

The New Year – January 2010

A year ago, I felt profoundly that “The noise thundering in our ears is preventing us from remembering that we have a *choice* of what we listen to.” Especially now, making choices is how we chart our path through uncertainty... or without choosing, do not.

This December, there was so much noise, that I chose to make this a “New Year’s” note. There is less noise now, though not a lot less uncertainty. It is essential that we choose carefully what we listen to. “Garbage in; garbage out,” is the programmer mantra, and just as there is junk food and garbage noise, there is garbage news. So choose your news wisely. Never in my 30+ years of management consulting, has this choice been so important.

In 2009, just as in 2003 and 2004, we heard the cacophonous sounds of concern and uncertainty; globally, we “hunkered down.” Now we have been through cash conservation, terminated credit, expense reduction, and the deferring or down-grading of almost all decisions that involved capital, or risk, or anything new. So much for 2009. Those choices were the choices *then*. This is the New Year. Why should we listen to which channels now?

I believe the 2010 New Year “Why?” must include a response to the change in the business framework as a direct result of profound 2009 actions: governmentizing business, accelerating alliances of all types, and marching toward a digitally linked world marketplace, to name just a few. I continue to believe that the American innovation gene exists and will continue to create value, but now more than ever, the future will not sound like the past. We must compose the new score, arranging our own new course, whether through fog or crystal clarity suddenly revealed.

My firm is now engaged in a strategic alliance with **Level 5 Advantage**, a Bay Area consulting firm. In 2009, we delivered plans to several clients resulting from a systemic review of desired outcomes, plans that were implementable and were implemented, not “Well, maybe this will work” scenarios. In 2010, we are working with IBM to create proprietary solutions for outsourcing total management of a company’s technical infrastructure – everything: physical locations, hardware, networks, security, software, and, where appropriate and desired, “cloud computing,” (when the enterprise owns no computing infrastructure but it is supplied by a “pay as you go” provider). Cloud computing is definitely a part of the new “score.”

Why did I ally with Level 5? Here’s what they said: “We need a deep grasp of a complete range of applications, strong financial acumen, “Big Four” boardroom presence, demonstrable success in the sales and marketing of products and services, and a sophisticated understanding of business, globally,” so that’s what we are delivering together – not a bad culmination in what was (and is) the challenging reality of this time.

I also believe in listening to excellent vintage sounds. In August, I recorded “A Masterpiece in Time,” my third solo organ compact disk, on the spectacular French Mutin Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Basilica del Santissimo Sacramento in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This organ (4,950 pipes!) was completed in 1912; its sound is unchanged today. Here is a sonic channel to the zenith of French organ building as it was just prior to the outbreak of World War I, from an organ builder known for his synthesis of both the science and art of organ building – the best of the best. The acoustics of the Basilica are also the best of the best with a room acoustic of approximately three seconds; the instrument is both excitingly loud and *brilliante*, and stunningly soft and *celeste*. You can listen to it by clicking [here](#). The CD is commercially available from www.cdbaby.com for on-line download, both in its entirety and by track, or in a jewel case with liner notes and photographs.

It’s up to us what we listen *to*. When you *choose* to listen, new channels open and the new *score* can be heard.

The New Year is here. The downbeat is now. Together we can compose the future.

With every good wish,

Jim Warren