

# Outlook

## Come As You Are

The fatal flaw in many organization “positioning plans” is that they assume accurate predictions can be made in complex human systems. In reality, they can’t. In the run-up to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the consensus opinion of highly-paid “experts” was that if hostilities broke out, oil prices would jump from the \$20.00 per-barrel range to the \$40.00 – \$60.00 range. Well, hostilities did break out, and instead of rising, the price of oil dropped to \$18.00 per barrel. This disparity between expert opinion and subsequent reality is not an unusual event. “Expert” predictions, in my life experience, have been no more accurate than the random flip of a coin.

Accepting that we can never really know what’s going to happen in a complex system is in fact the best basis for dealing with the future. This is because it forces us to position ourselves to prosper under future conditions —whatever they may be.

A good illustration of this wisdom (which I am happy to admit I cribbed from one of Pete Kaufman’s essays) is the concept used in urban planning called the “100-Year Flood Plain”. The 100-Year Flood Plain refers to well-defined historical patterns in rain-water runoff and flooding. Basically it’s the most severe cycle of flooding expected in a 100-year period of time. Urban planners use the 100-Year Flood Plain to determine the size of flood-control channels, permissible locations for dwellings, business districts, roads, and so on.

Planners relying on The 100-Year Flood Plain model realize that while the precise timing of major storms cannot be predicted, it is a virtual certainty that within a given time frame such cycles will undoubtedly occur. Accordingly, by planning for a 100 year “high-water mark”, they position the community to prosper and survive, even during the worst storms reasonably expected to occur.

Most disasters—emotional, physical, or financial—come with no advance warning. We don’t get to “go home and get changed” before we deal with them. But cyclically repeating factors—war/peace, boom/bust, tight money/loose money, inflation/deflation, are known “high-water marks”, that we can in fact anticipate and prepare for.

Like all of you, Glenair came “dressed as we are” to COVID-19. But we are happy to report that thanks to our organizational positioning (low levels of debt, a trusting, loyal workforce, solid customer relationships, and ample factory and human resources) we have been able to weather this storm and come back stronger than ever before. For those of you who depend on us as a mission-critical interconnect supplier, you are without a doubt already experiencing our return to full-capacity manufacturing and much improved on-time delivery. My sincere thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make it all happen, and to our many loyal customers who stood by us during “the flood.”

*Chris Toomey*

# QwikConnect

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