



# Three resolutions we MUST keep this year

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It's January; the time when most of us resolve to do things better in the coming year. The gyms are packed. (They'll be half empty by the middle of February.) The airwaves are filled with dieting tips, as well as advice on how to slim down and get fit by summer. But I don't see much information for us as small businessmen and machining professionals.

So, in light of continuous improvement for our industry, here are three resolutions to assure a better year for our shops in 2010:

Resolution 1: I will stop blaming the economy. For the past year, the macroeconomic situation has been downright terrible. Credit meltdown of mythic proportions. Gloom and doom on a scale comparable only to the grainy black-and-white footage of the Great Depression. With the entire



economy in shambles...well, no wonder things are bad.

STOP! That is the last whine about the economy for the year from me. Why not make it the last one for you, too? In my family's history, there's a story about Daniel Freese, an ancestor who ran a mill in Pennsylvania in the 1700s. (Yes, manufacturing and millwork run deep in my family.)

According to our family papers, "twice each year, Daniel would make his way down the Youghiogheny River by canoe or rowboat to Fort Pitt for supplies." The family history doesn't say that Daniel complained about the Indians, or that he failed to go because he was afraid of being

waylaid by robbers, or that the weather was bad. Twice each year, Daniel put half a year's production and earnings on the line as he set out for critical supplies for his business and family.

We have good blood in our veins—all of us. We have just come through an extremely difficult period, but we are still in business. According to philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, "What doesn't kill us makes us stronger." We may not feel stronger, but we have emerged smarter, and we're still in business. So, no more blaming the economy. Like Daniel Freese, our future is in our own capable hands. Let's get to work.

(Continued on next page)

## In This Issue

Three resolutions we MUST keep this year

Longtime PMPA member Bob Brinkman retires from Brinkman International Group

Effective management strategies await: Come to PMPA's 2010 Management Update Conference

PMPA Calendar



## Three Resolutions continued

Resolution 2: This is the year that I will get serious about safety. When Daniel Freese set out for Fort Pitt, or on his journey home, he certainly went through a mental checklist of steps to assure that he arrived safely with his money and merchandise intact. Reseal the canoe with pine pitch. Dress the flints on the musket. Pack proper clothing for the trip. Securely sew and wrap the coin purse and carry it close to the body. Keep eyes ahead and attention focused. Keep the ears alert to different sounds in the woods along the river.

As shop owners, we face similar risks on our journey this year under a new administration. The new Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, describes herself as “the new sheriff in town.” In my life experience, the sheriff’s job is enforcement. Not teaching, nurturing or supporting. Enforcement.

In the 11 months since Ms. Solis was confirmed as Secretary of Labor, we’ve already seen a new National Emphasis Program (NEP) for recordkeeping focused on establishments with low injury rates in industries with high injury rates. We’ve seen a new OSHA Field Manual. (Check it out at: [osha.gov/OshDoc/Directive\\_pdf/CPL\\_02-00-148.pdf](http://osha.gov/OshDoc/Directive_pdf/CPL_02-00-148.pdf).) And, we’ve seen a \$50-million increase in agency funding for about 175 new staff for inspections, standards development and protection of whistleblowers. Enforcement!

We’ve seen increased supervision of state plan states. We’ve also seen the strengthening and reclassification of penalties for things like Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) violations as separate indi-

vidual occurrences, rather than as a single incident of failure to comply.

This year, I would make a genuine commitment to making safety first. I would do it out of respect for my employees and for my pride in my company. I would do it to prevent the folks in Washington from getting a single penny in fines or penalties from what my company has earned.

Resolution 3: I am going to be an active agent for positive change. In my family. In my company. In my industry. In my community. And, in my country. “Become the change that you wish to see in the world,” is a quote I have used in almost every job interview I have ever had. It describes what I believe to be my style—I do what it is that I want to see done.

As I read the family history to my family each holiday season, I’m certain that Daniel Freese and my forebears shared this same outlook. They didn’t say, “Boy, it’s too bad I have to go to Fort Pitt to get supplies. It’s so far, and ...” Daniel did whatever it took to make it better, safer and more efficient to get to Fort Pitt. All despite the hardships, weather, lack of a sheriff and no ability to call for help should he get hijacked.

Last summer, while checking out the site for our National Technical Conference to be held in Pittsburgh, I found a marker commemorating the location of Fort Pitt—the same spot where my

ancestor went for supplies twice a year. It was located just across the street from the hotel where PMPA will be meeting.

Today, we live in a world where we do not face an existential risk of losing half a year’s earnings because of weather or rough currents on the river. We live in a world where people can go to “Fort Pitt” in climate-controlled comfort because our companies produce the critical-engineered components that make all of our automotive and aerospace technologies operate safely and cost effectively.

We live in a better world, I think, compared to the one with the challenges faced by my ancestor. That’s because all of our ancestors created positive change to make a better life in their world. A better life for themselves, their families, their employees and their communities.

We have been given this year to do with whatever we will. I resolve to stay focused on doing the positive things I can do to make it better for the companies in our industry. I hope that you will join me in being an agent for positive change wherever you are, and in whatever it is you are trying to accomplish.

Those are my three resolutions. Stop blaming the economy. Get serious about safety. Be an agent for positive change. You may take them as your own. I hope that you do.

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