

## Beware the Corporate Curse

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The question someone asked was, “When is a good time to plant a tree?” The answer was, “Twenty years ago.” Translated: If you want to enjoy that tree that you’ll plant in front of you, the beauty you’ll enjoy will be some time in the future. Certainly not today!

So, how do planting trees compare to hiring people? Back to about twelve years ago. We were in a Recession (no, Depression!), and we adjusted (laid folks off) many times till we hit a stable point. Then, when it was finally time to start building back, it was a challenge, but we had retained most of “the best of the best” ...Our core Key associates were still here. Now we’re staffing for increasing business and adjusting up...The reverse of what we did on the other side.

I have to say that wisely, we haven’t just staffed for the immediate future (the given quarter, and maybe the rest of the year). As “Gems” came our way...folks that have strong talent that would meld well with the Kimal Culture...we hired some that weren’t needed at the time. We knew they’d be valuable sometime in the not too distant future. And it really wasn’t a gamble--they were soon needed anyway as we grew. (Maybe that new employee “strength” gave us momentum to grow even faster!!) We’re still adding and looking for some of those “Gem” folks because they will be needed...We’re preparing *now* for that eventuality.

At this stage I see something going on in our industry...We have some new customers coming our way, whom we really hadn’t intentionally gone after. It seems they’re not getting the service they require (demand). And as they talk to their soon-to-be-past supplier, some are getting the following message: “Well, we’re behind on our service, delivery, etc. ...’cause we just can’t find folks to hire.” And this soon-to-be-our-new customer is also told, with a shrug: “It’s just the way it is in our industry” which implies without actually saying it, to “Just accept that fact...take it or leave it.” I think the problem is more pervasive these days. Back when “they” were adjusting down, there was a desire to “Make the numbers work.” Hey! I get that part of it. You can only Bleed cash so long! But now on the other side, it really has become a rigid program of “Make the numbers work” with many...(Corporate Curse kicked in!) And there may be a philosophy of now playing catch-up with the down side of simply not hiring...even when they could build back a stable force.

With us, it’s not just to take care of present business, but the most important element is to now “Bank our fires for the future.” And the problem with others multiples itself...Business has increased, and the staffing needs are now...Immediate!! But finding “Gems,” much less just potentially good employees, is very difficult. The well has almost run dry! The hole that was dug is so deep that digging out is going to be difficult (if not impossible) in many cases. I started this with the heading: “Beware the Corporate Curse” because with many businesses, we’re in that era where “Making the numbers work” overrides the *common sense* employee needs of the immediate and the not too distant future.

I would like to think that by taking a more pro-active stance on hiring based on now...and the future...makes much more sense than a propensity to show a good P&L and balance sheet in the short haul. And back to the “tree planting” that we really want to be enjoying twenty years from now...Between today, and decades down the road, if we neglect fertilizing, nutrients, trimming, or maintenance, we won’t have a thing of beauty...Maybe just a scraggly weed!

Good managing and good selling....Way into the future.