Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief

Bright spots in these gloomy times have been few and far between. When I hear about them—*even anecdotally*—I can't wait to share them. Here's a couple.

Consider 3-ply toilet paper, which (forgive me), was first *rolled* out last September. One of the most expensive bathroom tissues ever, its sales, apparently, have been booming.

More good news closer to home (at least as far as this magazine is concerned) comes from Inpro/Seal. Sales of its bearing isolators reportedly are up by 14% over the same period last year. Just goes to show that some products are recession-proof. The right one at the right time always will find a market. Reliability is one such product. There always will be a demand for it and for you, the individuals who deliver it day in and day out. That said, too bad Washington and Wall Street haven't turned to you for assistance with the deteriorating economy—*which, at times, has seemed to bear quite a resemblance to a huge, failing, critical equipment system.*

Under-monitored and under-maintained, running too hot and too fast for too long, is it any wonder that our once-shiny economic engine has begun experiencing a string of catastrophic breakdowns… that these events have led to an almost complete shutdown in some areas…that this type of unplanned outage will be extremely costly to turn around?

Oh, if you had only been involved from the get-go. You would have quickly determined the root cause(s) of the meltdown and gotten us back on line a heck of a lot sooner than the financial wizards who still haven't done it. Instead of pointing fingers, you would have worked feverishly, 24/7, to get things back up and running—*yesterday*. Repairing, replacing, rebuilding—*improving*—you would have done everything possible to fix the problem efficiently and effectively and develop measures to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

Alas, you probably won't be getting that call for help anytime soon. That's no reason to sit on your hands, however. Until a "Whatever It Takes New Deal" (as some call it) begins breathing life back into our economy, there are plenty of ways smart companies—*and real smart reliability and maintenance teams*—can spend their downtime.

Try to improve your maintenance efficiency. Whittle down the backlog of deferred maintenance you've been building. Don't simply maintain—*train*. Even today, there's a gross shortage of well-qualified capacity assurance professionals. Don't hamper your organization's ability to grow with a recovering economy. Catch up on your critical training needs. NOW. There's something else you can do.

By the time you read this, a new President—*elected on a promise to restore our hope, confidence and potential*—will have been inaugurated. Whatever your politics, please set them aside. Urge Congress to stop bickering with each other and the new Administration and just get ‘er done—*whatever it takes to put people back to work and our economy back on track*. NOW.

My take on all this is quite simple. Everyone is entitled to a seat on the big bus headed for the American dream. While we may have hit a pothole along the way, throwing fellow passengers under the bus won't help any of us reach our destination. We fell into this ugly situation together; we'll need everyone working together to dig out of it. **MT**