

The Finish Strong™ monthly e-newsletter helps business leaders examine issues important to taking operational performance to world-class levels. Do your Operations deliver your company's espoused brand promise to every client on every order?

Finish Strong™ is about developing an appropriate Operations strategy, and effective execution, dotting operational i's and crossing operational t's as you go.

Your company cannot afford to be sloppy if you want it to be great.

MESMERIZED BY HOLIDAY HUSTLE AND BUSTLE

The pundits pay great attention to the quantity of shoppers out on Black Friday. We see front page photos of shoppers standing in line at 4:00 a.m. ready to rush in when the doors open. But it's not how many are in line that matters, it's how much they spend. Hustle and bustle may make a good picture, but it's not the same as cash.

Motion is different from results. Having more people stand around the machine that isn't working doesn't get it fixed. Yelling "don't just stand there" "Do something!" encourages motion, but not results. Motion for motion's sake makes everyone look busy, but does nothing to make yours a better company.

We've built this monster by encouraging the "act busy; the boss is coming" mentality. It's time we kill it. A constant state of urgency is exhausting and can hide the truth. Are we running around because it will make us more profitable, or because we don't know what else to do?

Hustle and bustle makes great photos. Consistent priorities, an understanding of the relationship between time and money, and a system that flows smoothly may not look exciting, but it can be very profitable.

GROW AND DELIVER -- ACT NOW!

You've improved your operations -- you KNOW you have -- but costs don't seem to be falling as much as expected. You don't want to lay off people, but how else can you reduce costs?

You want to grow your business, but are struggling with how best to do that. New applications, new products and services, new markets, and new positioning can all be viable options, but how do you decide?

A great growth strategy, supported by great market tactics, can fall apart if operations can't deliver on the promises you make. Improved operational capability can be ephemeral if you don't sell it.

That critical integration of top line growth and enhanced operational capability to ensure the bottom line grows with it is why Andy Birol and I have developed a fully customized onsite "Grow and Deliver Workshop" for your business, ownership group, private equity group or association.

Sign up between now and December 31, 2007 and you will receive our "invest now to make 2008 great" discount. See www.GrowAndDeliver.com for more information. And as they say, act now!

UPROTECTING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

We hear that one of the most challenging aspects of manufacturing in China is protecting intellectual property. We think US “business ethics” and patent laws are superior. Having said that, you may want to keep an eye on pending legislation in our own country.

The Patent Reform Act of 2007 is working its way through Congress. Admittedly, whatever it says now may bear little resemblance to what it says if and when it ever gets passed, but for those of you with a vested interest in current patent law, it’s worth checking out.

The draft includes a move from “first to invent” to “first to file,” from judicial review of patent challenges to review by the patent office, and makes it more difficult to prove willful infringement.

If invention and innovation are key to the future of our economy, it’s important that those activities be both supported and protected.