

The Red Queen Effect

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known by the pseudonym Lewis Carroll, was an English author, mathematician and logician. His most famous writings are *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass*, both of which are known as classic examples of "literary nonsense." Nonsense or not, Carroll was a keen observer of human nature and societal trends.

In *Through the Looking Glass*, a young and befuddled girl named Alice gets schooled by the Red Queen on the realities of her curious world: "In this place, it takes all the running you can do just to keep in the same place," she says. The Red Queen is saying that, like animals in nature, we all better wake up running if we want to survive another day. Charles Darwin observed, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." Which brings me to the point of this article: If we are destined to keep running just to survive—just to stay in the same place so to speak—wouldn't it be a good idea to learn how to run *smarter* instead of than just *harder*?

One of the ways we have determined to do this at Glenair is to devote significant resources to new product development. Now this may seem to be a counter-intuitive strategy, as the risks and costs of such work can be staggering. But it has been our experience that attempting to "stand pat" with our current line-up of people, processes and products, however successful they may be, will ultimately lead to stagnation and decay. In other words, if we fail to keep moving forward as an organization, we run the risk of getting eaten by some hungry competitor who has figured out how to run faster and smarter than we have.

New products, like the extravaganza of innovative designs in this special *Electronica 2010* Issue of *QwikConnect*, enable Glenair to address new interconnect challenges, new customer requirements, and new industry standards. Just imagine how fast we would have to run to earn a steady market share of business, let alone an increasing share, if we only had our original core products to sell! In today's business climate, standing pat for too long can equal suicide. As Eric Hoffer observed, "In a time of drastic change it is the *learners* who inherit the future. The *learned* usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists." We hope our chosen behavior, particularly our willingness to keep innovating, confirms you have made the right choice in joining forces with Glenair in your own personal battle with the relentless forces of *The Red Queen Effect*.

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