

24th July 2009

Houston we have landed!

Change change change!!!

How time flies...

It's 40 years since Neil Armstrong stood on the moon, the first human to achieve this incredible feat (well that's assuming you dismiss the conspiracy theories that suggest he actually jumped down onto freshly laid sand in a Dallas warehouse lock-up).....

I can associate myself with this event quite closely, as I was actually born on 21st July 1969, which allowing for the time difference with America (where it was the 20th), was the exact day the moon landings took place.

Notwithstanding the usual concerns, excitement and other emotional side effects of hitting another decade, I thought it would be a good opportunity to look back over how the world has changed in the last four decades.

The 1960s of course ushered in a new world order, led by America with its young progressive President John F Kennedy, who himself instigated the great Moon Landing project. Human rights, then perhaps more than now, were at the top of the agenda with campaigns for the fair treatment of minority groups, women and the disadvantaged being promoted by most forward thinking politicians. Of course the 1960s had the Beatles too, alongside Elvis Presley, Summers of Love and all other enlightening things.... some dubious things too. The world seemed to escape the clutches of post war blues and begin to find a true direction.

Of course nature and the world at large can act to spoil the party and the 1970s saw much upheaval across the world, particularly from an economic standpoint. Perhaps too many Summer of Love parties had dulled the sense of the 1960s leaders and the economic policies left a legacy of pain for those responsible for economic management in the 1970s. Then we had US recession, oil shortages and stagflation (high inflation combined with recession). And it hurt, not least when in the UK in 1979 the Labour Government struggled to deal with the winter of discontent with strikes and protests, rubbish piling up on streets and even delays in burying the dead. Our world seemed lost once more.

The 1980s started with trouble and in many respects ended with trouble but along the way experienced some amazing changes in way of life and prosperity. The innovative computer organisations in the States were gaining critical mass (including Apple, Microsoft etc), ways of work were changing from the factory floor to the back office and people were starting to really experience the meritocracy that capitalism should be (notwithstanding the issue of Greed which dogged us in the process).

The 1990s brought a continuation of economic turmoil, but the mid 1990s turnaround was exceptional and commenced a period of economic growth and prosperity, the like of which had never been seen before. In fact so confident of the longevity of this economic strength financial

leaders started once again to declare the end of cyclicity and no more 'boom and bust'. I say again because over many centuries the same rubbish has been spouted by leaders and they are always proven wrong. In fact one Chancellor of the Exchequer made a famous quote 'there are two types of Chancellor, the failures and those that get out in time'.

But the 1990s also brought a huge amount of Business Process Re-engineering changing the way we work and leveraging the enormous advantages of the new Information Technology, especially in the latter half of the decade.

And so we arrive in the noughties, where enhanced communication seems to drive our personal and business lifestyles and agendas. Facebook enables us to communicate with long lost friends and Friends Reunited with those whom we went to school. Some of us cheer, others wince, but undeniably Friends Reunited has been a significant cause of affairs as old loves rekindle distant relationships. You see with the positive always tracks the negative!

We can now communicate effectively and instantly with people across the globe and do business 24/7/52 (or is it 24/265) where ever and whenever we choose. Again some of us cheer, others wince. But the development that has made this possible is truly amazing and when the human change management process has kicked in we will find the best way to manage the shop being genuinely 'Open all Hours'...

I don't remember too much of the 1970s, but I have lived through some amazing times and the rate and pace of change seems to show no signs of slowing. Being alive seems to be challenging, there is so much new to learn all the time. Being in business is off the scale, just simply keeping up is hard enough.

But despite all that, it's a privilege to live right now, we have so much going for us and are so hugely advanced. Let's hope we don't squander this incredible inheritance!

24.7.09