

**9<sup>th</sup> January 2009**

**Healthy New Year?**

**The new alternative in the credit crunch age!**

Happy New Year!

Well at least that used to be the typical greeting in Christmas cards, emails and new year telephone conversations.

But I think I may have spotted a new trend! This year, quite a few of the corporate Christmas cards and greetings have come with the message 'Healthy New Year' rather than the traditional 'Happy New Year'!

Now I know things are tough in the business world right now, and if you'll forgive me over analysing, but I find this change a little troubling.

I don't argue with the profound value in wishing each other a Healthy New Year, in fact the sentiment has some real practical benefit. But it does smack of a sea change in fortunes or opinion.

Is wishing someone a Happy New Year a bit politically dangerous? Are we wrong to wish for happiness anymore? Are we worried that we might upset someone having a tough time if we wish them a Happy New Year?

Moreover what's caused the change? It's probably safe to assume recession, economic hard times and the credit crunch (one and the same really but it helps build the point) are the main cause. But if that's the case does it mean with hard times it's no longer possible to be happy?

My son is undertaking GCSE business studies at the moment and is increasingly able to challenge me on level terms in economic discussions. He made the point this week that (as the last recession was nearly 20 years ago) anyone under the age of 35 years would be unlikely to remember austere times and if you were under 30 you had absolutely no experience guaranteed. In fact the argument follows that many over 35 years would have their recollection of austerity hazed by the years.

His point was the current negative environment is a huge shock to the system for most of us and we are starting to react to this in a myriad of ways, many of which are centred on self preservation.

But whilst for us these new times are an incredible challenge, around the world today there are millions who would consider our lives to be abject luxury (even if we don't change the car or take three holidays this year). In fact, in our own history, most of our grandparents and their parents saw incredibly challenging times and seemed to live through it with spirit, determination and a good deal of humour (and that didn't require a television set to entertain them).

We have a greater challenge than we have experienced for some time, but our history suggests we can deal with it. So Happy & Healthy New Year to you all.

9.1.09