

The No Status Quo Manifesto



Why should we keep learning, trying new things and taking safe risks?

The easiest thing to do, is usually the things we do everyday. Ever wonder why that is?

What is the Status Quo?

It translates from Latin as "*the state in which (it is)*".

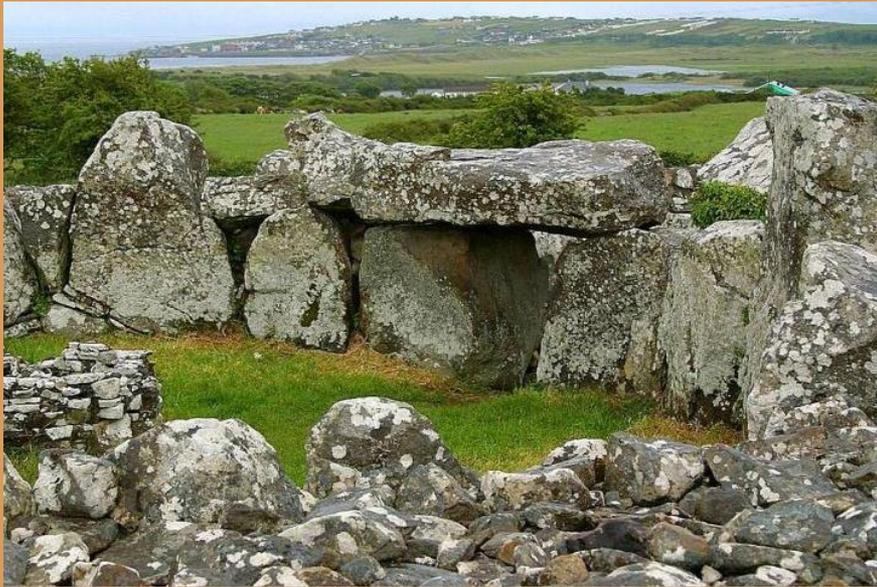
The first recorded use was in the 14th century by a politician calling for a return to the way things were before.

You can think of it as:
The way things are unless you do anything about it.

The way I will use it here is as the invisible "force" that pushes against you as you try to change.

Stone Age

The life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. - Thomas Hobbes, "The Leviathan"



Originally, the status quo was actually a good thing. Doing the same thing as everyone else improves your odds of survival. Experimentation can easily led to your demise. Survival always trumps innovation. Tens of thousands of years as hunter and gathers has made the human brain naturally adverse to change.

