



# Tom Asacker

## 2011: Breakout, Breakthrough, or Breakdown. Forget about the reality of the economy. Focus on your reality.

I'LL NEVER FORGET an enlightening conversation with college friends back in the economic heydays of the 90s. It has stuck with me for the past fifteen years and often helps inform my decision-making, especially during uncertain times like these.

As we relaxed and enjoyed a Labor Day cookout, and our good health and fortune, I spurted out that I was, once again, venturing into the great marketplace unknown. At the time we were all disengaged yet seemingly secure in executive positions with established organizations, unquestioningly embracing the status quo.

Upon hearing my news, one bewildered friend glanced at me, shook his head from side to side, and professed, "I could never do what you do."

"What's that?" I asked.

"You know," he answered, pausing to gulp his beer. "Risking it all."

"Risking it all?" I replied. "It's you who are 'risking it all.' And for what it's worth," I continued. "I could never do what you guys are doing."

What they were doing, what many are still doing, was playing it safe instead of playing it with passion. And by "playing it with passion," I don't mean "following" ones passion.

I've never "followed my passion," because, frankly, I have no idea what my singular passion is. Perhaps it's why I'm so amused by comedian Mitch Hedberg's absurd declaration: "I'm sick of following my dreams, man. I'm just going to ask where they're going and hook up with 'em later."

But why follow them? Why hook up with them? Why not be the leader of your life and let your dreams hook up with you? Don't be stuck. Don't be confused. It's really simple: Your life's purpose is the quality of your life's

experiences. Living life with passion *is* following your passion.

Unfortunately, most people believe that passion will mysteriously appear, or that the purpose of life is the pursuit of comfort. They view life as a waiting game with a series of problems to avoid, rather than an exciting game with the clock ticking and opportunities to pursue.

Comfort is an illusion; a fantasy that imagines freedom from pain and suffering if only we stay still and avoid change. What most fail to realize, typically until it's very late in the game, is that change happens to us whether we like it or not.

G. K. Chesterton wrote, "If you leave a thing alone you leave it to a torrent of change. If you leave a white post alone it will soon be a black post. If you particularly want it to be white you must be always painting it again; that is, you must be always having a revolution."

Without intervention, without progressive change, without revolution, everything in our work and our lives gets worse. Our bodies degrade, our relationships fizzle, our jobs disappear, and our ideas become obsolete (it has happened to countless organizations and to most of my friends). Face it: We are either breaking out of our spirit-sucking routines and breaking through to new insights and experiences, or we are breaking down.

When the opportunity to step out of your comfort zone screams at you in 2011, and it will definitely come, take it. Say no to the sure thing and say yes to a creative challenge. Say no to short-term, comfort producing activities, and say yes to fear and passion.

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard wrote, "To dare is to lose one's footing momentarily. Not to dare is to lose oneself." Lose your footing in 2011, experience life fully, and perhaps you'll find yourself again.