

President's Corner

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Richard Dolewski

Times Are Tough But Can We Change The Message?

By most accounts, 2002 was, and the start of 2003 has been a "BAD" year for business. Bad times for financial results. Bad stock-market performances, and unacceptable legal behavior by far too many CEOs and other top executives. Add to all of that a bad job market, declining consumer confidence and all of this makes you want to run and hide or wake up from this bad dream.

OK. Let's wake up. So we read the paper with our coffee and ... oh no! MORE bad news. Operation Iraq, SARS, layoffs and that's the problem. Business and the state of the economy is fundamentally a conversation shared by everyone. It's a "global water cooler focus group".

My brother in law came over for Easter and stated, "Business sure stinks these days ... how is your business?" I replied, "How about those Leafs!"

If we allow ourselves to focus on business always being bad, it's eliminating any discussion of what might be good or positive. We make it harder to change the negative trends that we all find ourselves always thinking about.

Business conversation with our employees, with customers, and with colleagues is the source of new ideas, new energy, and new directions. It should shape what we work on and how we work on it, day in and day out. This is a powerful force in determining what actually can and will happen inside companies.

Right now the business conversation revolves around innovation. It's an honest and hopeful reflection of tough economic times that still demands creativity. I am always thinking of new approaches that will fill today's missing void. But I stress that business demands creativity, not running away from it.

Announcement from COMMON

Congratulations: **Richard Dolewski!** The Speaker of Excellence program recognizes outstanding COMMON conference speakers. COMMON is pleased to announce that **Richard Dolewski** has earned a **Bronze Medal** for his Fall 2002 conference presentation: "Conducting a Successful DR Test".

Ratings are based upon the average responses to questions regarding the session content, the presenter's presentation skills, ability to communicate, knowledge of the topic, and use of training aids; as well as the overall rating of the session. The top 1% of these have been awarded a Gold Medal, the next 2% a Silver Medal and the next 3% a Bronze Medal. There were over 700 presentations in Denver. Awards for each speaker were presented at the Spring 2003 Conference.

Once again in Denver, Richard earned the distinction of "**Speaker of Merit**" by achieving a 4.0 or better, on a scale of 0 - 5. Richard has now received this honored distinction for a total of 16 sessions presented in COMMON events dating from Fall 2000 to present. Congratulations! With Richard's continued contributions to COMMON, he has also been entered as a member of the **Speaker of Excellence Hall of Fame**.

Summary of Richard's COMMON awards won to date:

- Best New Conference Speaker – Common New Orleans
- Best Conference Speaker – Mexico City
- Bronze Medal – COMMON Denver
- Speaker of Merit (16 Awards)

Business is more about emotions than most business people care to admit. It's about partnerships and becoming a team with your staff all over again. It's time to put the passion in the workplace and the joy of creation back into business. It's time to go back to first principles, by asking, "Am I working on something that I'm genuinely good at doing, or that really matters, with people who I genuinely care about? Or I am looking at the clock and waiting for the stroke of 5PM." This is the time to stop playing it safe and to start changing the game. Not only to apply creative thinking and sober decision making, but also to supplement the "hard part" of business with true passion and flat-out fun. Have some fun and make some cash at the same time! At some point, if work doesn't feel fun, and if it doesn't give us pleasure, then it's probably not worth doing ... even in the best of economic times.

So my challenge is about innovation and forward thinking and the courage to change. Not just knee-jerk change in reaction to what someone else is doing and what is patterned after the past. This is sure to fail like the others. We cannot recapture the past, but we can surely make the future. And the time to start is now!

So the next time someone asks you "How is business?" your reply is, "You know we are doing just fine, and I can look in a mirror and say I am having some fun, too!"