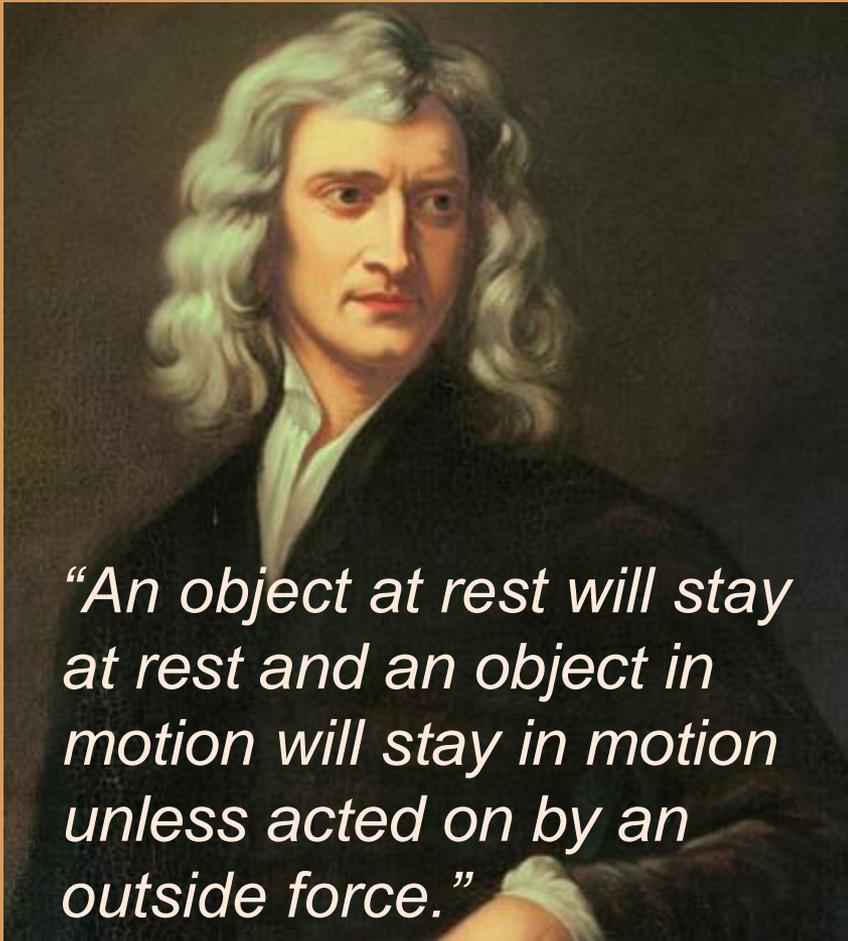
Bronze Age/Middle Ages

As civilization forms, the natural threats to mankind decrease. But something else happens. Inequalities emerge in society. Some individuals become better off than the rest. For these people, the status quo is a good place to be, and they defend their position. The have-not's do not have the resources to effectively change the status quo and



don't want to risk their livelihood (or life) to try.

Age of Reason



Science changes the way we see the world, and how we understand the status quo. In 1687 Sir Isaac Newton defined the laws of motion. Here the concept of inertia is laid out. Now we have experimental evidence that the status quo always wins unless challenged by an outside force.

Industrial Age

The 18th century saw great changes. Machines and steam became harnessed to do heavy lifting for us. The shape of production changed, and with it the status quo. Monarchs and royalty were replaced by robber barons and industrial millionaires. Inequalities didn't go away; they just changed names. All variation was sought out and eliminated.



The machine became the model for the living world. More got done, but at the expense of humanity.

Information Age



Electronic technology induced new ways for information sharing and communication.

Moore's Law ensured that the capabilities for learning and collaboration continually improved. This didn't remove inequalities, but it allowed people to work around them. The gates, and their keepers, could be bypassed. The power holders of the status quo could no longer fortify the world against change. They would have to play the game and change like everyone else.

The Red Queen Age

In *Alice's Adventures Through the Looking Glass*, The Red Queen remarks to Alice, "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you wanted to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" Today we are living in a world like this!



Gone are the days of following a predetermined path that will lead to a successful life.

How can we adjust from a life of comfort and status quo to one where we are comfortable experimenting and navigating uncertainty?

The power structures that held the status quo firm in society have gone away. Still our biological nature compels us to stick to the familiar. What new values are called for to take advantage of the new opportunity?

Challenge the Status Quo

In the long term, and increasingly in even shorter term, sticking with the status quo is no longer a viable success plan. Accept that change is here to stay and that you need not be afraid of it.

In fact, with practice you can use this to your advantage! Learning to effectively navigate uncertainty prevents you from ignoring the risks around you (which gives a false sense of security) or being overwhelmed by the feeling of chaos.

Make Sense of What's Going On

How do I make sense of all this change and uncertainty? The secret is realizing that you don't have to know everything. You can't ever have the complete information you need to make most decisions anyway. Start thinking about how much you really need to have figured out to take the next step.

The best methods for this are visual. Draw a picture, a stick figure, a circle – anything to engage the visual part of your brain. Keep moving your pen until you start getting more comfortable with your current situation.

Take Action on What You Find Out

Now what, since you've made some sense of your world? That wasn't the goal in itself, now you have to take action on what you've learned!

Remember, the status quo won't change itself. All that sense-making you've done should

naturally lead you towards a course of action, or a few possible options. Decide what and how you're going to experiment with them. Failures can be great for learning but take care to ensure your failures can be easily recovered from.

Make Less Chaos, Where You Can

The world is full of uncertainty. Be comfortable knowing that. However, you can carve out some areas in your life where there can be less chaos.

The choice is completely up to you where you want this calmness to be. What matters most to you can become more

predictable. This is where you can comfortably live life instead of life just happening to you.

This oasis will change as life goes on, be aware of that too. But that's good because what matters to you will change, and your area of less chaos and shift to accommodate that.

Embrace the Humanity Around You

Life is about your connections with the wonderful humans around you. The best thing you can do to make the world a better place is to love humans any chance you get. The status quo tends to hurt humanity in the long run.

Continued complacency leads to taking people for granted and eventually, no longer seeing them as human at all.

This is the most compelling reason for challenging the status quo and worth remembering when the going gets tough.

