

Letter from the Publisher



September 11, 2001

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It is mid-September as I write this publisher's letter, barely a week after the terrible events at The World Trade Center, The Pentagon and outside Pittsburgh. In the wake of unspeakable tragedy, it seems almost trivial to write about "normal" business topics in a world forever changed. Instead, I would like to offer a personal observation about human nature and the American people.

It was around 9:00 AM local time when the first news about the attack on The World Trade Center reached Editor Kristine Chin and me at the ISA Show in Houston. Because we attended separate meetings, it was later Tuesday I learned that Editor Chin's brother worked one block away from the trade center complex. Telephone lines were jammed, she told me, and it was hours before Editor Chin could reach her family. Thankfully, her brother was safe; he had escaped the devastation by only a few moments. Thousands of others, we learned, were not as fortunate. Editor Chin observed that tense as the hours of early Tuesday were, her experience was little or nothing compared to what people in New York were facing.

On Wednesday, it became clear we were stranded in Houston. Airlines were grounded and trains and buses were not available. Our only hope would be to rent a car and drive the 2,000 or so miles back to New York. We anticipated it would be expensive, but it seemed the only alternative to an indefinite stay as guests of the Marriott. Then, we learned there were no rental cars available anywhere in the area.

Late Wednesday, we were fortunate to hear that Dave Holmes, Promotions Manager at Emerson Process Management, had a rental car he planned to return to Avis in Austin, TX. Could we travel with him, we asked, and take over his rental in Austin? Of course, he replied, and drove us to Austin and helped revise the Avis rental. As we completed paperwork, we learned that Avis had waived all "drop off" and other charges; we would get home for the cost of gas and meals.

On our three-day roadtrip, Editor Chin and I saw evidence everywhere of American patriotism and unity. American flags on highway overpasses, handwritten signs saying "God Bless America" and a host of other gestures, large and small, made it clear that despite enormous tragedy, we as a nation were one people, united.

It is perhaps here, in the sense of unity evident now among Americans, that we can find a message of hope as we confront and deal with the nightmare events of September 11. Many of us remember the divisiveness of the 1960s and the legacy of the Vietnam War. Many doubted, I especially, that Americans would ever again be as united as a country and in a common purpose as described by Tom Brokaw in his book *The Greatest Generation*. Evidence of the last few days is clear, though, that we *can* unite, we *can* come together, that we *are* one nation. Despite the horror, despite personal loss and despite the terrible damage wrought on our collective psyche, America as a country has rallied and we are one.

The loss of so many lives and the heartache among those affected is a terrible price to pay for the sense of unity we feel now. Let it be, then — this sense that we are one — a small tribute, dedicated to the memory of those who have died or suffered as a result of the events of September 11, 2001.

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