

LESSONS FROM THE UNEXPECTED

The purpose of this discussion is to learn from each other's experiences.

I welcome all comments.

Who would have thought after our yearly meeting in 2020 the United States would experience an economic shut down, a pandemic, social unrest, and political upheaval? Truly unexpected. There is no need to go into detail reviewing the events. We all will remember 2020 for the rest of our lives. We were all forced to make decisions. Of decisions made, which were accurate and usable? Do you have decisions you would reverse? What can we do to be better prepared? Hopefully, 2021 provides a positive experience. If the unfortunate persists, hopefully we will be better prepared.

Therefore, let us consider **Lessons from The Unexpected**.

Wisdom is defined as “the ability to think and act using knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense and insight. Wisdom is associated with attributes such as unbiased judgment, compassion, experiential self-knowledge, self-transcendence and non-attachment, and virtues such as ethics and benevolence.” (Wikipedia)

Experience is defined as “the process through which conscious organisms perceive the world around them. Experience can be accompanied by active awareness on the part of the person having the experience, although they need not be.” (Wikipedia)

Knowledge is defined as “a familiarity, awareness, or understanding of someone or something, such as facts (propositional knowledge), skills (procedural knowledge), or objects (acquaintance knowledge.) By most accounts, knowledge can be acquired in many different ways and from many sources, including but not limited to perception, reasons, memory, testimony, scientific inquiry, education, and practice.” (Wikipedia)

Foresight is defined as “the ability to predict or plan for the future, often termed ‘visions’ in management/business context.” (Wikipedia)

Lessons is defined as “an insight gained by a learner into previously unfamiliar subject-matter. Such a lesson can be either planned or accidental, enjoyable or painful.” (Wikipedia)

The words mentioned above describe developments *post experience*. As we live our lives we are to benefit from our experiences. If we do not learn, we have wasted valuable time as we travel the journey of life. When an experience repeats itself, we need knowledge and wisdom learned. Going through life without learning does not allow us to pass on wisdom, knowledge, and foresight to the following generations. Therefore:

Knowledge is the basis of all success.

The following outlined observations are not new or profound revelations. These are ideas and philosophies which have existed since the beginning of time. Unfortunately, we have tendencies to forget.

- **Expect the Unexpected.** This is one of the simplest concepts of planning and forward thinking. We become so involved in our routines we excuse ourselves of not having

enough time to plan and ponder the future. Consider if we would have asked ourselves: 1) What if I could not work my normal routine for several weeks? 2) What if do not have the financial means to exist. 3) What if my normal routine was disrupted. **Lesson learned: Take time to plan and ask, "What if".**

- **Spend less than your financial income.** This concept cannot be any more fundamental to economic success. Think back to stories and lessons from 1929 – 1939. This era is labeled the Great Depression. Remaining survivors share stories of being destitute and 'poorer than wildlife'. Starting in the 1970s the lessons from the Great Depression steadily started to erode. As credit became easier to obtain our country started to exist on credit instead of cash. Today, most American households have debts which cannot be repaid. The economic shutdown of 2020 demonstrated the importance of saving and not spending more than your income. Question for the future, "will this lesson be quickly forgotten?". **Lesson learned: Spend less and save more.**
- **Family Time.** During the economic shutdown of 2020, restaurants and dining out experiences were significantly reduced to the level of nonexistence. Many food establishments improved their carry-out options as an optional survival technique. Unfortunately, the food service industry has probably suffered more than any other industry. My nephew is a franchisee owner of a national sandwich chain. I have first-hand stories of what he has encountered. We are sympathetic to any food service business that closed or has suffered greatly. We would not wish any ill results on these businesses. One social result was a return to families sharing meals together. Many families had not shared a sit-down meal for years. Families discovered what had been forgotten. Family time is very important. The development of children is greatly improved when a family interacts. Think back possibly two or three generations, when families frequently had meals together. Consider experiences of going over to the grandparents' house on the weekends and holidays. Consider past experiences when relatives and friends would casually gather at one of the families' residences. This could be one of the most important experiences from the unexpected. **Lesson learned: We need more family and friend time.**
- **Innovation.** March of 2020 the United States Government enacted an economic shutdown to control the pandemic. Businesses were forced to become creative. As Americans, we had to come together and utilize existing technology and be innovative. We did not step back and look at this difficult time as being defeated. This is another illustration of American greatness. A skill and a habit of which many other countries are envious. This type of mental toughness has contributed to the United States growing as the greatest country in the world. We were reminded when we are confronted with difficulties, we will determine a method and a technique to succeed. We incorporated available technology to work outside of an office environment. The auction industry switched from on-site in-person auctions to virtual auctions. Consider the development of a vaccine for Covid-19. Regardless of one's political or economic

