

Everything Flows, Nothing Stands Still

Heraclitus was a Greek philosopher of over 2500 years ago. He is one of my favorites, and taught about the energy business, believing that **energy is the essence of matter**. One of his sayings is relevant to the oil and gas business: *All things change to fire, and fire exhausted falls back into things*. I am no expert on refining processes, but I know that heating and cooling is involved in order to produce hazardous liquids and natural gas.

These early philosophers were astute observers of nature, probably because they did not have the distractions of personal electronic devices and the media we consume. Heraclitus was standing by a river one day, watching the stream. He observed “you cannot step into the same river twice, for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you.” Based on that observation, he also said something that might apply to hydraulics and the nature of today’s world of work, including the CRM “change management” requirements. Both of the statements below are translated from the same Greek words:

- **Everything flows, nothing stands still.**
- **Nothing endures but change.**

What is the main purpose of pipelines? Isn’t it to keep the commodities flowing? Doesn’t it cause problems when the pipeline stands still and nothing is flowing? I remember reading about problems on the Alyska Pipeline due to flow being less than optimal. Those problems included a buildup of ice and paraffin that impedes flow and contributes to corrosion. The pipeline needs more flow. When are problems likely to occur on your pipelines? Isn’t it during start up and shutdowns and switches? The ideal would be to keep everything flowing, as Heraclitus observed. Avoid unscheduled shutdowns. Even if there is no flow, there are effects on the pipelines because nothing stands still. There are internal effects on pipes and equipment during slowdowns and shutdowns.

How well does your company manage operational and organizational changes? I already know the answer. My observations lead me to believe the answer is “not so well” in most companies. We believe if we can only find the ideal Management of Change software that all will be well. Software is no substitute for careful planning, adequate communications to all affected by the change, and the completion of all action items before the change is released to operations, including to controllers.

How well do you individually manage the changes required in your work and life? Even if organizations do not manage changes as well as they should, we still should endure the effects of the changes in a positive manner. Heraclitus also said something that the serious minded might not appreciate, but it has power to help us manage changes: *Those who approach life like a child; moving and pushing pieces possess the power of kings*. Keep everything flowing, beware of the risks of standing still, recognize that changes are inevitable, and be regal in the ways you approach the effects of changes. Use your energy in ways that matter.