

## 2009 – End of Year Reflections

By William F. Slater, III

"Never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end — which you can never afford to lose — with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality."  
— Admiral Jim Stockdale

As 2009 ends and we look forward to 2010, I will share some of the more interesting things I experienced during 2009, as well as some thoughts on life and the coming year.

First, as many of you know, this is the 10<sup>th</sup> year that I have wrapped up with a Christmas vacation to Poland. When I married my wife, Joanna Roguska, on December 3, 2000, I made a promise to her and her parents to always bring her back home to Warsaw for Christmas. I would soon find that I married into a wonderful family that loves us treats us very well, and am so grateful for it. So each year, this annual Christmas Trip to Poland is how we end each year, and then ring in the new year, and it's something we look forward to all year. (Picture on page 6).

So I am writing this letter to share with my friends and colleagues, from Joanna's Uncle's home in the southwest part of Poland. We are here because this is where we have come to celebrate the New Year for seven of the 10 years I have visited Poland.

### ***Career Update: Two Jobs***

I started out 2009 as a Project Manager, working as a Data Center Consultant and Technical Project Manager, working on a Data Center Build-out and Migration Project. That position ended in March 2009 as the project was coming to an end. After several trying months looking for a new position, I started a new job as a project manager working to implement best practices in services management for a branch of the U.S. Military. Geographically, it is not an optimum situation, but in an economy like the one we are now living, it is a decent job working for a company where I had previously worked from November 2006 to March 2008, so I took it.

### ***Started a Second Graduate Degree Program***

During a lucid moment of unemployment in mid-April 2009, about 30 days after my job came to an end, I was thinking about my situation, asking, "What else should I do to help prepare myself the rest of my career?" After repeatedly seeing the MBA degree requirement for many of the positions I was seeking, the answer became clear: I must enroll in an MBA program. I was aware of the excellent reputation of the University of Phoenix, so I chose the UoP MBA program.

The primary argument for returning to school to work on an MBA degree is to equip myself to be a better professional for the remainder of my working years, which should end in about 2031. Indeed, I have always taken great pride in my credentials and in the quality of both my academic and professional work. I even obtained two college degrees, a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology degree, and a Master of Science in Computer Information Systems degree, plus I have earned many professional certifications. But I did not have an MBA degree, which could have provided an essential credential to remain employed, or to quickly regain employment in this tough economy.

So as I applied for entry into the UoP MBA program in April 2009, I pleasantly discovered that three graduate level classes from my first master's degree would be credited toward the 12 required classes. The classes that I was credited from my first UoP masters degree in Computer Information Systems (2003 – 2004) with are highlighted in yellow:

University of Phoenix

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MSCIS

Schedule and Grades

Current Program: MSCIS Student Academic Status: RG - Regular (Effective: 12/11/2002) ID: 5403438178  
 Program Version: 007 Program Academic Status: RG - Regular (Effective: 02/17/2003) WILLIAM SLATER III  
 Total Credits Required: 37 1409 N ASHLAND AVE  
 Program GPA: 3.92 Academic Status Descriptions CHICAGO, IL 60622-2224

The following information is unofficial and is intended to provide you with convenient information on your student record. To obtain an official University transcript, you may order online or call Customer Service at (480) 446-4600 or 1-(800)-866-3919. If you are a student of Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Phoenix, please contact your local campus or Customer Service to request a copy of your transcript.

Completed Courses (click on the grades below to view your official grade card)

