

THINKING BEYOND THE CRISIS

By: Robert S. Sher

Recently I saw a television interview featuring syndicated business columnists Suzy and Jack Welch (the revered past chairman of General Electric) discussing the premise of Suzy Welch's new book, *10.10.10: 10 Minutes, 10 Months, 10 years*.

In the book, Welch suggests each of us ask ourselves three questions if we are facing tough decisions in our lives:

- What are the consequences of my decision in 10 minutes?
- What are the consequences of my decision in 10 months?
- What are the consequences of my decision in 10 years?

As a coach, I really like this premise. While we have to survive today, we still need to think about the near term and longer term. Many of us in business have forgotten to consider the future while trying in earnest to just stay the course. Perhaps it has become an endurance test. We cut expenses where we can, pay the bills, trade business trips for conference calls, freeze hiring, cut salaries or demand non-paid furloughs.

In the past I've given you tips about getting through a crisis, reiterated the importance of being responsible and suggested ways to avoid the next buggy whip industry; all strategies I embrace for surviving in these uncertain times. Now I would like to help you move one step beyond this survivalist mentality.

Today's world is so fast paced and uncertain it is easy to get stressed and lose focus. The business world as we once knew it is changing – for better or for worse – and we need to figure out ways to thrive in it. Many of us do not know how to do that and it then becomes overwhelming.

I am not going to pretend to have all the answers for managing your success nor can Welch. We can each, however, help you begin to change the way you think to transform the way you work and live.

In her book, Welch shares her own secret to life management; one that makes sense and has practical applications for each of us. She created a system that worked for her; one she details to help us think about the decisions we make so we can put our lives into perspective.

Welch's system begins by taking a close look at your life and answering some business and personal questions. Should you quit your job? Should you wait for the next round of layoffs? Should you close your company? Should you wait it out? Should you buy a larger house, leave a relationship or send your kid to private school?

Next, question the consequences of each option as it applies to 10 minutes, 10 months and 10 years. The tens are not meant to be literal. The first one stands for now, the next is the foreseeable future and the last is so far away you cannot predict how it will play out.

For your final task, analyze your answers to your set of questions and compare them to your values. What do you believe? What are your goals and dreams? What do you want and what do you need?

You are the only one responsible for your future. If you can regain control of your choices and reclaim your life, you should be able to find long-term happiness.

Robert Sher, CPA, is a Certified Executive Coach. Formerly CFO and partner for Schostak Brothers & Company in Livonia, Michigan, Sher has been a delegate from the Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants to the National Future Forum working on the CPA "Vision" Project. Sher serves on the boards of numerous charitable and professional organizations. His Email address is: info@bobsher.com.