

Still a Decision

- Al E. Bavry, Advisor, Kimal Lumber



Years ago, I was talking to a friend/mentor and we were discussing, as a Leader, the process of making a decision. My friend made the point that when things may get very difficult, and Leaders might just “freeze up,” and don’t make a necessary decision...They are still making a decision! Yes...A non-decision is still...a decision.

We’re in very unusual times, and things are certainly at the “very difficult” stage for many businesses throughout the nation. As an essential business, the construction industry has been very lucky, or however you want to call it. But that doesn’t mean it’s been easy for builders and suppliers, either. We all know our current difficulties, no need to point them out in detail. We know construction is moving along at a strong steady pace. After hitting an initial re-set button, we’re back rolling again. We’ve been strong all summer and now into the autumn.

Here’s a personal story I’d like to share. To begin, I have a 13-inch DeWalt planer, as I’m about to plane a lot of Wild Cherry wood. This Cherry is about as hard as it gets! So, about seven weeks ago I ordered a special carbide planer blade head. The company I ordered it from accepted my order but were a little vague about when it would ship. I finally contacted them the other day: “What’s the status of my carbide planer head?” After quite a bit of hemming around, the man I spoke to (a manager?) finally blurted out that he just didn’t know when it would be made and shipped. Then, he kinda unloaded his problems to me...It seems they’ve got a “backorder” of over two thousand with this contractor that makes them. And he added, “We *hope* they’ll start shipping within six weeks.” Obviously, something has gone horribly wrong--with an order file that huge on one item and a value of approximately eight hundred thousand dollars. Now that’s real money!

At this point I’m about to cancel my order and get a couple sets of regular steel knives, and hope I can make them last. So what happened to this company that is now poised to lose much of their order/build file? Did workers leave in droves? Did the company initiate layoffs? I don’t know what happened and probably never will, but with an initial real order file that huge (not counting a myriad of other things they do), wouldn’t they do everything within their power to fulfill orders? Why didn’t they start communicating many weeks ago this dilemma they’re obviously in? Somewhere along the way it appears their decision was to *not make a decision(s)*. And now it’s piling on them. At the very least, their credibility is in the tank.

So....As lumber dealers...In my lifetime, we’re probably in one of the most negative periods to live in... But we are so fortunate. We have business! What I generally see are companies that have the business and are doing everything possible to continue to supply service, keep commitments, etc. In other words do everything to take what they have and super make it work. In hearing from some, even with the problems we all face (staffing, material availability, all), they are admitting to having the best times they’ve had in a long time. And on the other end are some companies that are really struggling...Not making those positive moves. So...Coming full circle...We have to make decisions...More than ever...And if we decide to “make none” then shame on us. We still have control of our destinies. Don’t let your “next decision” be...No decision! Good selling, all.