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The Summer of '69

Three events occurred 40 years ago that hold a place in America's history. On July 20th, mankind took one giant leap and walked on the moon. In early August, the Manson

Ideas For Success | August

"We the People..."

During the summer of 1787, James Madison and other delegates to the Constitutional Convention set the cornerstone upon which to build the United States. Over four months, they worked tirelessly to create what is considered "a model of cooperative statesmanship and the art of compromise." Having completed the great leap to independence, the founders dedicated themselves to ensuring the efforts and sacrifices of so many would endure for generations.

Today the country is divided on many issues, with the current maelstrom being health care. Turn on CNN or MSNBC for one side's view; switch to Fox News or tune to Limbaugh-Hannity-Beck radio for the other. What's missing amidst all the shouting – including that being displayed in Town Hall meetings – is true debate about what is best for we the people. If only video existed from 222 years ago so Congress could see robust dialogue among real statesmen. Then again, many admit to not reading the bills they sign, so they'd probably skip watching it anyway.

Customer Appreciation A year ago, I shared the story about switching our electricity service provider, which is an option we have in Texas with utility deregulation. We decided to leave the company that had served us for a decade because their price would have cost us an additional \$50 per month on average. Unfortunately, the two-year agreement we signed came as oil skyrocketed to \$147 per barrel. Thus, the charges this June and July were our highest ever... and with another year remaining on the contract, it appeared we'd continue to reach deep into our wallets.

Then a funny thing happened. With oil currently hovering around \$70, our provider announced it would give a new rate to anyone who signed during the height of oil speculation. All it took was one brief phone call and – Voila! – our utility bills going forward will be reduced 15 percent. While that's still higher than current market offerings, when you consider the company was under no obligation to do anything, I view their gesture as an example of excellent customer care. You can be sure we'll remember that when the contract is up.

Everyone is searching for ways to save money, which provides a great opportunity for your business. Think about your existing customers: What could you do right now that will ease their pain? Reaching out with an unexpected offer creates a strong bond that could secure their loyalty for a long time. You don't have to break the bank...just show you care and are willing to prove it.

Words of Wisdom Ask folks to name the greatest president and chances are you'll hear two names. One presided over the

Family committed gruesome murders of actress Sharon Tate, her unborn child and six others in California. A few days later, the young generation gathered on a dairy farm in rural New York to celebrate all things Woodstock.

From the Revolution, to the Civil War, to the sixties, to today...times are filled with highs and lows. Yet, as the founding fathers envisioned, we the people always find the way. In 40 years, our children will remember this era; I'm confident they'll view it as Bryan Adams did 1969 in his hit song:

*Oh when I look back now
That summer seemed to last forever
And if I had the choice
Yeah, I'd always wanna be there
Those were the best days of my life*

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Constitutional Convention before becoming our first commander-in-chief. George Washington said: "Truth will ultimately prevail where there is pains to bring it to light." The other guided this nation through the Civil War. During his first inaugural address, the 16th president stated something that is important to remember:

"This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing Government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it." ~ Abraham Lincoln

Sooner rather than later we the people are going to hold those in Washington accountable. We're going to demand they listen to their constituents. We're going to stop giving them lifetime jobs. It won't take a violent revolution...just a statement in the voting booth that brings the truth to light.

Recovery Flight Did you see the story a couple of weekends ago that passengers on a weather-diverted Continental Express flight were forced to sit on a crowded small plane for six hours with no food and an overflowing toilet...and the comforts of the terminal just 50 yards away? What was Continental's response afterward? Give customers willing to sign a waiver of liability a fare refund, \$50 gift card and \$200 travel voucher. That's less than they occasionally offer for bumping you on an oversold flight.

Contrast that with the experience we had on our daughter's new apartment at college. Last week, she and her roommate learned they were being shifted to a unit different from the lease they signed in February. Unfortunately, the new one didn't have two walk-in closets...which is why they chose that complex in the first place. What was the management company's response when we protested? Since there were no other units available, they handed the girls a check for \$1,200. "It's our mistake, and we want to acknowledge that," said the manager. It didn't make the closet any bigger, of course, but it certainly made a strong impression.

Every company makes mistakes; the key to creating strong customer loyalty is in how you recover. Continental's regional partner messed up, and the parent didn't do a great job on its end either. All that was needed to prevent any issues, of course, was for an employee with independence to have taken initiative during the flight delay and say, "Get those people off the plane." The simplest way is often the easiest, yet people frequently forget that lesson.

Until next month, continued success in all things.

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