Course	Title	CR	Start	End	Instructor	Grade
COM/515	MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION	1.00	01/23/2003	02/12/2003	GLORIA KRAY	A
ORG/502	HUMAN RELATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR	3.00	02/20/2003	04/02/2003	WILLIAM CAMERON	A
LAW/529	LEGAL ENVIRONMENT OF BUSINESS	3.00	04/10/2003	05/21/2003	WHITNEY BELL	A-
ACC/529	ACCOUNTING FOR MANAGERIAL DECISION MAKING	3.00	05/29/2003	07/09/2003	MICHAEL GREENEN	A
CSS/551	PROGRAMMING CONCEPTS	3.00	07/11/2003	08/21/2003	KEN MURPHY	A
CMGT/555	SYSTEMS ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT	3.00	09/04/2003	10/15/2003	APRIL ADAMS	A
CMGT/575	CIS PROJECT MANAGEMENT	3.00	10/23/2003	12/10/2003	SETH CHAIKIN	A
CMGT/576	PROGRAMMING MANAGEMENT	3.00	12/18/2003	02/11/2004	JOSEPH LANGDON	B+
CSS/558	DATA BASE CONCEPTS I	3.00	02/19/2004	03/31/2004	MARIO MISSAKIAN	A
CSS/559	DATA BASE CONCEPTS II	3.00	04/08/2004	05/19/2004	EDWARD SPEAR	A
TCM/537	NETWORKS/DATACOM I	3.00	05/27/2004	07/07/2004	DAVID KERR	A
TCM/538	NETWORKS/DATACOM II	3.00	07/15/2004	08/25/2004	E. RUFUS ROGERS	A
CMGT/585	CIS RISK MANAGEMENT & STRATEGIC PLANNING	3.00	09/02/2004	10/13/2004	REINALDO FERNANDEZ	A

KEY: **WV** - Waiver Without Credit - Includes all exempted coursework (must be replaced with appropriate upper division coursework. Some programs may have specific requirements of upper division business-related coursework). **WC** - Waived Course with Credit - Please contact your Academic Counselor with any questions.

The current and scheduled courses below may not include everything required by your program. Please refer to your Enrollment Agreement for specific requirements for your program or contact your academic counselor.

At this writing, I have completed 4.5 classes, and I have 4.5 classes remaining. My graduation date is August 2010. My academic schedule with required 9 classes is shown below. Classes shown in highlighted blue are completed or in progress.

Course	Title	CR	Start	End
MGT/521	MANAGEMENT	3.00	04/28/2009	06/08/2009
HRM/531	HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT	3.00	06/16/2009	07/27/2009
QRB/501	QUANTITATIVE REASONING FOR BUSINESS	3.00	08/25/2009	10/05/2009
	<a href="#">Materials</a>			
ECO/561	ECONOMICS	3.00	10/13/2009	11/23/2009
QNT/561	APPLIED BUSINESS RESEARCH & STATISTICS	3.00	12/01/2009	01/25/2010
OPS/571	OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT	3.00	02/02/2010	03/15/2010
FIN/571	CORPORATE FINANCE	3.00	03/23/2010	05/03/2010
MKT/571	MARKETING	3.00	05/11/2010	06/21/2010
STR/581	STRATEGIC PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION	3.00	06/29/2010	08/09/2010

## Joanna's Interests and Activities

As most of you are aware, I am married to an incredible woman, Joanna Roguska, and I am so proud of her. Her talents, energy and interests always amaze me. Besides her day job as a gifted web developer, she is

- 1) A professional belly dancer in an 8-woman troupe called Fringe Benefits
- 2) A student in a post-Bachelor's degree program studying Graphic Design at Columbia College in Chicago

- 3) A student pilot, gradually working on her pilot's license
- 4) A gifted amateur photographer with an excellent Canon Digital SLR camera and a large photo portfolio at Flickr
- 5) A fitness-oriented cyclist and runner, who bikes to and from work to save money and because it is faster.
- 6) A great wife, my best friend, and soul mate

My life got infinitely better when Joanna first came to Chicago back in June 2000. Without her love, support, and inspiration, and that of her family, I wouldn't have accomplished a fraction of what I have done since they came into my life. I thank God every day for all of them, and especially for Joanna.

## ***The World We Live In...***

Last year in my 2008 End of Year Letter, I had several things to say about the Economy and how I thought that things might get better sooner if people tried to be more positive. After seeing the results of government initiatives and the behaviors of banks, which could have helped people by lending money to qualified borrowers, I am not so sure. During October and November 2009 I completed a fast-paced graduate level class in Economics, so I understand better how things work in the Economy. I also understand the implications of things not working out sooner than later, as well as the implications of all the borrowing and spending the government is doing to bail out various sectors of the U.S. Economy. But because of things like the Globalization effects of the last 20 to 25 years, as well as the Internet, the U.S. Economy is more interdependent on the Global Economy than ever before.

