

CRISIS:

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR PARTNER DIES

This sounds like a depressing topic. I mean, who wants to read about that? Not me—that's for certain. Unfortunately for me, it was all too real. My partner, Doug Carpenter, who I had founded Paragon Steel with back in 1988, was one of the great guys. He had a great family, friends and while we were partners, no one I ever met said an unkind word about him. We were partners for more than 25 years and I had been the one with medical challenges my whole life. Not Doug. So in 2012, it came as a big surprise that he was the one who fell ill and ultimately passed away on May 6, 2014. I was horribly saddened by the loss. Together, we had built Paragon Steel into a successful steel service center, with an emphasis on service. We also developed a close friendship and bond that would last until his final days.

But then the question remained of "What to do after he was gone?" Should I continue to operate the business as we had in the past all the while knowing that it would have been Doug's desire? Or should I simply recognize the reality that without Doug's influence and collaboration, it would/could never be the same. I struggled with this, too. It was like a quote I had once heard about what it was like when Frank Sinatra had died: "The band continued to play, but the music never sounded the same."

So for the past few years, I've really struggled. I've lived in a reality of wondering what Doug would have wanted and what I had to do to keep the train running. Because ultimately, it is the Paragon Steel train with all of its loyal customers, vendors and most of all, employees who have the true stake in OUR future together. I believe that through all of this adversity, we found a mission, a purpose to prevail. Because in the end, that's what building a business is all about: Creating and fulfilling dreams. And we know that there will be hurdles and bumps along the way, but that's why they call it work. We have built something really unique at Paragon Steel—a legacy to live on for and to be proud of. I'm sure Doug would also be proud.

Thank you for your continued support.



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By Jim Stavis

STAINLESS STEEL: MAY IT HELP US ALL "LIVE LONG AND PROSPER"

By Jim Stavis

Late last month, the newest movie in the popular *Star Trek* franchise hit theaters across the country, once again giving us a glimpse into a future (the 2100s to 2300s to be exact) where our ecosystem is stripped of natural resources and humans and aliens continue to exist in a high-tech yet habitable environment built from a variety of metals. While the special effects of today's movie are no doubt bigger, louder and brighter, it's a similar glimpse of what we saw when the *Star Trek* television series first debuted—on September 8, 1966 on NBC.

While I love to see a future that includes various metals, my question is: Is such a stripped down, space-age tomorrow even possible? Many scientists believe that the earth will one day become uninhabitable for both human and machine once we use up our natural resources, and I tend to agree. That's why it is so critical for all of us to do our part in preserving the planet to sustain life far into the future—for our kids and grandkids, and their kids, and so on.

For a company like Paragon Steel that distributes and processes a variety of metals, we may have a leg up in this preservation battle. One of the greatest (and frankly, easiest) actions we can take in preserving natural resources is using sustainable

materials—in our businesses and in our homes. Stainless steel is one such material, with a closed-loop production and reuse system, that can play an important role in a sustainable future. It's 100 percent recyclable, readily available, durable and useful in a variety of industries, from construction and health care to food and beverage and household products.

So here's to stainless steel and its amazing ability to positively impact our environment. As Spock said so often in the *Star Trek* television series and movies, may it go a long way toward helping this generation and the next, and the next, to "live long and prosper."



Paragon Steel Celebrates Year #28

I can remember it like it was yesterday. That's when you know you're getting old. On July 5th, we started our 29th year of being in business. I can remember when our banker told us that 75 percent of businesses didn't make it past their second year. So, obviously we've done something right. When people ask me what our key is for success, I have two basic answers: First, say what you do and then do what you say and secondly, be prepared for change, because nothing ever stays the same. When we started, the fax machine was new technology. We bought Apple One computers and there were no Internet, cell phones or social media. We stumbled onto a concept of customer service, which really did

not exist in the steel distribution world at that time. Now most distributors and companies, in general, know that they had better figure out customer service if they want to stay in business.

So how did we celebrate our 28th year? A taco party. Maybe when we turn 30, we can order steak and lobster.



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