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By Mike Whitehead

## **Creating Opportunity From Chaos**

Picasso once stated, “Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction”.

Much has been written and discussed around the destruction lately. I’d like to propose we spend some time on what’s possible from all of the turmoil, change, and chaos of the past few months.

Is it possible that we are on the verge of creating a new type of community, one in which ALL people matter?

Is it possible that the democratic process is working and that the people are speaking? Are we becoming more tuned in and aware of how of the consequences of the leaders we elected (or failed to elect)?

Obviously something is happening. Voters have lined up early to make their choices. Maybe we now see that we chose the leaders that have created the conditions we now find ourselves in.

Maybe we are beginning to see that what we do makes a difference. From big choices like who we elect as president, to the everyday choices on how we spend our time and energy, we have a choice of the outcomes we experience.

If this sounds like positive thinking, I invite you to look closer. I am not suggesting we can wake up tomorrow morning and choose not to be in economic turmoil. There are indisputable facts: the U.S. unemployment rate is 6.1 percent and rising, many businesses have failed, investment portfolios have been gutted, and important prices continue to rise.

But we can choose how we respond to this information to make choices. For example, do I choose to stay on the internet for several hours watching bad news roll in? Or, do I use that time to generate a list of how I can bring more value to my company, go on a bike ride with my family, or think about making a career change? Am I fretting, or contributing?

Here is one example. Most businesses become successful because they provide a valuable offering to their customers. When businesses experience difficulties, the first tendency is often to shift the focus on how to stop losing money. But companies which stop focusing on bringing value to their customers, lose customers, and therefore lose more money. Imagine an entire economy built on this scenario which we will call “Money Focus.”

Now consider another scenario called “Value Focus.” This past weekend my family attended Fall Family Fun Day at the U.S. Whitewater Center. The facility partnered with Parent University, a Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools initiative to offer parents courses to support their childrens’ education and wellness. Over 9,000 people came to enjoy rock climbing, entertainment, food, workshops, giveaways and children’s activities – for free.

Here is the shift in perspective. The U.S. Whitewater Center was expensive to build and is expensive to operate. It has also made headlines for being tight on funds. As an entertainment venue, it is certainly not exempt from the hardships of the economy. Yet its leadership chose to offer its facility, staff and services to provide value to 9,000 community members, partner with a community educational initiative, and do so for free.

Is this positive thinking or an act of creation? Consider what it would have cost to buy the PR/ advertising/media exposure that this event continues to generate (incidentally, including this column.) What benefit will the Whitewater Center see this summer when those 9,000 people need something to do for healthy entertainment? Furthermore, would this event have even been possible if the overriding focus was on making money rather than providing value?

What this example demonstrates is that what we do today makes a difference. We can choose to bring value to our customers, our companies, our families and our communities, or we can choose to act in ways with fear and resignation. Are we investing in our future or resigning to it?

Today we are exactly one week from the general election. For 20 months we have received information that we will choose to act on in some fashion (‘not acting’ also counts). As we experience the consequences of our past decisions, we have the opportunity to create what we will experience tomorrow.

Every day we get a new chance to determine if and how we will bring the greatest value to our businesses, families, and community. In one week we will also get the chance to vote for the future of our country. What will you create?