

**Openings:** The philosopher Kierkegaard provides some advice for us as we stand on the cusp of the New Year.

*Life can only be understood by looking backward,  
but it must be lived by looking forward.*

**Spotlight:** When there appear to be so many refinements and improvements to make within your enterprise, it is no wonder that a focus on the future is one's primary stance. With your compass set towards what is still to be accomplished, it is easy to discount the miracles of yesterday and today that make tomorrow a possibility. This time of year lends itself well to reviewing the accomplishments of the past twelve months and celebrating the successes as well as the mistakes.

Before commencing this year-end review, be certain that your sense of humour is in good form. The turmoil of the past year requires a response and given the choice between tears and laughter, a good chuckle seems more therapeutic. As well, if you cannot laugh at those embarrassing mistakes, you may find yourself wanting to rewriting the facts rather than telling yourself the truth.

Make a list of the year's events but do not attempt to categorise the items on your list as good or bad. It is so difficult to determine whether an event is beneficial or detrimental to advancing your cause that the only prudent approach is to be grateful for every experience. Viewed from an appropriate perspective, everything—even the worst scenario you can imagine—has value. The challenge is being thankful when feeling more pain than pleasure.

A year filled with SARS, the war in Iraq, mad cow disease, and severe fires and flooding just has to take its toll. Still, here we are at the end of the year, wiser and wealthier than we started out. Our reward is the opportunity to participate. No matter how you measure 2003, the year is a success and 2004 offers the same opportunity. With a resolution to play your part fully, the coming year should unfold as planned with much for which to be thankful.

**Quote:** Brother David Stienl-Rast, a noted Benedictine Monk, tells why gratitude is an important business asset.

*A grateful attitude is a creative one, because, in the final analysis, opportunity is the gift within the gift of every moment—the opportunity to see and hear and smell and touch and taste with pleasure.*

**Musings:** Fifteen metres from my office window, there is a sprawling bush that every autumn, produces a multitude of bright red berries. On drab West Coast days, the berries provide a cheery contrast to the green foliage and grey skies. The birds ignore this bush and the deer only seem interested in the leaves. Then one day during the winter, the birds—mostly robins—descend upon the bush consuming every berry in a frenzied feast.

This ritual plays out year-after-year with the day when the event occurs varying by at least as much as a month. To date, I have found no clues that aid in predicting this annual avian assemblage. Perhaps after decades of observation I will gather enough data to have the same level of certainty in predicting the date that I have in picking winning lottery numbers.

An awareness of patterns can be profitable to your enterprise. Even when it is not, take the time to enjoy the pleasure of simply noticing that within the chaos, there is some certainty.

**Links:** Have you ever bookmarked a page on a website only to find that it does not exist when you later attempt to access the page? Using the *Wayback Machine*—[www.archive.org/web/web.php](http://www.archive.org/web/web.php)—you can access old versions of websites and even websites that are no longer active. This service, started in 1996, has archived over 30 billion pages providing a fairly complete picture of the development of the World Wide Web.

**Facts & Figures:** Research has discovered that music played in restaurants has a direct impact on the amount spent by diners. Playing classical music increase the amount that customers pay while playing bland music is likely to have the opposite effect. It is theorised that classical music increases spending owing to its "connotations of affluence, sophistication and wealth." When people feel more "cultured and sophisticated", they are more likely to spend money on items they think cultured and sophisticated people would order.

**Just For Fun:** A witch received a \$9,000 grant from the Norwegian *Industrial and Regional Development Fund* to make and sell potions door-to-door. Her specialty elixirs include night creams for vivid dreams, a day cream to combat indecisiveness and a foot cream to change a user's bad habits. A government official said her business plan was "pretty reasonable and well thought out".