

Ever-Changing, Exciting Future

- Al E. Bavry



Now that I'm "retired," I feel I have an even better opportunity to "read tea leaves" and take a snapshot of the future. I know those of you (that have made this industry your lifetime's work and career) understand some unique basics about it. It is "chaotic," "disruptive," "ever changing," "rewarding and unnerving"...and as an airline pilot once said to me, after I'd commented on the enjoyment he must have in flying a huge jet plane "Yes, it's pretty neat, but here's what it really is: Hours of sheer boredom (*pause for effect!*)...And moments of sheer terror!!" Sound familiar?

Anyway, my sense of what's going on now in our industry is...it's both ever-changing and exciting. What a time to be in the business of building materials dealer, where you can still pick your flavor...and become darn good at what you do. Whether it's as an owner, outside sales person, manager of a yard, team leader, running a unique showroom—you name it---there's plenty of "picks" to choose from.

We are so disrupted that there still is no "one model fits all." So, in my ramblings...Here's some things I see down the pike. Think of several different types of yards...One, a down-and-dirty commodity driven place, kind of lean and mean. It's run very efficiently with (gasp) autonomous delivery trucks. Think about the contractor on the jobsite, receiving his basic needs for the day. The driverless truck pulls up, and removes his staged and tagged order, and the contractor signs the App on his smart (smarter than ever) phone...hits send. The driverless truck pulls away and returns to base...for the next autonomous delivery. But wait...there is also a true bricks-and-mortar, *full service* operation, with highly trained sales folks that are there to service any customer needs. *Their* real presence will be stronger than ever.

You see...I feel that as we face these ever-changing choices, as Yogi wisely said, "When you come to a fork in the road...Take it!" And we will have these multiple forks... an over-simplification...New down-and-dirty, lean stores that will appeal to a certain group...And better-than-ever, full service, knock-your-socks-off operations. But plan either one well...Little "forgiveness" if you don't get it right. So, too, a few other things...(gasp!). This is becoming less and less of a "good old boy" industry. More and more strong women have entered this arena, and most are doing darn good—in sales, management, leadership, et-al. This is good for all. I also remain a proponent of the young man or woman who (again, gasp) didn't go to college, but works in a building material company, and "grows ahead" by starting from ground floor...And working up. I've seen many great cases of really fantastic associates become million dollar sales persons, managers/leaders, etc., but started by driving a forklift in the yard. (Actually, it's the way I began 58 years ago!)

And one last comment for now. We are in a political whirlwind in this country. Being the eternal optimist, and not really "talking politics," I think great disruption is going on, that will settle into something better...'Nough of that...Great selling, and just keep your eye on the ever- moving target. Being a heat seeking missile can be tons of fun...