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A Helpful Mindset for the Current Times

Modeling leadership and opportunity when so many are frozen in fear

By Fred W. Churchley III

If you are reading this article, you are a leader. Even if we don't know each other well, you made it into our viewfinder because a colleague or peer of yours thought this of you. An amazing trait of leadership is that the greatest successes typically emerge from the most challenging of times. Lean economies cause us to sharpen the sword of entrepreneurship and the creativity available in our daily lives. Survivors don't just weather storms; they convert them to fuel, achieving their greatest breakthroughs while many stand around shell-shocked into inaction.

In tough times, leaders lead. We step away from the pack and point our minds and hearts toward opportunity. We remind ourselves of this daily, and in doing so, we help others hold the awareness as close as possible.

When the economy is robust, the overflow can blur the edges of our critical thinking. The line between what we want and what we need gets finer and finer until in some cases the contemplation dissipates. Material things such as cars, homes or luxury goods flow into our lives with ease. So much so that we forget to notice the complexity and distraction that accompanies them. We have to manage the upkeep, manage the people that manage the upkeep, or remember to adhere to the upkeep schedule. There are more people to call, more things to coordinate and a myriad of additional decisions to make. The complexity sets up camp in our brains diverting precious mind-share – away from friends, family and relationships.

There is a teaching moment in all of this; one we can apply to our own thinking and share with adult children and grandchildren. Many can still afford, financially, all of the same goods and services as they have for years. Even so, the current times offer a spark of reflection. We can pull away from the balance sheets of our business or personal finances and toward the balance sheet of life. What is your own personal measure of a rich life and how can you choose to make it even richer? How do the young people around you measure excess? And how can you personally influence their measuring sticks?

As over-achievers, we crave control. Painfully, we know that we can't control the economy or the world's reaction to our country's behaviors. Yet there is one area in which each of us maintains 100% control: our perspective. We control how we think and what we choose to do with what we have. In doing so, we can choose to step up our leadership activities filling in the vacant spaces for others who are lost or wandering.

Like so many things in life, every challenge is a courier for choice. We can believe that things are unraveling from the core and we can spiral down, perpetuating the negativity that is indeed the root cause. Or, we can take a long view, a wide view, looking for the lessons and the opportunities, and restoring confidence in ourselves, friends, colleagues, families and our businesses along the way.

As always, please feel free to call regarding this or any planning related question....