

“When You See the Light at the End of the Tunnel”

– Al E. Bavry, President Emeritus, Kimal Lumber

Watching the TV news the other night, Greg Gutfeld made an interesting comment: “When you can see the light at the end of the tunnel...Remember, you’re still in the tunnel!” Maybe that’s kinda of a “duh” moment...But it says a lot. At my age, “north of eighty years,” I thought I’d seen it all...And then a Virus comes along...Quickly recognized as Covid-19....The now Infamous Coronavirus 19. In my years I’ve seen many flus come and go: Watched the AIDS epidemic, Ebola, and many garden variety flus. In fact to the latter, the “Flu Season” occurs every year. And most people that get it, get sick for a while, and recover just fine. And it’s a sad but ever-reality that some (mainly those with compromised immune systems) do die. During some of our past flu seasons, the flu deaths were pretty high. This Coronavirus 19 is being played out very differently...

So, trying to remain objective and applying some reality checks...Pre-Coronavirus 19 we had a thriving, booming economy. The best I’d witnessed (and been a part of) for many years. Now, in virtual shut-down/lock down, the economy has almost ground to a halt. We’re “containing” this virus very well many say. But in the meantime, many small and large businesses are poised to die, and many may not have a real chance of recovery. A new era is being born! I continue to believe in in this great country and what we’ve endured in the past...And virtually every time we were in a Chaos mode, we came out stronger on the other end. And yes...I admit...I remain the eternal optimist...

So, even though there seems to be some leveling off, and maybe even starting down the (good) other side, we can see light at the end of the tunnel!... But Greg’s reminder... “We’re still in the tunnel.” So, a few thoughts... Try focusing on one of the “keys” (clues) that those smart talking heads are saying: “Those at risk most are the ones with compromised immune systems.” And now as they interview quite a few generally healthy folks that have or have had it...These people are coming out fine on the other end. One woman I listened to admitted a “slight discomfort” and said it felt kinda like having a cold, and three weeks later, she was doing fine...

So, I assess this virus this way, and I’ll break it down both personally and then in our work life. First, if we tend to stay in “good health,” by having pretty good eating habits, being physically active, getting plenty of sleep, are mentally active and think positively, etc. (very important), we’ll probably survive and come out o.k. on the other side...Whether we contact it or not. But, if we have “bad habits” like smoking, don’t watch our diets, do little physical activity, tend to view things more “negatively,”...I’ll stop there...Our chances of surviving “well” go down...Exponentially! Now apply the same thing if you’re a business...Doesn’t matter if you’re that local mom-and-pop restaurant, the local supermarket, builder...lumberyard, whatever...If you’ve maintained a “healthy” business climate, built a good “immune system!” including taking good care of your customers, employees, and tended to always do “things right!” (although now it’s very tough surviving), chances are you’ll come out even stronger on the other side.

A couple of examples of maintaining a good business “immune system” quickly come to mind. First there’s Publix: I always graded them a great company and a tough act to follow. Now when

you go in any store, a smiling Publix associate wipes down the cart before you can grab it, says thank you for coming in. Same with the cashier, now behind a small plexiglass barrier, but ending the transaction with a genuine smile and “Thank you for choosing Publix.” At Detweiler’s markets you find the same experience: Folks inside taking care of you, smiling and thankful for the business. At a local favorite restaurant I always went to pre-virus: Now it has a well-oiled curbside pick-up, and those great meals previously eaten “inside” are darn near as good as the takeaway...they even remember to put in a little container of “Scorpion” hot sauce in my bag.

So, I guess the message is simple...As we see the light at the end of the tunnel, but are still painfully aware that we’re “still in the tunnel,” maybe it’s time to really check that “immune system” that will portend our future. As we leave the tunnel and are in the radiant “full light of day again,” while I feel we’ll come out strong, maybe even stronger—some of us now won’t make it. My final word...Even though we’re learning and living a tough lesson, the ball remains in our court. Both personally and professionally, consider the status of your immune system, as it might be the most important component you have...and knowing that source of strength, I remain optimistic as we come out on the other end.