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### Always expect the unexpected

Adapting to sudden changes is, of course, one of the prized managerial skills of which I can reasonably claim that we in the UK are pretty accomplished

By Carole Spiers, Special to Gulf News  
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No, it is not unknown for the famous Gulf sunshine to be suddenly broken by thunder, hail and floods. But it is rare enough to be classed as freak conditions, and the public continues to be surprised and shocked each time it happens. It is also rare enough to be classed as a low priority with the public services, with drainage and mopping-up operations not always front-of-mind with the authorities.

Checking, as always, with local readers' comments in the press, I find a healthy mix of grumbling at the damage and inconvenience, and thankfulness for some fresh drinking water, along with optimistic hopes for possible rainfall catchment programmes in the future.

Adapting to sudden changes is, of course, one of the prized managerial skills of which I can reasonably claim that we in the UK are pretty accomplished. (Indeed our eternally changeable weather is often quoted as one reason for our famous creative imagination.) This is, in fact, one branch of Change Management — an important part of corporate life in this and other countries, and for that reason a growing part of my own speaking and consultancy programmes.

#### 'Denial'

Any mention of unexpected change takes me back to the very beginning of my career, when I was running seminars at a small company distributing electronic organs — a new market that was opening up.

The company's success was strongly personalised by its dynamic young Marketing Director, Dennis. Then during a holiday in the Bahamas, he was in a small plane which caught fire on take-off and he died from smoke inhalation.

I happened to be in their offices when the news was coming in — and I learned the meaning of the word 'denial'. It couldn't have happened... It hadn't happened... Nobody could think straight.

One young manager called Hamish, quietly observing all this, decided he might as well try filling the gap himself. Hamish was about as unlike Dennis as you could get. But he simply analysed the situation, and deduced Dennis was not, in fact, irreplaceable.

He explained to the CEO their product was good enough to sell without the need for a colourful frontman. He accepted there would be a temporary dip in sales, but argued convincingly they could recover in about a year.

The CEO said Hamish would have to sell this proposition to the shareholders. They were sceptical at first, but under this newcomer, both the company and the shareholders proved they were capable of radical change management.

The company did indeed go on to bigger things, before eventually being sold to one of the electronic giants — at a price to impress any shareholder!

### **Adapting to change**

Gulf storms provoke confusion, even when they're predicted.  
Residents complain, but also look ahead to better water engineering.  
Adapting to the unexpected is part of Change Management study