

BY JAMES FISHER

Blink: Don't Blink

Many years, many changes

MANY OF YOU HAVE READ *THE TIPPING POINT* by Malcolm Gladwell in which he discusses how a unique product, service, event, etc. becomes established within ourselves and then into an accepted norm of society. Gladwell's second book, *Blink*, is described as "a book about how we think without thinking. Instantaneous choices." It delves into many possibilities and events that shape what might be considered by many as the norm. One such subject is thin-slicing, which is described as "filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables." It is a uniquely written discussion on what counts for what and how things impact our lives without us necessarily even recognizing the fact that we have been intentionally and permanently altered.



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It is you, your insights and your messages that have influenced this column over the last many years it has been written. It is you who have thin-sliced each monthly installment and helped define what truly matters within a universe of untold possibilities. That has been no more reflective than it has during the past few days. The 2007 installment of the NACS Show has just ended. I am always embarrassed by all the kind words that are said about this column, the subjects that are attempted here and your reaction to them when we see each other at industry events. The consensus is not in at this time as to the success of this year's NACS Show, but for me, personally,

it was a total success because it provided me with the opportunity to connect with so many of you. That is what I have tried to achieve in this column during the four-plus years I have been writing it—the formation of a bridge between all of us as to what matters in this industry, in our companies and in our lives. It is this simple mission that has brought so much joy in writing "The Last Word" every month.

Many events have occurred during the space of time this column has been written: three different individuals have held the position of president of SIGMA, five different individuals have been the chairman of NACS, there have been two different owners and publishers and three editors of this publication (*NPN*). Hurricanes Katrina and Rita both hit the Gulf Coast changing our lives in many ways. When I started writing this column, we had not yet entered Iraq and the price of a gallon of gasoline was a \$1 and some cents. Now prices are above \$3 a gallon, and the debate rages on as to where it might settle. I know there are so many events we can consider that have shaped our lives, families and businesses since 2002.

As Kenny Chesney sings in his song, *Don't Blink*; "What is the secret to life? Don't blink. Just like that you're six years old and you take a nap; next thing you wake up and you're 25." It goes on to cover life and all of its experiences, discussing how it is "best to start putting first things first in the here today and gone tomorrow world we're livin' in." For all of us, "Life goes faster than you think...don't blink." That is the secret of life.

Thank you for giving me the pleasure of writing this column for these last few years. Every month it has felt as though I am merely writing a note to friends. It is now time to let someone else receive the enjoyment and friendship that you have bestowed upon me. This will serve as the last "The Last Word" for me. I hope this very last page of this magazine continues to bring you enjoyment each and every month it is published. From my home and heart to yours, may we all try to slow down and take life in and God bless. **NPN**