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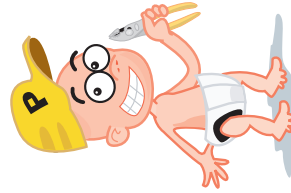
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## KEEPING IT REAL

By Jim Stavis

I have a son who is now a sophomore in college and taking his first business class. Every week, I get to hear a business question that was discussed in class. What do I think about how Toyota is handling their quality problems? What do I think about Google pulling out of the China market, etc. I suppose it is better than a constant dialog about the Lakers or who's going to win *American Idol*. Anyhow, recently we had a good discussion about business.

*(continued inside)*

PARAGON STEEL

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# KEEPING IT REAL (continued from front)

The question he had was, “Why do people do business with you?” He asked, “Do you have the lowest price, the best service or do you provide a superior product?” My response was “sometimes,” not always. And then he asked, “Why then do you get their business? Are you ‘keeping it real?’”

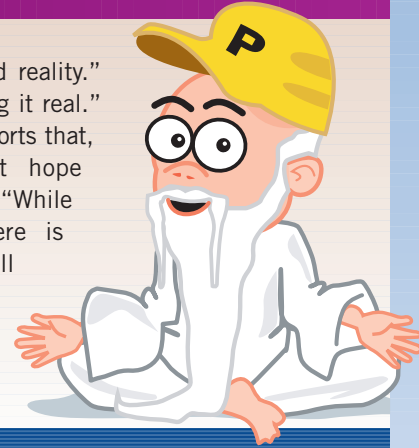
I thought about that one for a little while and realized that he was right—keeping it real is what it is all about. That is not to say that having a competitive price, dependable service and quality product are not all important to the success of the business. But perhaps what is most important is the impression that customers have of Paragon Steel and our team. By keeping it real, we are being honest about who we are and what we can provide. Because at the end of the day, people do business with the people they trust and like—those they feel confident will not let them down.

So perhaps rather than saying “Paragon Steel—A higher level of quality and service,” we should say, “Paragon Steel—Keeping it real.” I’ll let my son take the credit for that one.

## THE STEEL FORECAST *Keeping it Real Again*

The steel forecast somewhat mirrors the economy in general. A survey of steel buyers that appeared in *Purchasing Magazine* shows the demand outlook for spring will erode as nearly 30% of companies are planning to reduce their order bookings going forward. This is rather bleak news for the steel industry in general. Trade publication reports have suggested that mills have seen stronger bookings in the first quarter and are using that forecast to justify their cost-push price hikes. However, as we close the first quarter, the decline in business volume would not seem to justify the price hikes. In a recent steel buyer survey, there “reflects a profound

disconnect between expectations and reality.” In other words, “They are not keeping it real.” Steel analyst Michele Applebaum reports that, “Fundamentals remain weak, but hope springs eternal.” She explains that, “While current activity is still weak, there is improved optimism that spending will revive and that the green shoots will become self-fulfilling prophecies.” Let’s hope she is right.



## 90-YEAR-OLD WISDOM

This was written by Regina Britt of the *Plain Dealer* in Cleveland, Ohio. It is the 33 lessons life taught her. I found many of these lessons worth learning.

1. Life isn't fair, but it is still mighty good.
2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.
3. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.
4. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your family and friends will. Stay in touch.
5. You don't have to win every argument. Sometimes agree to disagree.
6. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
7. Save for retirement starting with your first paycheck.
8. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up your future.
9. It's okay to let your children see you cry.

10. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
11. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.
12. Everything can change in a blink of an eye. But don't worry: God never blinks.
13. Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful.
14. Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.
15. It's never too late to have a second childhood. But the second one is up to you.
16. When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.
17. Over prepare, then go with the flow.
18. No one is in charge of your happiness but you.
19. Frame every so-called disaster with these words: In five years, will this matter?
20. Always choose life.
21. Forgive everyone for everything.
22. What other people think of you is none of your business.
23. Time heals almost everything. Give time time.
24. However good or bad a situation is, it will change.
25. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
26. Believe in miracles.
27. Don't audit life. Show up and make the best of it.
28. Growing old beats the alternative—dying young.
29. All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.
30. If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.
31. The best is still yet to come.
32. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
33. Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.