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Navigating Our Future

HUNKERING DOWN THROUGH ROUGH SEAS

It is commonly understood that society advances through the work and efforts of future-oriented people. People who set sail for new horizons, with a well-annotated map, arrive at new destinations, to discover new opportunities, and create new communities. This practice, however, is based on the estimate, prediction, or belief that the planning, and the voyage, will be worth the sacrifice.

Sadly, today's financial environment offers little hope in supporting this prerequisite, not only in Greece, but beyond its borders as well. If, in addition to purely Greek evils, we add the volatility of global markets, the national debt concerns, the international dimensions and repercussions of the crisis, political and social unrest in a number of countries, and the apparent lack of alignment between world "leaders," it is no wonder that today's environment leaves all of us totally clueless about our final destination. Major changes are most probably about to take place, the magnitude of which falls outside our scope of view.

As a result of this chaos, lately

I have seen a number of good and able navigators jump ship and abandon the voyage. The question we must ask is clear. What can we do, in these white-capped, turbulent wa-

ters, with no compass and no visible beacon to guide us? Where are we heading? Where do we hope to arrive?

I will never forget my MBA Director, Dr. Geoff Southern, when, 20 years ago on my very first day at university, he entered the classroom and—before even introducing himself—wrote on the whiteboard in capital letters: "SURVIVE!" Giving up is never the answer; to the contrary, fighting harder always is. And when there is no identifiable enemy, when you know not when the fight will commence, than all you can do is wait, prepare, and train for it the best way you can.

Since, in today's battle the wait may be long and unpredictable, the most important thing to ensure is that you are well prepared and ready for all eventualities.

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You may need to survive, under adverse conditions, for a long time. This means cutting down on any excess "consumption" and learning to survive on the mini-

mum requirements your organization can handle, without diminishing your reserves. Beware, however: cut down your "nutrition" too much and at the time you need strength the most, you will be feeble and frail, with no chances of victory.

During the standoff, you must also train and exercise. Review the things you do and identify what it is you really do best; make sure you really excel in this. Find new opportunities which can increase your effectiveness and create a successful strategy around this core. Don't spend any time on non-core activities unless you are confident your core process is complete and guaranteed.

Internally "optimized," you must now familiarize yourself well with the surrounding waters and its conditions and keep the radar sweeping. The speed of change shows that we will not be able to predict how long the battle will last nor when it will end. We will probably find ourselves fighting several fronts at once. At the same time, we must constantly question the intel we have relied on and seek out further information on our surroundings.

Last, but not least, keep morale high on board your vessel. For as long as the wait can be, the moment you jump ship there is no turning back.

Have no doubt, it is future-oriented navigators who do advance society, even in times of crisis, danger and doubt. At times like these, however, it is not about how prosperous the land we find will be. It is about ensuring that there is a safe destination. It is, first and foremost, about ensuring you reach that destination. 🐙