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A Road Less Traveled

In 1978 Dr. M. Scott Peck authored the book “The Road Less Traveled.” It became a revolutionary book about the human mind, focused on emotional, spiritual and psychological health. Peck’s primary premise was that sustainable growth in mind and spirit can be achieved on an extremely high and all-encompassing level, resulting in advanced levels of maturity. In short, he described the attributes that create a fulfilled human being. He was turned down by several publishers before Simon & Schuster agreed to publish the book for a minimum amount; it had an initial printing of only 5,000 books.

During the 32 years since publishing, “The Road Less Traveled” has sold more than 6 million copies and has been printed in more than 20 languages. It is a book I read with great interest many years ago. I find that passages and beliefs from it often provide awareness in both personal and business lives, in both integrated and segregated patterns. The entire premise of a road less traveled brings visions of discovering things and places for the first time and relishing in what could be vs. what always seems to be. What is, but what could potentially be created is what brings satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment to each of us.

Why does all this matter? It only matters in terms of the title of the book and our ability to be able to con-

tinually improve, grow and develop into more fulfilled and enlightened human beings. From a realistic point of view, the same pattern of development, growth and maturity can be attributed to our industry, our individual companies and the retail offerings we create to serve our customers, our employees and our communities.

We do not see uniqueness and potential opportunities from our national highway system. That provides only a window of sameness,



and a homogenized landscape. We are presented with potential bounties while on the roads less traveled each day: back roads, country lanes, state highways, suburban pathways and city streets within each state. It is the neighborhoods, communities, hamlets, villages, towns and metropolitan areas that present us with unheralded opportunities to restore old, refresh stale and create new. There are those who can never see what could be, and those who see infinite possibilities: the visionaries of what could be.

SELF-CREATED COMPETITION

Being in the presence of those visionaries happens to our company on a weekly basis. Two recent examples reflect very diverse approaches by two different companies. The first consists of the development strategy for 16 existing facilities in one Midwestern state. The corporate objective was to determine what specific actions should be taken to upgrade and modernize each location to better serve each community, reach more potential customers and reduce the exposure of potential adverse competition. In other words, create an anecdote to the philosophy that “98% of all competition is self-created.”

The other example is the opposite. One Southwest company identified and analyzed eight new markets (to the company) to enter, and determined of the number of facilities to develop in each new community. The company plans to, in each market, build advanced retail facilities that it hopes will result in operational dominance within each marketplace. This reflects the philosophy of seeing opportunity while others see only sameness. The company will be the proverbial competitor for the aforementioned anecdote.

These two different operational objectives best represent the belief that “the concept never changes, but the marketplace always does.” ■