

EDITORIAL

Much has been said about the current global economic crisis and much will continue to be said about it. The on-going barrage of comments should not be a surprise though given the magnitude and severity of the turmoil and how baffling it has been to many, not to mention the anger and frustration of those directly – and adversely - affected by it.

More troubling, however, – and perhaps an even more plausible way of accounting for the massive outcry – is the failure of international organizations, national institutions, and in-house risk-management teams, to have heeded forewarning signs, raised red flags and, short of preventing the recession, mitigated its effects (some even go as far as alluding to a conspiracy of silence, intimating that perhaps some knew it was impending but had a vested interest in not disclosing information).

As a result, political and business leaders, academics, and various other stakeholders, outraged by the lack of oversight, predatory lending practices, and “wild risk-taking”¹ that have brought the world economy to the brink of financial disaster and made a mockery of ethical management, have been quick to call for an overhaul of the financial system and for closing several important regulatory gaps.

New players have also come on board and, with their presence at leading international institutions, a new political and economic agenda has emerged; one that calls, among others, for a new world order, tighter financial regulations, and more corporate and institutional accountability. While skeptics will look at it as mere wishful thinking, others will see in all these declarations of intent grounds for hope and for much needed wide-ranging regulatory reforms. In any case, it remains for all those concerned to deliver on their promises. Time only will tell if they will succeed in pushing for stricter regulations and overcome the resistance of the powerful banking lobby.

Much has also been said and will be said about another crisis, neither global nor economic in its nature yet, no less perplexing and traumatizing and of equal concern to locals, namely, the December 2008 and April 2009 political crises in Thailand.

It will therefore come as no surprise that a majority of the contributions to this second issue pertains to either crisis, starting with article one, *Restoring Thailand's Tourism Destination Image in the Wake of the Recent Political Crises: A Few Proposals*, which, in light of the recent political unrest, explores the impact of destination crisis management planning or lack thereof. Dr. John Barnes also argues for the adoption of a crisis severity scale and reviews some possible ways of dealing with the current slump in the tourism industry.

In article two, *Customer Relationship Management: from Theory to Practice*, Dr. Kriengsin Prasongsukam focuses on specific CRM implementation issues which, in his experience as a CRM consultant, deserve particular attention. Although seemingly trivial, the argument goes, they will often

1. This term was recently - and aptly - used by President Obama as reported in the *International Herald Tribune* “Many Voices Shaped U.S. Finance Overhaul,” 18 June, 2009: 1.

end up being significant in terms of implementation success. At a time when it is particularly critical and challenging for a company to retain its customer base, CRM may prove a panacea.

Article three, *Did You Say Debit?*, concerns itself with the concept of debit and credit. A proponent of a teaching method that combines pragmatism and theory, Dr. Michel Thiéry expounds on this fundamental accounting concept by way of a journey back into time that explores the origin of the double entry bookkeeping system and emphasizes some underlying principles.

In a slight departure from the format adopted in the first edition and, starting with this issue, each edition will also feature comments on current events. Allowing for greater flexibility and quicker reaction to current affairs while retaining the intellectual integrity of full-scale academic papers, they provide valuable insights on on-going events. This issue includes two comments.

Comment one, *Thrifty Americans and Splurging Chinese: an Oxymoron? May be Not for Much Longer*, is an essay by this author on Sino-American spending habits and an attempt at capturing one of the most salient – and symbolically-charged – trends currently unfolding and exacerbated by the steep recession.

In comment two, *Reflections on 2008 and the Global Financial Markets: the Challenges Facing the IMF and the World Bank*, Dr. Noel Jones, a former IMF and WB staff member, elaborating on some of the issues outlined in this editorial, shares his views on the year 2008, and the financial sector in particular, and articulates some of the challenges that the IMF and WB should in his opinion address.

The GSB student's contribution to this 2d edition, *Hospitality and Tourism Management Education: an Analysis of Chinese Students' Motives and Institution Choice Criteria*, explores, as its title indicates, students' reasons for choosing one HTM institution of higher learning over another, either at home or abroad. With the economy going through tough times everywhere and competition among HTM institutions stiffening, Ms. Wei Wei Chen's study provides insightful and relevant information to all those concerned.

Finally, in keeping with the overall theme of this edition, the book reviewed, *Asia Future Shock, Business Crisis and Opportunity in the Coming Years*, also raises burning issues. As Dr. John Barnes notes, the author, a long-term resident, participant and student of Asia, is uniquely placed to explore Asia-specific problems.

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