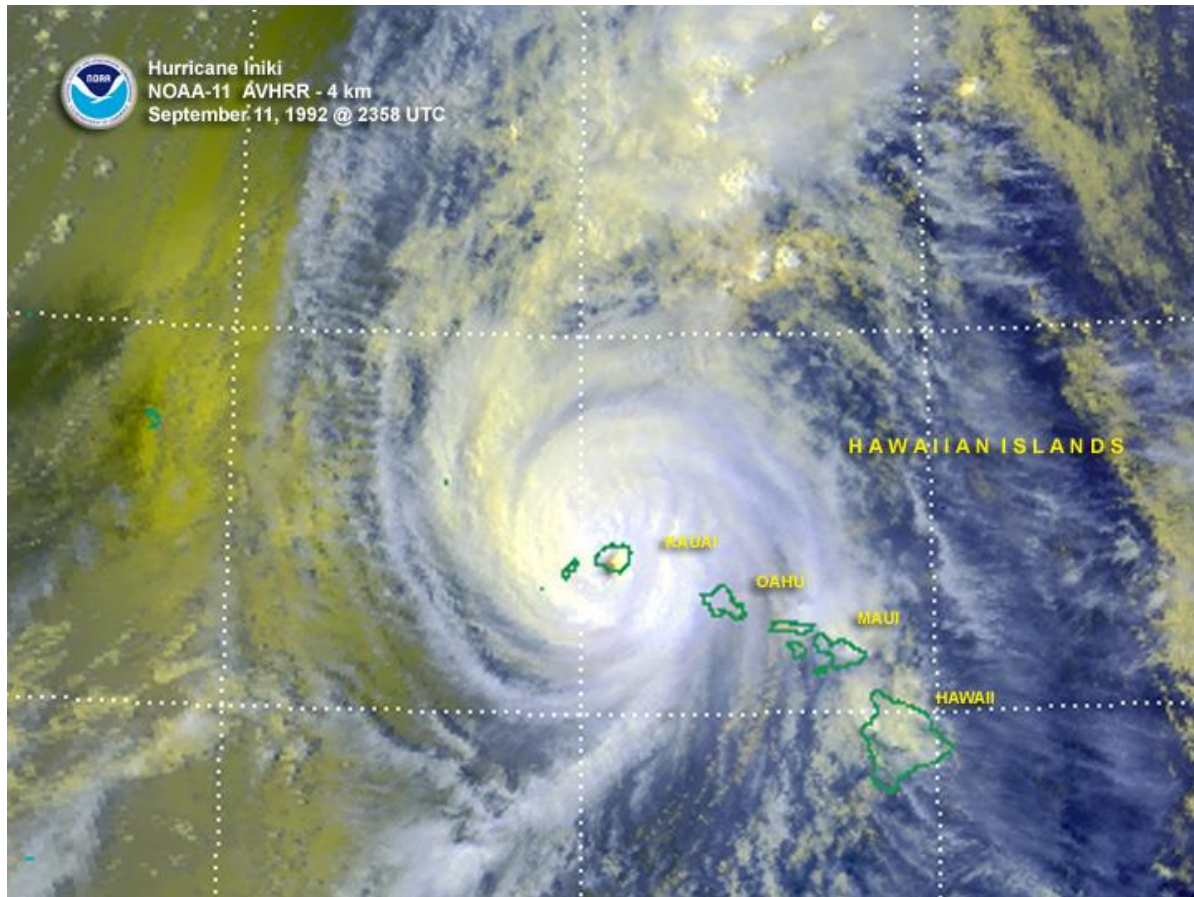


Weathering Storms and Working Toward Success



On Sept. 11, 1992, the strongest and most destructive hurricane to hit the Hawaiian Islands made landfall on the island of Kauai causing a path of destruction including water, wind and dirt.

Hurricane Iniki hit the United States on the heels of the destruction caused by Hurricane Andrew in Florida and Louisiana. Iniki pummeled the south shore of Kauai destroying about 1,500 homes and damaging hundreds of others. Beachfront shops and businesses were also destroyed by 20 foot waves and sustained winds of 130 mph. In all, Iniki caused an estimated \$1.8 billion in damage.

The storm lived up to its name Iniki, which means sharp and piercing winds in Hawaiian, as it battered Kauai with wind gusts up to 160 mph. The storm's high winds

accounted for much of the destruction. Twenty-one years later, Hurricane Iniki remains one of the costliest hurricanes to ever impact the Eastern Pacific.

