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What's happening here? No, the sky is not falling. Yes, the E-commerce and the Internet is here to stay -so is Integrated Supply, Channel Compression, marketing groups, buying groups, etc.....

All or most of it is here to stay - but all or most of it may not be as big as "first advertised" including the Internet and B2B E-commerce.

Even the Bruce Merrifields are toning down the impact and they're now saying we're not all "toast" anymore (see recent Merrifield articles plus his session at NIGDA (National Industrial Glove Distributors Association) in Las Vegas in March of this year) - so I guess the sky's not falling after all! (Unless, of course, you invested it all in DOT.COMS recently).

I guess we're learning that a lot of these opportunities should be considered and investigated and we should ask ourselves "... so how can we take advantage of that in our business?" and act on that - rather than the folks that come back from each business or personal seminar and change their whole business model or personal life based on what they just heard or read.

We get a lot of these "opportunities" thrown at us all the time. They're not necessarily just fads or buzzwords and I'm not suggesting that we just take a wait and see attitude. I'm saying check 'em out - think about them - ask about them - study and research them - but don't necessarily "bet the ranch" on them.

Of course you can't just bet on the Blue Chip ideas or companies anymore (i.e. Procter & Gamble). You've got to spread your risk, trust your instincts, value respected and trusted advisors and colleagues, and experiment.

Most recently I attended the ASMMA/IDA (The American Supply & Machinery Manufacturers' Association, Inc./Industrial Distribution Association) Spring Convention in Dallas (May 6 - 8).

Two of the speakers in fact stressed that personal professional relationships still and will always exist and are very important.

Both stated that technology has changed, for the better, the selling and the buying process. It makes buyers - better buyers and sellers - better sellers.

One of the buzz software so-called solutions is CRM (Customer Relationship Management) then the upgrade or spin-off called PRM (Partner Relationship Management) software appeared. PRM does all what CRM does but includes electronic lead management, promos and other features. The problem in both of these seems to be that more than 60% of the users report no measurable results or only minor improvements.

My thoughts are software is software - hardware drives software - people drive hardware and part of the problem is people driven (or not driven - depending).

Machines or software don't have customer relationships - people have relationships - relationships that can be trusted and counted on time after time.

While I think CRM, PRM and all of this is good - they have to be people driven and people involved. Also, most of these are symbiotic relationships (between only two channel partners). My thought is why not strive for Interdependent relationships to include all channel partners.

Naw - the sky's not falling - we're not all going to be toast. There's much that's changed - much, much more change to come ahead but what won't ever change is the need for relationships.

Think about it.

George J. Hayward