Plain talk
Not a single shot fired

COLUMN BY ROB BUKSAR



Most of us are going through this terrible business environment in hopes that sooner or later it's going to improve. Even if sales pick up and cash flow resumes, it will be no indicator that the economic environment has healed and regained normalcy. Is it possible that what we're experiencing is the new normal business environment? Look around you. What do you see going on in terms of real serious business activity that would give anyone with "functional gray matter" optimism for a rosy future?

We've had brain-dead, corrupt and disconnected leadership for the last 30 years. In most instances, we still do. The entire country is in undeniable free fall. Look at your own circumstances. Are you doing better than last year? How about the last five years before that?

I suggest that if you're lucky enough to still be doing OK, that you've been fortunate to have the "opportunity" to expand dramatically. You know, increase the size, scope and workload in your business. Did it make you any more money? My guess is it allowed you to maintain the status quo and you were happy with that! Problem is that you're going to run out of places to expand quickly and "diminishing returns" will soon introduce themselves to you.

In our industry, starting and charging technology is better than ever—so are the vehicles. This alone accounts for less replacement parts per vehicle sold. However, there are more vehicles, equipment and machines requiring starters and alternators than ever before. Furthermore, the number of rebuilders servicing the industry and the overall capacity of the industry has been reduced by more than 50 percent. This should leave a ton of work for the remaining shops, but "Where's the beef?" Oh it's there, it's just no longer going to the shops. We've been cut out of our own market!

There are more new imported parts being sold from more huge corporate outlets than Carter has little liver pills. Our market is being devoured a big bite at a time leaving nothing but the crumbs for you and me. No market, no sales—no sales, no money—no money, no living. Game, set, match; we have been beaten and destroyed!

This is a war and as of yet, most of us are still sleeping in an "ether" haze. We will continue to lose because we are offering no resistance. Face it; we are kept so distracted by unimportant issues, we fail to realize we're being taken over by China and the OPEC nations.

Every year that goes by, we all get "painted" a little farther back into the corner. No matter what shape your business is in today, do you honestly think our country can continue with its current economic policies? Come on now! Today our government is borrowing billions daily from the Chinese just to pay the interest on the money we've borrowed from them earlier! That's so crazy, it doesn't even qualify as stupid. In the meantime, the Chinese are taking the proceeds and buying anything and everything of any value in the U.S. Actually, these days the Chinese are buying anything they want, wherever they want, because there is no limit to their money!

Are you familiar with the military term siege? It's when an invading military surrounds a castle or fortress and forces its surrender. The siege cuts off all avenues of supply henceforth bringing the fortress to its knees via starvation, etc. Seldom is a shot fired. The attacking military just waits until the other guys run out of resources, get weakened, then give up.

Unless something dramatic changes pretty soon, we're going to be overrun. We're already weakened and are getting weaker.

Our deficit spending now equals our gross national product. President Obama talks about unsustainable spending but continues being the biggest spender in U.S. history. Heck, our president has already shut down the space program and surrendered NASA to the Russians! Further, in the most dangerous time in all of history, there's talk about downsizing our military to pre-WWII levels for budgetary concerns.

Donald Trump may not make a good president but no one would question whether he recognizes if a business deal is good or not. Recently, he has commented openly and loudly about how the U.S. is getting screwed by China, OPEC and many of our other trading partners. According to Trump, the trade deal with China is so bad, it threatens the integrity of our entire economy and needs to be terminated and renegotiated immediately.

"China is manipulating our currency, making our products, taking our jobs. They kill us in every way," Trump said.

For those of you indifferent and uninvolved, you no longer can afford to remain uninvolved. Your vote, voice, money and hopefully activism are needed and will make a difference. As far as the rest of us, Democrat or Republican, conservative or liberal, it doesn't make a difference. When you're in a foxhole trying to stay alive, you don't care what your neighbors' beliefs are. You come together to try to survive! Pointing fingers and trying to assign blame at this point helps nothing. We all need to focus and be about the business of trying to restore our nation by changing direction and doing it quickly.

So, where do we begin? First: Support candidates who are proud of America and don't go around making excuses for our less than perfect behavior. There is no crime in believing in American Exceptionalism. When the world's been in trouble, who gets called and more importantly, who shows up? Has anybody seen Russia, China, Cuba or any of the Arab states come to anyone's rescue?

Second: Our leaders must understand that our power is relative to our prosperity. Think about it. If you're broke and in need, you're hard-pressed to help yourself, so how in the world can you help or protect someone else?

Third: In order to regain our prosperity, we have to revitalize our industrial engine and become a superior manufacturing power again. So much so, those other countries will want to redirect their investments here rather than China. Why? Because "like before" the U.S. will be the best bang for the buck, not like it is now.

I know as well as anyone how difficult it is keeping a small business up and running these days. I've been doing it for 35 years. I also know a small owner-operator's job is so complex. It's almost totally consuming. Yet, keep this in mind; small businesspeople are the backbone of this country. Just like in your shop, if something is going to happen, it's going to be you who does it or at least initiates it. Sorry to burden you even more but the ball's in our court. If we don't become active at some level, I'm afraid nothing is going to happen or change. We are at a point now where we either start swimming or sink.

So, if you don't want to be totally overrun without a single shot fired, start putting up some resistance. It's high time to adopt the attitude, "I'm tired of this nonsense and I'm just not going to take it any longer!" Then, start finding ways to make a difference. If you fire up the desire, the "how" will become visible to you.

Happy New Year. May God bless all of you and God bless America!

Rob Buksar is owner of Hoosier Electric Co., Gary, Ind.

ERE