

Doom & Gloom and the "Responsible" Media

By Anna Wells, Editor, *IMPO*



"It's what we do with this knowledge—this **doom and gloom**—that really counts."

It's not a new perception by any means. In fact, in lieu of any colorful euphemisms, it's rare that the vague moniker of "the media" does not evoke a ghastly beast capable of only exaggeration, exploitation, or sentimental schmaltz.

Over the past year, this phrase "doom and gloom" has become part of our critical vernacular when referencing the media's coverage of the economic recession, housing market, and the seemingly consistent layoffs, bailouts, and foreclosures.

So what kind of effect does this coverage have on the average American? And, perhaps more importantly, does this do more harm than good? As a card-carrying member of the media, I'll admit to feeling the sting of criticism when the dissemination of news makes us look like sensationalist pariahs. Still, I'd argue that there is no better time than now to gauge our own situations against the bad luck or business mistakes of others.

By way of example: CNN's top headline this morning read "U.S. Homes Lose \$2 Trillion In Value." You might wonder what good this kind of information can do. Honestly, upon first digestion, it kind of makes me want to start digging pennies out from between the couch cushions. But on a bigger scale, it really does make me think of my life and my job on a more macro scale. Careless spending and cautious investment become more salient issues—ones that we begin to think about daily. Is this really so bad? Is a level of financial comfort and job security good for a night's

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sleep, or does it also perhaps aid in the malaise of “business as usual?” How long can business as usual last without *negative* effect?

The tone of the information we receive should spur us to take action; to do better things. It's easy to keep our heads down and try to weather the economic situation, but a clear vision will improve focus. Instead of bemoaning the depressing subject matter and letting it seep into our subconscious, feeding a low-grade helplessness, we ought to focus on what these sad stories can inspire—whether it be a creative approach to cost-cutting, or a new appreciation and loyalty for your company and it's leadership. I've seen more and more business articles lately about how to become “indispensable” to your company. Granted, sometimes indispensability is irrelevant when your business's finances are in the gutter, but the point is it's a great opportunity to reevaluate our individual contributions to our respective companies. Optimistically, hopefully—can't we use the “gloom” as a motivational factor, and leave the doom behind?

Perhaps the media could learn a thing or two from a favorite cartoon from my childhood—GI Joe. The show's ubiquitous sign-off—though somewhat of a cliché—is genius in its simplicity: “Now you know, and knowing is half the battle.” It's what we do with this knowledge—this doom and gloom—that really counts.

What's your take? Email comments to Anna.Wells@advantagemedia.com [1]

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