

lifestyle: PERSPECTIVE



**PAUL
DEVERE**

CORPORATE Prophet

“Dad, I don’t get it,” my daughter says.

Don’t get what? I ask distractedly. It is a Saturday morning and I am reading the paper. My 16-year-old diligent Daughter is about to leave for her summer job.

“I made a whopping \$11.21 on my \$500 CD in 12 months! \$11.21!” she almost screams (almost) as she shows me her bank statement.

The beauty of compound interest, I suggest as I read a headline in the business section. “ABZ CORP CUTS 3,435 JOBS, EARNINGS UP 21%.” I shake my head.

“But you said I’d make REAL money if I saved it!” The majority of her savings can be directly related to her ability to wipe babies’ bottoms at a day care center during her short summer break.

I think she is screaming now, though it is hard to tell because one of our dogs has heard what he thinks is another dog trying to break down our door and threaten us with a nuclear weapon of some sort. Our dogs can bark louder than our children’s screams, both a blessing and a curse.

I quiet dog and daughter with a mollifying “there, there” and give the dog a treat. He gently rips it from my hand. My daughter, who doesn’t get a treat, gently rips her bank statement away.

My 16-year-old son ambles by. He, too, is off to his summer job, dreams of a Chevy with big speakers dancing in his head.

“You gonna use your car?” he asks demanding. My (our) car is my (his) sole means of transportation today because my bride is out of town with hers. I advise him I’ll take him to work. He angrily grumbles something like “grsherdtswtres” and returns to his room.

“Dad!” My demonstrative Daughter yells. “What about my CD?”

I sense it is time for our “little chat.” No, not the birds/bees thing, this is Economics 101. And this from a father who prays to the patron saint of scholarships (St. Augustine, for your edification) daily. On my knees.

My son sticks his head out the door. “Grsherdtswtres!” he says.

Grsherdtswtres, I reply.

“Cool,” he says and returns to his room. I am not sure what I have committed to.

You see, Dear Daughter, if your interest rate is higher, the banks have to raise interest rates on things like home mortgages and car loans and credit cards. And that will slow the economy down. Do you want to slow the economy down?

“No, I just want more money,” she grumbles.

Well then, you could take your money and put it in the stock market. You could make more money there, but you could also lose it all.

Cautious Daughter hesitantly questions, “How much more?”

I show her the newspaper. Look, the ABZ Corporation’s earnings are up 21%. If you would have invested your \$500 in ABZ last year, you would have made, let’s see, about \$30.

“That’s it?” Inquiring Daughter asks. “And it says here, they fired 3,435 people!”

Well, yes, that seems to be one of the more popular tactics in corporate America. When you lack creativity, innovation and vision, you hand out pink slips. A few years ago, it was popular to cook the books to show a profit, but people started going to jail.

“Let me get this straight,” patient Daughter states. “A company no longer has to, like, make cool stuff that people want, to make money. They just have to fire people?”

Well, that’s one way of looking at it, I agree. My son sticks his head through the doorway. “Grsherdtswtres,” he says and for some inexplicable reason I throw him the car keys.

“Dad, I’ve got it! I’ll start a company and go public. My first act will be to fire 15,000 employees, people we haven’t even hired! Dad, thanks. This is excellent!” Daring Daughter says.

“Grsherdtswtres?” my son, car keys in hand, asks.

“It doesn’t matter,” my IPO daughter responds. “You’re fired!” □



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