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Plan to Plan

PART 1: OUR WAY BACK

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In my younger years, I was an avid runner. I'd race 10 to 15 times per year. In most years I would run a couple of half marathons and one marathon. I wasn't competitive in the longer races, but they were very rewarding and provided great motivation to remain fit. One year I developed a stress fracture in my lower, left leg. Not entirely aware of the problem, I finished the Las Vegas Marathon that year. Doing so pushed that stress fracture into a full-blown fracture. I broke my leg running a marathon. That was not smart.

I was out of running for 18 months. Such fractures take much longer to heal, and I was not able to train for more than a year. By the time I returned to running, I was terribly out of shape. The mental effort of dragging myself back up the steep fitness curve was a great deal more than the physical effort. One of the biggest mental challenges I've faced. I knew what to do and how to do it. The doing of it took discipline and planning.

Now I find myself in the same situation...in business. For us, the challenges brought by COVID began near the end of 2019. The supply chains from China began to slow before the virus

reached the U.S. And, of course, by February, everyone began to experience the challenge. By spring, we became reactive, never certain what would happen each month, watching our business slow, and feeling somewhat powerless to deal with it. Planning was difficult. If I'm honest, somewhat abandoned.

Our planning muscles atrophied. By the end of the year, we were out of shape, reactive and nervous.

We started to see signs of business recovery in the fall and these signs became realized by December. As eager as we've been to recover prior demand levels, those planning muscles really need to strengthen. The doing of it takes discipline and planning. Yes, we actually need to Plan to Plan.

Over my next few posts I'll offer some observations about what is working for us and what we are seeing our clients do. Several of our customers have shown to be very good at this Plan to Plan thing and I am furiously taking notes. I've always valued the lessons our clients teach us. This year, even more.

To complete the metaphorical story: I recovered my running fitness. That took about six months, and I was racing again soon after. It was after breaking-my-leg-running-a-marathon that I set personal records routinely. I was faster, more fit, and better at racing. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I continued to get faster every year, for many years, following that crazy, marathon incident. I was a much, much better runner. More disciplined with attention to the messages my body was sending.

That's what I am looking forward to following the infamous 2020: becoming a much, much better business. More disciplined with attention to the messages our clients are sending.

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