



Feeling Lucky in Tough Times

by Rick Davis

I am privileged in ways that are beyond description. My career has taken me throughout the United States and Canada, working in the best industry in the world while building relationships with many friends. The question is, to quote Clint Eastwood, “Do you feel lucky? ... Well, do you?” We should all feel lucky to live in America and be part of an industry that puts shelter over the heads of people throughout our country.

Yet the reports about our industry and the global economic picture make it difficult to find solace. Conversations in too many boardrooms throughout the industry focus on cutbacks, layoffs, and pessimism. On one hand, we all must strive to accept the reality of a down market, and budget cuts and layoffs are an unfortunate part of business. But fiscal cutbacks need not come at the expense of human leaps forward.

During these times, true leadership requires you to be optimistic and share good thoughts with fellow industry associates. If the news has you down, turn it off and recognize that negative prognosticators are merely salespeople trying to sell time between commercials. If you are pessimistic about the economy, focus instead on the abundance of opportunities around you.

If you find conversations hinging on the negatives in the marketplace, change the conversations.

Professing to be an optimist is much different than being an optimist. A pessimist worries about the recent economic slowdown; an optimist understands that the market for roofing materials is still segmented and growth opportunities are still very present. A pessimist wonders where the next sales growth will occur; an optimist embraces the news that remodeling expenditures are still strong. An optimist sees our market as an opportunity to improve selling skills.

What the world needs now are fewer pessimists and more champions of opportunity. Become a champion who strives to grow personally and help others in tough times.

1. Assess the market. Take a ride in your imaginary helicopter and try to see the entire landscape of your market. Rather than look at a few lost sales or recent downturns, focus on the abundance of sales opportunities that you have yet to explore.

2. Shake everybody's hand. Now that you have taken your ride in the helicopter, go meet everyone in your market — everyone. Don't worry about your weekly or monthly



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sales quotas. Get to know everyone, and let them know you are there to help. While you're at it, shake the hands of every fellow employee and thank them for their efforts this past year.

3. Play for the long term. Stop obsessing about weekly and monthly sales quotas. Market downturns may create sales downturns but need not create mental downturns. Keep your mind on maximizing market share over the long term.

4. Consider yourself lucky. You work in a great industry, live in a great country, and the world is a beautiful place. Optimism is contagious, and you should be the person that shares an affirmative outlook of our industry, our country, and the world. Actions change our thoughts and brain patterns. It is virtually impossible to feel bad if you have a real smile on your face. So, offer words of optimism to others, and you will feel them in yourself. Don't you feel better already?

I thank all of you for reading my column. Have a great holiday season! **R**

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