

# THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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**"Great ideas need landing gear as well as wings."**

» C. D. Jackson



## Discovery Channels

An old runners' quote about toughing things out goes, "There will come a day when I can no longer run. Today is not that day."

I've frequently had that mantra in my mind as my knees send reminders it might be time for a break. (I may be a slow learner.)

When I woke up recently with a ballooning knee, I realized it might be time to dust years of dust off my bike in the garage.

Since then, I've found myself on streets and in neighborhoods I haven't seen in the years since my last injury. (There may be a lesson in there.)



## The Optimist in the Room

It seems like 90% of the conversations I have with bankers during the past months focus on employee morale.

That isn't a big surprise.

Across the country, many folks (including middle and even senior managers) who have been unable to return to regular work routines are anxious about their roles.

When physical activities that constituted large portions of your job are suspended for an extended period, unease is understandable.

On an aerial map, these areas look like part of one big neighborhood. They're right next door. In practice, they may as well be different cities.

I've again noticed things within just a few streets of our home and wondered, "How long has this been here?"

A week of daily rides has reminded me of the type of ruts we fall into.

While restrictions on our movement and access may have deepened some of our ruts in the past year, they aren't a phenomenon of the pandemic.

Even in normal times, most of us tend to develop pretty standard routines.

Sure, routines are important. They save us time and allow us to become efficient and proficient with tasks.

If we're not careful, however, we become unintentionally closed off to opportunities.

Our routines become so engrained that we stop analyzing if they remain as productive as before.

We also miss opportunities that are right in front of us if we'd look up...or walk over...or drop in...or telephone...or email...or...You get the point.

In the past, I've compared driving on our normal commutes to driving on totally unfamiliar routes.

We often drive miles along our normal commutes without noticing a thing. We're on mental cruise control.

On unfamiliar routes, our antennae go up. We take things in. We're more alert.

There is no doubt that our business surroundings have changed a little (or tremendously) over the past year.

Unfortunately, many are still going through the motions of their once effective routines,

In some cases, folks who have remained on the customer-facing frontlines feel that others have been on an extended vacation while they keep the doors open – literally and figuratively.

That's not reality. But perceptions can be their reality.

Recent conversations with bankers about these issues reminded me of one of my old soapbox topics: the setting, sharing and spreading of moods.

In chats where we shared personal stories and even joked a bit about the absurdities around us, the conversations remained upbeat.

Serious issues were discussed, but with a more optimistic tone.

On one call, however, the same topics seemed to drain us.

Once people begin the grievance ball rolling, it tends to build momentum.

I'm not suggesting that folks' lists of grievances and challenges aren't real. They are.

But I've been reminded repeatedly in recent months that the energy and demeanor we bring to our conversations and interactions with employees, peers, supervisors, and (yes) customers, are almost as important as the subjects we discuss.

In challenging and stressful periods, there are reasons that speaking with some people leave you feeling hopeful and energized by the experience and others...well...leave you less so.

You may not always have the answers to the challenges before your team or the ability to quickly change the situations you find yourselves in.

You do always have the ability, however, to purposely be the optimist in the room (or on the call).

awaiting “normalcy” to return. That normalcy may return soon.

Then again, it’s already taken longer than most predicted.

What new paths (physical or virtual) can you explore this week to make your own discoveries?

You just may find them closer than you imagined.

One of the upsides of being a committed optimist is that they tend to enjoy more upbeat and productive interactions.

They experience more of them because they help create them.

Optimists spur optimism.

Consciously strive to bring energy to others with positive comments, compliments, and humor this week.

You’ll likely increase their enthusiasm and productivity, as well as your own.

**"I quit being afraid after my first venture failed and the sky didn't fall."**

» **Allen H. Neuharth**

*Dave Martin, author of [The In-Store Advantage](#), has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.*

*For more info about having Dave or an FSI Consultant speak to your group, email Tina Coleman, [tcoleman@SupermarketBank.com](mailto:tcoleman@SupermarketBank.com) or call 800-992-4978.*

Financial Supermarkets, Inc. • [fsi@supermarketbank.com](mailto:fsi@supermarketbank.com)

383 Clarkesville Street • PO Box 1450 • Cornelia, GA 30531 • (800) 992-4978