

As we batten down for the strong winds of change in a stormy economic climate, navigation becomes a survival game. As the future looks less and less like the past, it is difficult to know whether to base our business decisions on gut feeling or numbers.

As Malcolm Gladwell points out in his book *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, *intuition* can be incredibly right, or wildly wrong. Similarly, we need a dashboard of indicators to see how we are doing, but even for the experts numerical forecasts can be little more than educated guesses. To overly rely on one side of the brain is to turn a blind eye to the other side.

In a stable world experience is a reliable guide, because what happened in the past can be a good predictor of what will happen in the future. However, rapid change can play havoc with guidelines, at least until things stabilize again after people get readjusted. This can get very confusing, unless you change your focus.

Powerful Perseverance is a mindset which is more reliable than either gut feeling or analysis alone, and can actually integrate the two. Japanese executives often make reference to pragmatic philosophy in the form of 4-character sets, which come from the Chinese Classics. The literal translation of these phrases can sound as trite as the advice on a Chinese Fortune Cookie. In my view, these are mostly bad English translations of sometimes profound ancient wisdom.

With *powerful perseverance* as your navigational mindset, you don't abandon ship when the pressure is on. You stay with your business, maintaining a firm hand on rudder and steering wheel, keeping your bearings and your wits about you.

This enables you to navigate both with gut feeling and logical analysis. Certainly we need all of the help we can get, and a whole-brain approach will serve you much better than a half-brained attempt.

The media provides plenty of fuel for panic, and little for inspiration. As you navigate your business into new waters in 2009, cultivate this mindset and you will see that there are many opportunities that go unreported and undiscovered.

This is one entrepreneurial mindset which will serve you well.

Powerful Perseverance

The literal translation of the 4-character set 積極一貫 (*sekigyoku ikkan*) might be: *stay positive, or never give up.*

The first two characters are usually pronounced *sekkyoku* (positive), but in this case the reading is *sekigyoku*, which has the added meaning of *accumulate mastery* (極みを積む *kiwami wo tsumu*); and the second two characters meaning *throughout, or ceaselessly.*

The literal translation contains too many redundancies to have impact in English, so I have translated it simply as *Powerful Perseverance.*

From the foredeck you can sight
The captain on his bridge,
Before his instruments alight,
As he charts the course of voyage.
Hatches battened firmly down
As the wind begins to rise,
Strong currents are renown,
Stars are hidden in the skies.
The wheel is his intuitive guide,
Steering rudder left and right;
The compass his analytic side,
Giving bearings in the night.
Both in harmony he uses well,
Not on one or other alone;
History cannot the future tell,
His skills together he must clone.
Mastery accumulates in time
Over many years at sea, afloat,
Maturing, blending like aging wine,
The finest skipper of any boat.
Ceaseless attention at every hour,
Navigators mind, positive force,
Pitted 'gainst the elements' power
Focused on the task, the future course.
Powerful perseverance abound
To finally land us safe and sound.

Verse by Hugh Purser