

**"IF IT SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS"**

My mother volunteered this sobering proverb to dissuade me from taking a job in college assembling products at home for "as much as \$700 a week."

Earlier, when I was still in high school, my father served up a "there's no such thing as a quick buck" when I asked him for a five spot so I could join a pyramid scheme. My bright ideas were nipped in the bud by parental logic. Yet looking back, this unsolicited advice steered me clear from more than one disaster over the past couple of decades.

During the high-tech boom of the '90s those cautionary tales taught me that a valid business model trumped brushed-steel doors and a volleyball court in the lobby every time. In the housing boom of the 2000s, my parents' sharp aphorisms proved sage advice, and helped me realize something was amiss when I could be approved for a \$700,000 loan just by flashing my driver's license and showing proof of residency.

Now, don't get me wrong. I've made more than my share of bad moves along the way. Yet in many ways my parents were right, as evidenced in these challenging times we all now face.

It's been a year of reality checks thus far—failing industries, massive job losses, and government bailouts. Uncertain times for all of us. But buying into the fear will not put our nation back to work. Our ability to innovate and create will allow us to emerge stronger and more powerful than any threatening teaser ("More job cuts after the break") from your local news anchor.

The truth is, it's not all bad news. People are indeed finding new jobs and keeping the ones they have. The economy may be shaky, but there's employment for those who are qualified and willing to work harder and smarter than ever before—because clients need smart thinking and new ideas more than ever before.

It's also a prime time for companies to advertise and show the solidity of their brands. Savvy onlookers and insiders know it's about improving on our strengths and evolving with the economic landscape. It's about quality and customer service. It's about finding pleasure in daily tasks, taking pride in the work we do, and reinforcing connections with coworkers, clients, and customers.

Grand schemes and temptations will always be there. Perhaps we'll look upon them with a tad more savvy than before. No matter, we have a fight on our hands. But we'll make it. We have to.

Until summer,  
Curtis Clarkson

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