

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 in the marketplace.

TURNING THE CORNER

Profits, productivity, and sales are recovering for many manufacturers, as the industry leads the economic recovery in the US. Companies that reported the layoffs off 1,000's of employees only 24 months ago are now announcing plans to hire 100's back.

Politicians and journalists complain that companies are too scared to build employee levels back to pre-recession levels. Fear is one possible motivator, but perhaps companies took advantage of the slow down to improve processes and training. Perhaps marginal contributors were laid off, but workers with reliable attendance and a commitment to improvement were kept. Is manufacturing positioned for great success?

It is people like us who can answer that question. Turning a corner can lead to a dead end or to a beautiful new path. I've seen some manufacturers retrench, cower, and now blindly return to the "business as usual" they knew in 2007. I've seen many others make changes in the last 24 months to create a very bright future.

As your company turns the corner, do you have it positioned as the former, or the latter? Despite the criticism of those politicians and journalists, the more of you who say the latter the more healthy manufacturing is.

GOLDEN GEESE ON LIFE SUPPORT

Both the National Basketball Association (NBA) and National Football League (NFL) are facing the threat of canceling all or part of 2011-2012 seasons due to labor / management disagreements. While multiple

issues are on the table, they all boil down to money. Each side wants more.

The intention of open book management is to share financial information to better inform decision-making to improve the organization. Inherent in that concept is the assumption that members of the organization care about its long term health.

The football and basketball player associations doubt the numbers provided by their respective leagues. Both unions talk about poorly cared-for retirees, but the focus of negotiations is clearly on maximizing income of current players. The owners don't believe they are properly rewarded for the financial risks they take, and in some cases complain that they are in fact losing money.

This lack of trust, this lack of common goal, and this short term posturing at the risk of long term viability sounds frighteningly similar to the US automotive industry a few short years ago.

While local governments have supported the NFL and NBA by providing facilities on the backs of tax-paying citizens, they are not at the table for these talks. Nor are the customers.

We can all learn so much, prevent so much crisis and failure and replace it with raging success, by not only studying history, but by understanding that we are not that unique. Keep your goose healthy. Don't count on being "too big to fail."

FINISH STRONG®

The Starting Pistol
Albert Einstein:

"I have no particular talent. I am merely inquisitive."

The Tape
Rebecca Morgan:

"Leaders are committed to discovery; try asking questions instead of answering them."

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