

If you know a company — customer, supplier, friend, or your own — that could benefit from improved operations, let us know.

Your best interest is our best interest.

The Finish Strong® monthly e-newsletter is for business leaders who recognize Operations as a strategic function that creates competitive advantage, profitability and brand loyalty to the marketplace.

LEARNING FROM HISTORY

In the Finish Strong® January 2004 e-newsletter, I wrote:

“As we experienced year-end 2003 under an Orange terror alert, we must wonder what another major terrorist attack would do to our businesses. In just a matter of a few weeks in December we also saw earthquakes hit California and Iran, heavy snows hit much of the Northeast United States, Mad Cow disease discovered in Washington state, and a flu epidemic. All this on top of the earlier SARS scare and West Coast dock lockout. We don’t know what the next major business interruption will be, or where it will hit. We do know that something out of our control will happen that impacts our businesses.”

Looking at April 2009 through that lens, while the details are certainly different, the diversity and seriousness of challenges are not. What did you learn then that could help your organization now? What are you learning now that will ensure your company is well positioned to thrive in the environment you will face five years from now?

If you’re not taking time every day to think and to learn, who is looking out for your company’s future? Maybe your “leader standard work” should specifically include reflection.

IN CASE YOU WONDER

Quadrillion comes after trillion.

Illinois Senator (1950 - 1969) Everett Dirksen, credited with saying “A billion here and a billion there, and pretty soon you’re talking real money,” may well be rolling over.

But as we risk becoming desensitized by the size of financial numbers tossed about, it can be valuable to consider time-series ratios. Take the national debt. Sure, it grows over time, but so does GDP. The metric “debt to income” perhaps has more meaning than the absolutes in isolation.

With year-end 2008 (est.) debt of \$10,723,156,000 and GDP (income) of \$14,264,600,000, the debt to income ratio is 0.75. While certainly one of the highest ratios since 1900, it was exceeded for about 5 years during WWII when the ratio reached 1.2.

Few are comfortable with the current economy. But it’s not all uncharted waters. While it may not be obvious, perhaps your company has conquered similar rapids before. It’s a good idea to check the rear view mirror even as driving forward.

FINISH STRONG®

The Starting Pistol

W. Edwards Deming:

“Rational behavior requires theory. Reactive behavior requires only reflex action.”

The Tape

Rebecca Morgan:

“As the economy recovers, operations with a theory about ramping up production and the supply chain will eclipse all those that merely react.”

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