

GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

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Hope & Change—Phase 2

Gary Mangum



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I remember writing a note to myself eight years ago about “Hope & Change” as we were in the week that President-elect Obama would be entering the White House through this amazing system that we have that allows for the peaceful transfer of government.

At that time, my personal politics didn’t put me on the winning side, but I hadn’t been invigorated by his opponent, so I remember clearly thinking I sure hope we can all give this unknown, short-time senator a chance. I didn’t really understand how he got to this place, but I didn’t understand President Carter either.

“Give him a chance”—I remember saying that to many friends at the time. My biggest personal concern revolved around the economy broadly and firearms ownership personally. Now, eight years later, neither of the things I was most concerned about was destroyed. Many of us better understand the importance of term limits; at the same time, many would appreciate four more years of the change movement. At that time, at age 52, I didn’t really appreciate the full power of the Judicial Branch of government—today I think I do, and I for one, hope that moderation and reasonable balance remains the norm.

I’ve been an advocate for social media personally and in business for many years now. In Maryland, a very long-shot governor was elected largely because he was able to connect directly with people who were hungry for a message they could believe from a messenger they perceived they could trust. They could never get to that message or person if the major media crafted or otherwise “reported” the message.

Today, the business-owner-now governor in Maryland enjoys a 74% approval rating. He doesn’t engage in Republican or Democrat chatter, and Maryland’s biggest city, Baltimore, who gave his Republican predecessor 11% of their vote a decade earlier, today surveys over 60% favorable to him. People love this governor; he has been doing precisely what he said he would at every juncture, and today, when surveyed amongst his peers across the country, he’s considered the most popular governor in the country. Integrity is our most valuable offering; genuine concern for others and compassion is where our governor lives and operates.

As I write this, we celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday across the nation. It's also Inauguration week, where peaceful transfer will be repeated. While many are making their plans to travel to Washington to celebrate, there are also scores of business owners, employees, teachers and government employees rolling up their sleeves and engaging on the front lines of change in a city that still needs so much help. What these folks know is that people and sustained private engagement can mean so much more than "programs." Lives really can be impacted one at a time.

So what's this have to do with business and a column that I always enjoy reading when others have done the writing? I think I really want to say to my friends that have been moved to be so extremely critical of the incoming president: take a break. Many have gone before you and been personally very upset by the result of an election—PTA, school board, local or state government. We're going to survive.

This election I didn't advocate for anyone: it's no secret I couldn't have supported the Clinton candidacy, though I liked much of what President Clinton accomplished with the legislature he had to work with. I didn't advocate for now President Trump either because I didn't get the same pull that my wife and many good friends did. For me, it was a repeat of eight years ago.

My hope and expectation is that this president and the people he surrounds himself with will continue the process of changing those things that a broad swath of the country want changed. Today, if I post something favorable towards the future and use the Trump name in the same paragraph, a hate fest quickly develops. Pockets of friends will jump in and predictably start the trash talk, and others will join in to what can be a multi-day predictable dialogue.

As I think about our business and this backdrop of political realities, I keep coming back to the importance of treating people like we want to be treated. I really think if more of us could do that every single opportunity we get, we will be in a much better place across this great country that we have. I personally am blessed because that's precisely how the relationship developed with our biggest and only customer. We will soon be celebrating 25 years of growth together and the common interests that have developed, outside of profit, are around helping people when and where we can—mostly those less fortunate and families associated with protecting this great nation that we have. **GT**

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