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Upside-Down Logic

Speaking of headlines: Michael Phelps gets caught on camera inhaling; A-Rod confesses to using steroids; Barry Bonds goes to trial next month on charges of

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At the precise moment I sat down to write this, a constable knocked on our door. For an instance, the thought that would occur to every parent with teenagers flashed though my mind. Those quickly vanished when he said, "We received a panic alarm from your residence." Instantly, I knew the cause of this situation...me. A few minutes earlier I had changed the backup battery on our system, and – in my never-ending struggle with things mechanical – apparently pushed the wrong buttons trying to reset it. Fortunately, the officer was all smiles and kindness, thanked us for being good citizens, and went on his way to handle real emergencies.

This incident inspired a thought that seems pertinent to share with you. In these challenging times, there is a panic button standing silently by, tempting you every day. It gains momentum from pessimistic headlines: "Worst Housing Slump in Decades." It picks up speed in the words of your acquaintances: "This is going to get a lot worse before it gets better." It reaches maximum velocity as you lay awake at night: "Will we be able to survive?" It would be easy to push the panic button right now; however, that won't bring someone to your door to protect you.

As a leader, you have to remain steadfast – positive you and your organization will make it through. Clear your mind of negative thoughts, and focus on what you control. Speak to clients and customers. Tighten expenses. Inspire team members. The answer isn't a bailout. It's you.

Words of Wisdom If you've been reading *Fast:Forward* awhile, you know what I was doing during halftime of the Super Bowl. Having seen Bruce Springsteen & the E-Street Band on every tour since 1978, I rank among his most loyal supporters whose birth certificates don't say New Jersey. Lately, I seem to be repeating this verse quite often:

"Someday we'll look back on this, and it will all seem funny." – Bruce Springsteen (*Rosalita*, 1973)

This, too, shall pass, and all of us will come out the other side better.

Defining Moment The Boss takes up half the space on my iPod. Looking for inspiration: Listen to *Darkness on the Edge of Town*. Feeling stressed: Crank up *Born in the USA*. Needing perspective: Put on *The Rising*.

The Super Bowl performance was good, but not great, because it takes more than 12 minutes to appreciate Springsteen and the Band's talent. You have to experience the entire show – they were four hours when he was younger! – and see Springsteen give every

perjury and obstruction of justice. Remember when sports were the escape?

I believe – casting a wide net here – 10,000 years of hunting/gathering and fight/flight have put an evil stamp on men's DNA. Most overcome it. Many don't. Athletes out of control represent millennia of 'As long as I don't get caught, it's ok,' behavior, where the strong take advantage of any opportunities to bring home dinner (read: multi-million dollar contracts) or experience pleasure (read: girls dig rich guys).

Suspensions, asterisks and jail time are solutions. The next evolution might be to stop expecting mortals to act like gods. After all, they put on their pants like every other man. It's you and me who put them on pedestals.

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ounce of energy to the audience. I've watched him from the front row and the back rafters, enjoying every moment along with thousands of fist-pumping, aisle-shaking, lyrics-singing fans of all ages.

You may not like his voice. You may not like his politics. You may not like the fact his tour grossed \$204 million last year as he sang about the poor and downtrodden. You have to admit, though, the man commands an audience. Here's the question: How has Springsteen remained relevant 34 years after appearing simultaneously on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*?

It's simple really. The Boss is adaptable. From the bearded, skinny guy singing in small venues about cars and girls in the 70's, to the clean-shaven, bicep-busting superstar filling stadiums around the world in the '80's, to the politically motivated rock legend stumping at candidate Obama's campaign stops, Springsteen continually discovers a way to reinvent himself.

That's critical for ongoing success – especially in the business world. It's imperative to adapt with the times. Failing to do so means you end up: 1) In a mess (American auto industry); 2) Left behind (network television); or, 3) Extinct (Circuit City). To stay on top means you have to be bold enough to change, regardless of how successful you are at any given moment.

Need proof? Check out the Grammy Award for Record of the Year in 1975. It went to Captain & Tennille for *Love Will Keep Us Together*. Seen them lately?

Until next month, continued success in all things.

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