Celebrate Your Wins and Reflect

Man cannot live on change alone. Yes change is the new black, but humans can't handle constant churning. Make sure you're regularly stepping back and taking a breath.

Your need to recharge, to sharpen your ax.

You need some stability so you can reflect on all the status quo you've been cracking!

Celebrate and sustain your wins before pushing your comfort zone again.

What things can we do
to guide our daily lives
to help keep pushing
the status quo?

**Lofty goals or mission
statements won't help us
where the rubber meets the
road. When we're constantly
faced with the resistance of
the status quo, what tricks can
we use to fight back?**

Conventional Wisdom = Mediocrity

If you're doing what everyone else is, you're starting off aiming to be in the middle of the masses. Why shoot so low?

On the bell curve the middle is called the *median* – the root of the word mediocre. Is that the best you can think of?

If you're going to do something, make it worth your effort – try something that could possibly put you ahead of the mediocre middle of everyone else. If you fail, then at least you failed at work worth doing.

The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark. -

Michelangelo

Don't Compete, Collaborate

We fight against the status quo – not other people.

Every person who reacts against the art you're trying to do, is just reacting to their discomfort that comes from the possibility that the status quo around them might be shifting. This activates their fight or flight reflex.

On the other hand, those around you challenging the status quo, experimenting, trying different things – they are fellow renegades to join up with. You can support each other.

Pushing the edge of what works now is not a zero sum game. There is room for lots of players.

The Best/Worst Reasons to Do Something

“That’s the way we’ve always done it.” is the *WORST* reason to do anything.

Not to say that it is wrong. But are you verifying that it is still working?

Instead say, “That’s the way we do it because...” and give the data and reasoning for it being your standard of operation.

If that’s not true, think about other options. The *BEST* option to try something new might be because “We’ve never done it that way before.”

Now you’re challenging the status quo and opening the door to new possibilities. Saying no to what is can free you to say yes to what could be.

Strive for Better Understanding

From an early age we're trained to believe every question has one right answer. To succeed in life, we're pressured to find the right answer first or get more right answers to everyone else.

If you want better outcomes you'll need better understanding of the situation, problem, or

opportunity you're dealing with. Don't get me wrong, there's lots of help available – by all means use it. But the responsibility is yours to get the most understanding for your needs.

You can't just read Wikipedia and be great, but Wikipedia is a great place to start.

One Size Fits All Does Not Fit All

A lot of gurus and experts are selling solutions. They have results and customer testimonials to prove it works. If it doesn't work, it must be you're fault, right?

But the fine print says "Results Not Typical" or "Results May Vary". The reason is obvious. With the many factors which

affect your situation, what are the chances that what worked great for someone else will give you the same results?

Instead, let's take responsibility for our own solutions by trying things in real life, discarding what doesn't work, and moving forward with what does.

Failure is Always an Option

Imagine there's a crisis. A leader assembles his team. He gives a rousing pep talk which includes the phrase: "Failure is not an option!"

But failure is *always* an option.

It's the most likely option.

It's far more likely than success. It's much easier too. If it wasn't, a dramatic pep talk wouldn't be necessary.

Failure is critical to long term success; almost always a precursor to it. The key is managing it, such that the costs are small but the benefits are potential huge.

A or B? Try Option C

Black or white?

Paper or plastic?

Cash or credit?

Day or night?

You're in or you're out.

Go big or go home!

Why are so many of our world views stated as either/or positions?

The world isn't so mutually exclusive.

There are shades of gray. The only limit is the mental prejudices we hold on to.

We can do better than false dichotomies. If you're stuck considering between two unattractive alternatives, try option C.

So now that you realize that the future belongs not to the status quo but to those that fight it – what will you do? Can you go back into the dark cave after you've seen the light?

You don't have to go it alone, I invite you to join me and other renegades on a journey of not settling for what is and being open to experimenting with the possibilities of what could be. Join the [Rogue Polymath newsletter](#) and follow [@roguepolymath](#) on Twitter.

Thanks for reading – best of luck,
Jay Johnson

Photo Credits

Cover, Bronze/Middle Age,
Information Age - Death
to Stock Photo

Industrial Age -
publicdomainpictures.net

Red Queen – Illustration
by John Tenniel (1871)

Age of Reason – portrait
by Godfrey Kneller (1689)

Stone Age - public-domain-image.com

If you enjoyed this
ebook, please share it
with others!

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Google+](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Email](#)