workers to better understand and more effectively approach the execution of their tasks," he says.

Seaton eventually created HATS, "a task-management and workload distribution activity which helps you assess how many and which 'hats' your employees are wearing." During the next several years, Seaton followed HATS with other training activities and products in such areas as change planning and preparation, process improvement, priority

management, barrier elimination, and what he calls “brainstorm management.” These developments led to the formal launch of Innovative Management Tools in 2005.

IMT is based in Milladore, a small community in central Wisconsin where Seaton lives with his wife Joanna and their two children. Despite its small-town setting, IMT reflects an international perspective that harkens back to Seaton’s college days as a French major, culminating in a year in France his senior year, where he returned a year later to teach English under a Fulbright scholarship. Since graduating, he has held corporate positions that have taken him on assignments to 34 countries, from Canada and Australia to Mexico and Singapore. Such experiences, he says, give him a keen appreciation of the dynamics of change impacting multinational companies.

His international experience taught him another lesson: keep things simple.

“When you are not speaking your native tongue, you are forced to make word choices, choices that will help you be understood or not understood,” Seaton says. “In most cases, the simpler the better.” Having learned that fact (“sometimes the hard way”) through his career and travels, Seaton strives to create organizational improvement tools “that are ‘simplistic’ in nature but are powerful in outcomes.”

Reflecting on his own positive outcomes, Seaton offers advice to Wesleyan students and recent graduates. First, he says, “remember that everything you will do can be tapped into later in life.”

“I didn’t plan my path after graduation,” he explains. “As I started to develop my company, I realized that every experience I had had over the years allowed me some knowledge, some insight and some information necessary to create useful tools and an exciting company.”

Seaton’s second piece of advice echoes the words of the late IWU President Minor Myers jr., who was known for asking students, “What’s your passion?”

“Once you take the time to truly understand your passions,” Seaton says, “it is so much easier to find something about which you can really get excited.”