

Friends of Focus Consulting Group (FCG):

At the FCG Holiday Party, my colleagues told me that I am traveling too much. Having had a few drinks, I responded with my usual curiosity and openness, "Here's my cell phone. Call someone who cares." But they persisted and produced photographic evidence. Below is me on 1/1/2010, and then a recent shot, after 227,000 air miles.



OK, Point taken. I now have enough frequent flier miles to put both daughters through a private college, so I guess I can ease off.

The team is at 9 consultants and growing. The annual Holiday party included an original tune called "The Hammer or the Rose" by John Cooper, shown in this photo belting it out:



My favorite line from the song is: "If I had a hammer, I'd use it on folk singers!" Keith Robinson, who played drums and sang lead vocals for a heavy metal band in the 80's, refused to give us a rendition of "Smoke on the Water." My personal repertoire of songs that I can play by heart has shrunk from over 200 to 2, so I played, "Taking Care of Business" and "Margaritaville ". (No, I did NOT play Kum bay ya.)



On the subject of music, it remains a fact: every senior investment team has at least one ex-rock & roller. No exceptions! Who is it on your team? (And can they sing Smoke on the Water?) At your next offsite, try this icebreaker: each person declares their favorite concert of all time. Winner to date: U2.

The most popular idea that we presented to clients in 2010 was that of the "Red X." The Red X lives outside of the cultural norms of an organization. Netflix calls them, "brilliant jerks." Our research shows that 75% of investment firms have one or more of these characters. Further research shows that they CAN sing Smoke on the Water and will do so readily after three drinks.

The entire team is held together by the tireless efforts of Liz Severyns, who balances home/work life by spending at least 5 minutes each day with her three young children. Once the kids are down at night, Liz fires up her laptop and communicates with clients in Capetown, Singapore, London, and Sydney. More than once, concerned clients have written back: "Go to bed!" Suffice it to say, if anything happens to Liz, the "jig is up."

With best wishes for success in the New Year,

The Focus Consulting Team

(John, Keith, Lou, Jack, Hank, Chuck, JK, Liz)

I must repeat this tip to Holiday Newsletter writers: Never, ever brag about you or your family. No one likes that. Period. Full stop. Worse yet, it's bad form to gloat when 10% of the country is out of work. Show some class and avoid the hyperbole. If you must dwell on family members, share something interesting, like: "one of them has developed a rare skin rash, covering the entire body, for which there is no known cure." We'll feel better knowing that we don't have that skin rash. See, that is the true spirit of Christmas.

On the way home from the Holiday Party, pictured on the other page, we were surprised to see that a cheerful holiday driver had neatly clipped off our mailbox. The Postal Carrier left a helpful note for us: "Your mailbox does not meet U.S. postal codes." (What was his first clue? Maybe that it was lying on the ground?) Not to worry, our girls Alexandra (9) and Nikki (8) were happy to earn spending money holding up our wounded mailbox. (Warned, of course, to watch out for other carefree drivers...)



Our new house is pictured in background. Jane has been so busy fixing up the house, working at Baxter, and raising the girls that she missed the news about the global financial crisis. Some very bad things happened: Lehman collapsed and Goldman did not. Mr. Bernanke sent a personal note to thank Jane for single-handedly keeping the economy afloat and then returned to his master plan for saving the U.S. economy: printing more money.

After explicitly promising the girls that I would not share any wedding photos, I un-crossed my fingers

and am including one below. The girls were invited to a middle-eastern wedding as flower girls. (Never mind that they had never met the bride or groom...long story, not worth telling.) Each spent the entire morning at the beauty shop having nails and hair done up special. (60 hair pins for each) And the result is shown below:



Janey proved once again that she is the love of my life by not making me go to the wedding.

We have a full house for Xmas, which is the way we like it. Both grandmas, the grandpa, aunts and great aunts will descend on 4122 for the holidays. With politics becoming increasingly polarized in the U.S., we'll be waving Swiss flags and wearing lederhosen to encourage good behavior. I predict some family members will embarrass themselves despite our best efforts. (I'm stocking up on duct tape in case the worst occurs.) If you come to visit, please don't mention Sarah Palin or Nancy Pelosi. No, really, please. I'm serious. It's not pretty.

With warmest holiday wishes, The Wares