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2009 - You Are Not Alone

So, we are finally here, the year 2009. The beginning of a year that has as many questions as days, from a new President in the USA, to where will the global recession take us, to who is next for a bailout, and will the stock markets react like the ascent of a rollercoaster or like the ride.

The pent-up emotions that range from hope to anxiety are being felt throughout the world. The challenges that are impacting us are both direct and indirect. To quote the science fiction writers, "We are not alone."

So, what can we do? Well, when you need to mingle with others in your specific discipline, take a few minutes to commiserate and realize that you are not alone, then snap out of it and flex your creative inner-self and start moving forward, there are excellent forums in all fields that are focusing on meeting the challenging times head-on. I have noticed that forums, seminars, and conferences are changing their themes dynamically to meet the challenges in their field, this is the same consciousness that service providers must do with respect to their customers. Yes, I understand that there is a cost associated with many of the events, but if you go with an open mind and are not looking for a shoulder to cry on, then you may actually see things in a different light while building a social network the old fashioned way, face-to-face.

I attended two timely events in 2008, one in November [**10th Annual CEO2CEO Leadership Summit**] that was held just after the elections in the USA, and one in early December, the [Opal Financial Group's Investment Consultants Forum](#). The two seminars, though different, were similar events that echoed the mood and current events within the world.

The 10th Annual CEO2CEO Leadership Summit's theme was "Driving Growth and Value During Economic Uncertainty." Attended by CEOs from across industries, and with guest speakers and roundtable sessions focusing not on a specific industry but on the US and Global Economies, as a few CEO's commented, "This is the information that I wanted to hear first-hand." One of the key take-away points was, "No one is immune to a recession, so let's promote idea exchange to help CEO's become more effective navigating through an economic air pocket." The event planners created timely social time, which provided for provocative interaction, business card exchange, and discussions for follow-up meetings.

With regards to the Opal Finance Group's Investment Consultants Forum the theme was "The Role of the Consultant is more important than ever in making Investment Decisions." While the financial markets continue to go through tumultuous times, many Investment Consultants were shaken on how to proceed with clients who have lost 20-40% of their portfolio, and what were the best investments to look at for the next 6-months and beyond. For a consultant or service provider, this gets back to two common challenges: 1) Know your customers and what the impact of this type of change really means to them and their company, 2) Are you connecting with you customer and putting them first or are trying to justify your services and the results?

My take-away from the events, and speaking with many of the attendees, was that leaders are moving quickly to distance themselves from things outside of their control while they look at what levels of growth and operating performance will create the most value for their company. Thus, no matter the size of a business, we have to move beyond the sensationalized information we continually hear every day in the various news mediums and focus on what is within our control.

If the opportunity to attend a summit or forum is prohibitive, then do not forget to open a line of communications with an advisor or consultant to see if they understand your specific challenges.

Over the next months to a year (hopefully not more), the time between discussion and decision lengthens, thus this is the perfect time to start a dialogue and build a connection between a customer and a provider. In many cases talk and information is pro-bono [to a certain point], while everyone works together to move forward.

So, have a Happy New Year and remember, we are not alone as we push through the challenges in front of us in 2009, and that there are opportunities available within and outside of our specific industries and disciplines for support and communications.

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