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(By Bob McCurdy) The English theologian and historian Thomas Fuller appears to be the first person to have said, "It is darkest just before dawn," and right now the sun ain't shining. Unlike previous periods of economic turmoil, this one also includes life and death consequences.

As difficult as it might seem this morning, this country will overcome this challenge as we've overcome all previous challenges and thrive once again. It is just that no one is clairvoyant and no one knows exactly when.

Rudyard Kipling wrote a terrific poem titled, "If." The poem is addressed to the reader in an attempt to open our eyes into believing in ourselves. There is a

line in it that is particularly applicable today: "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs." It is important that we all keep perspective. Life will go on, the economy will once again boom, sports teams will again play, we will once again flourish, and there will be winners and losers emerging from this uncertain time based upon how they continued or discontinued advertising.

We must be extremely sensitive and not underestimate the impact of this situation on our clients' businesses, their lives, their families, their jobs, their future, and focus on solving *their* problems, not *ours*. If we do this, we will solve ours. Exhibiting a deep understanding of client issues at both the professional and personal level is the key to not only a deeper relationship during this unsettled time, but partnering with them more deeply as dawn arrives, which it certainly will.

Some clients could soon be confronting existential challenges and be faced with the dilemma of either "sinking the boat," harming their company by making a bad decision, or "missing the boat" by letting a great opportunity pass. It is our job to provide the most professional guidance we possibly can and make sure they don't miss that boat.

As precarious a time as it is, we owe it to our clients to discuss the opportunity they have to emerge from this challenging situation stronger than before. Darwin wasn't wrong when he said, "It is not the strong, nor the intelligent who survive, but those who are quickest to adapt." It is an indisputable fact supported by decades of research and numerous case histories that:

- Companies that do well in tumultuous times view it as an opportunity. They go against the natural tendency to pull back ad spend, increasing their share of voice rather than diminishing it. The next several months could even be an opportunity to push their weaker competitors out of the market.
- Investment in advertising grows share more in challenging times than in "normal" times — less competition due to competitive retrenchment. It is a fact that companies that cut spending during challenging times take longer to regain lost market shares, if ever, when circumstances improve.
- Winning companies stick to a plan and give strategies time to work.
- Those who emerged stronger explored new media channels and out-of-the-box media opportunities. It is a perfect time for an advertiser to take advantage of radio's high reach and cost efficiency, utilizing both long- and short-form commercials for maximum share of voice.
- Creativity will provide more of an edge than in "normal" times. It's an ideal time to redouble focus on client workshops.

The Chinese word for "crisis" is comprised of two characters signifying "danger" and "opportunity." Many successful brands and companies have launched during less-than-optimum circumstances. These companies viewed their situation through a different lens and saw it as an opportunity:

- HP was founded in the Great Depression or the 1930s.
- Microsoft was founded in the recession of 1975.
- Apple's iPod was launched in the recession of 2001.
- Kraft introduced Miracle Whip in 1933 and saw it become America's bestselling dressing in six months.
- Texas Instruments brought out the transistor radio in the 1954 recession.

The economist Frank Knight made the distinction between "risk" and "uncertainty." Risk describes a situation where you have an understanding of the range and likelihood of possible outcomes. Uncertainty describes a situation where it is not at all clear what might happen, let alone how likely the possible outcomes are. Uncertainty is dominating everything today, which is why consumers will seek safe havens, which means there is an opportunity for those advertisers who remain "visible" with the right tone and messaging that contributes to stability in this uncertain time.

No one knows when dawn will occur but occur it will, and those marketers and salespeople who are able to keep their heads while others around them are losing theirs, will emerge better positioned for continued success than those who did otherwise. The bottom line is that those who are willing to take some risk will always find there are more opportunities than obstacles in doing so.

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