One local shop keeper, a screen printer, was hit hard by the hurricane with hundreds of t-shirts drenched with water and stained with red dirt that had been churned up in the storm. What could have been a disastrous and devastating blow, causing financial ruin and ending the dreams of store owner Randy Williams, turned out to be a boon for business. Liking the reddish color and turning a seeming catastrophe into an opportunity, Randy developed a dirt dying process and sold the shirts with an, “I Survived Iniki” design. Since then, the company has grown to a worldwide brand known as the Original Red Dirt Shirts.

The company still has a factory in Kauai where they produce 10,000 shirts every month. At the other factory in Mesa, AZ, nearly 100,000 t-shirts are produced monthly. The dyeing process is 100 percent natural from the red dirt and other food grade products used to set the color through the design process to finalize the shirts’ appearance.

Efforts by Randy Williams to overcome the challenges presented by Hurricane Iniki are leadership lessons for everyone.

Disasters Don't Have to Be Disastrous - Just Ask Others

Everybody and every business is going to face challenges, obstacles and difficulties somewhere along the line. Challenges often times are the trigger points that help develop our character, hone our skills and inspire creativity. A Dutch proverb says, "The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor the man perfected without trials." Problems may arise and cause delays in schedules and plans but delays are not denials. In his effort to develop a nickel-iron battery, Thomas Edison tested over 9,000 experiments without getting positive outcomes. While at his work bench continuing in his effort to achieve success, a long-time associate expressed his regrets to Edison for not getting any results. Edison quickly replied, “Results! Why man, I’ve gotten a lot of results. I know thousands of things that won’t work.”

Going it alone can be lonely and discouraging when working through difficulties. Seeking input, guidance, and counsel from trusted advisors can help you to see things from a different perspective, develop a strategy and stay focused on a solution.

When Life Hands You a Bowl of Dirt, Develop a Process for Making Shirts

You may need to ask yourself a series of questions in order to develop a process for overcoming the challenges, problems, or obstacles you or your team are facing. What good things are happening within the project that can be highlighted? Who needs to be notified of this problem or delay? Have others dealt with a similar problem, if so, how did they handle it? Are there other potential problems that might be created through our effort to solve the existing problem? Is there another viewpoint, solution, or perspective we have not considered? Sometimes, mind mapping a problem can help lead to a solution.

Optimism Beats Pessimism

In their Fall 2013 newsletter, Employee Assistance Program, LLC commented on research regarding optimistic people saying, "According to psychologist Suzanne Segerstrom, optimism is not just about feeling positive. It's also about being motivated and persistent. In her book, 'Breaking Murphy's Law: How Optimists Get What They Want From Life – and Pessimists Can Too,' Segerstrom explains that optimists tend to deal with problems head-on. Instead of walking away, they plan a course of action, seek advice from others, and stay focused on solutions. Segerstrom also says that optimists tend to expect a good outcome, and even when they don't get it, they find ways to learn and grow from the negative experience. Optimists believe their actions shape their destinies."

There Must Be a Pony in Here

It's kind of like the story of the twin boys had who had developed extreme personalities – one was a total pessimist, while the other was a total optimist. Concerned for their children, the parents took them to a psychiatrist.

First, the psychiatrist treated the pessimist. Trying to brighten his outlook, the psychiatrist took him to a room piled to the ceiling with brand-new toys. But instead of being overjoyed, the little boy burst into tears. Confused, the psychiatrist asked, "What's the matter? Don't you want to play with any of the toys?" "Yes," the little boy cried, "but if I did I'd only break them."

Next the psychiatrist treated the optimist. Trying to discourage his outlook, the psychiatrist took him to a room piled to the ceiling with horse manure. But instead of wrinkling his nose in disgust, the optimist was delighted. Then he climbed to the top of the pile, dropped to his knees, and excitedly began digging out scoop after scoop with his bare hands. “What do you think you’re doing?” the psychiatrist asked, just as baffled by the optimist as he had been by the pessimist. “With all this manure,” the beaming little boy replied, “there must be a pony in here somewhere!”

Success can sometimes be buried beneath a lot of dirt, mud, and manure. Keep digging!

Mark Turner is President/CEO of the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce. After 20 years of sales and marketing, he left the corporate world and served 12 years in the ministry as an Associate Pastor before accepting his current position with the Chamber of Commerce.