opinion, the limited time for development was simply amazing. **Lesson learned: We must remain innovative.**

- **Religion.** Since this topic was prevalent and widely discussed I feel it is worthy to have a comment. **The intentions of this paragraph are to remain neutral.** For those who confess a faith in a religion, a God, a supreme deity, restrictions were implemented preventing gatherings with fellow believers. If you do not have a religion or faith affiliation this was a non-event and had no effect on your life. **The lesson learned: If your heart is so motivated, you will find a way to experience your religion or faith.**
- **Wearing a Mask.** For most Americans, wearing a mask was only a visual experience when we saw telecasts from China. Mandatory mask wearing was a concept which most of us would have thought came from a B rated movie or a science fiction novel. Most of us did not understand the concepts of a pandemic. Even though there is a significant division amongst citizens whether masks are an advantage, in most venues' masks remain a requirement. **The lesson learned: there are times we must do what we do not want to do for the greater good.**
- **Hoarding.** Hoarding has become a common reaction when common living supplies appear to be limited. The pandemic illustrated how supply chains can be quickly depleted. Consider the amount of time certain supplies took to replenish. This paragraph focuses on supplies for our daily and weekly habits. The supply chain for larger capital goods also experienced a reduced supply of goods. Consider what supplies are truly required for a short- and long-term period. **The lesson learned: We have become too dependent on instant gratification.**
- **Health Care.** The health care industry became the most presented and discussed topic on an hourly basis. Issues surrounding the health care industry were instantly illustrated. We all listened and experienced how vulnerable the health care industry is structured within areas of the United States. In the larger populated areas, hospitals and medical facilities were not equipped to handle the quantity of people needing care. In less populated areas, the health care industry faced other challenges. The discussion of the health care industry, past, present, and future, goes beyond the scope of our meeting. We all have our experiences. We all have our opinions. **The broad and mutual lesson learned is the health care industry needs attention.**
- **Power and Strength.** The United States has been revered as the world's foremost economic and military power. We have the technology to place a small object on planet

Mars and receive photographs from its surroundings. We have the technology to communicate wirelessly in an instant on nearly every part of the globe. We have military strength which is simply amazing, yet our economy and social structure was greatly disturbed and divided by a microscopic virus. **Lesson learned: Identify and strength our weaknesses.**

- **Education.** Education shapes a society. The quality of a country's educational programs can define the future progression or regression of its citizens. Educational topics have been presented as often as health care. The lessons for 2020 are uncertain. Educational experts are concerned about the future effects from the 2020 educational experience. Within my family I have educators in the public school system. I have had numerous conversations as to the advantages and disadvantages of virtual classrooms. One could conclude technology for educating is more important than realized. One might conclude, we could have been better prepared for virtual classrooms. I have had educators express their concerns for students who need more personal educating. **Lesson learned: The educational structure within the United States needs improvements.**

Questions for Consideration. The following are questions to ask yourself. Hopefully, your answers create a learning opportunity.

1. Is there any action which you could implement to safeguard yourself and your family from experiencing the events of 2020?
2. What preparations have you made in case there is another economic shutdown?
3. Do you believe we could have a repeat of 2020?
4. The United States has experienced many events which have shaped its future. What is the ranking of 2020 compared to other historical events?
5. Have you changed or modified any of your lifestyle based on your experiences of 2020?
6. Do you believe most Americans will forget **Lessons from the Unexpected?**
7. What is the most important lesson you learned from 2020?