

All change please... why this is no time for standing still

Forget the myth that says we all hate change. **DICK LUMSDEN** says we live with change every day and we just get on with it

Last week, I was lucky enough to be working in Berlin for a few days and, for once, I had some free time to get out and explore the city.

The last time I spent any time there was before the Wall came down, and frankly, I was astonished at just how different everything was from my memory of going nervously through Checkpoint Charlie and having coffee and chocolate cake in the very austere and colourless East.

Now, the vibrant hub of the city is all on what was the eastern side of the wall, and even Chancellor Angela Merkel's modern office block straddles what was, only a few years ago, a bleak no-man's land.

There must be many thousands of Berliners, now in their 60s and 70s, who have had to adapt to these changing circumstances of the post-war cold war, the wall going up, the wall coming down, and now cheerfully embrace the current hustle and bustle of a major capital city.

We all live with change of course, and there has long been an urban myth that older generations don't like change. That, somehow, we are so set in our ways that there is no point in marketing to us because we're not going to try or buy anything different.

But it is not that we oldies don't like change – in my experience, and those of my friends, we are always willing to try a new restaurant, or visit somewhere new – what we don't like is being changed.

Habits are very comforting, and it is through habit that we probably buy the same brands of sauce, or cheese, or go to the same pub on a Friday night.

But when we are forced to change our habits because of circumstances outside our control, that makes us grumpy. Just ask Mrs Lumsden, who has been going several days a week to the same gym in Ardleigh for more than 20 years... until it ceased trading overnight a couple



■ Over-60s are 'digital immigrants' - while those born since the end of the 80s are 'digital natives'. Photo: ADRIAN JUDD

discovered new classes, new people and are hugely enjoying it. They like the change – but didn't like being changed.

It is the same with new technology, and in particular the rise and rise of the smartphone and tablet in our homes. In only around six or seven years, these devices have risen to a position in society where they are virtually indispensable.

And one of the fastest growing groups buying these latest gadgets is the over-60s – indeed my dad at 81 has just bought himself a touch screen tablet and is thoroughly enjoying the experience of discovering what it can do and new ways he can use it.

For all of us born before the mid 1980s and the invention of the mobile phone, we are classed as "digital immigrants". We have had to recognise and accept the changes in the way we communicate and the way we interact.

For our children and grandchildren, born any time since the end of the 1980s, they are "digital natives" and the changes for them are much less. Their exposure to digital technology comes at an early age

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lifetime has been immense. But for a child born today, what will the world be like by the time they are 26? Can technology keep evolving and changing at the same pace? How many versions of the iPhone will we have had by then? Will people still be taking naked selfies and having their Cloud accounts hacked... or will data storage be on the moon by then?

Talking of naked selfies, and how things have changed, I was cleaning out our loft a few weeks back and came across boxes and boxes of old family photographs going back to my own childhood.

I'm sure all of you have similar boxes stashed around your own homes. Never looked at, totally forgotten.

So we decided the time had

Lumsden and I spent hours rolling about with laughter looking at embarrassing childhood bathtime scenes; wedding fashion disasters and me when I had hair.

But in the true spirit of embracing change... we decided we wouldn't scan the images ourselves, we'd box them up and deliver them to my dad, who, as well as his tablet also has a laptop and scanner and has taught himself how to crop, scan and file.

I urge everyone to scan and capture your memories now, because the time will come when future generations will only look at something if it is delivered electronically, and is in 5D, augmented reality (if such a thing exists). A black and white pic of great-grandad with his trousers rolled up on Portobello beach, sitting in a Kodak wallet in the drawer will impress no-one.

Embrace change, welcome the new, just don't let anyone do it for you!

■ Dick Lumsden is managing director of Owl Marketing Solutions, a specialist in marketing and advertising to older consumers. If you have any