Suffice it to say that there is still a great deal of uncertainty ahead and many will experience disappointments as they struggle adapt their thinking to how things really work in the New Economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Others, and I include myself in this group, seek to quickly grasp and understand the new opportunities for development and prosperity that lie ahead, and embrace those. And even though it seems like I am making that sound easy, I am not. For example, since Economics is about human behaviors in an environment dealing with limited or scarce resources, our success as a country will be closely linked to our understanding of how business can operate efficiently, when affected by factors and forces that are evident, and some that are not so evident. Anyway, now more than ever, the ability to do solid research, as well as traits like good communication, good analysis, and being agile will be required in order to be successful. Again, these concepts support my reason for pursuing an MBA.

One of former President Bill Clinton's recurring themes was life-long learning. I strongly believe in that and think that the more that other Americans embrace this idea, the sooner we can start to look ahead to brighter days. However, the longer it takes Americans to adjust their thinking, their personal development and their behaviors in the New Economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the longer it will take us as a Society to reap the rewards of prosperity ahead.

Personally, I also think part of the key to our future is in the Old Testament Bible verse shown below:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

## ***When People Experience Hardship***

During my time between jobs during 2009, I did take a lot of time to think and reflect about myself and people in general, and about how we are shaped by hardship. It's really true that you learn a great deal about yourself and who you are after you look back and understand the full implications of a hardship that you have gone through. It is a time to take stock of yourself and what your strengths are, as well as

learning what the opportunities are for improving in the future. I also believe that hardship and the resources that you gather to deal with situations are good indicators of how well we plan as human beings.

Finally, I believe that personal hardship tells us as much about the people in our lives as it does about ourselves. You learn who your real friends are. You will also learn that you may not have as many good friends as you previously thought, and you learn a lot, both good and bad, about family. I won't take up much more space covering this. In the Old Testament, the book of Job does a much better effort than I ever will of explaining what trials and tribulations do to a man.

## ***Thoughts about Life and the Coming Year***

I am optimistic, as I always am, that this coming year will be a really great year. After all, 2010 is also the first year of a new decade, as well as being a new year. So we have the benefit of understanding what the first 10 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be like, and I think we are in for a great new decade as well.

With the ever-increasing rapid pace of things, such as the evolution of technology and the consumer products that use it, I think the first 10 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century were just a small glimpse into what the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century holds for us. As a life-long learner, and as a leader, I want to help lead the initiatives that will be introducing the changes that make business and people stronger and more effective. I think that will be an interesting role as I plot my own course for the coming year and for the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

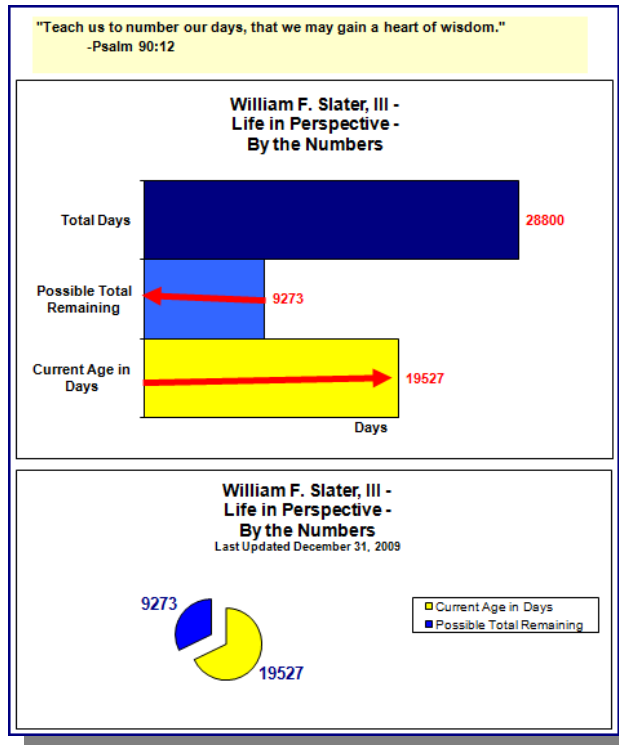
By the way, as friend of mind once made this observation about the future. He said, "I don't know what the Future holds, but I know WHO hold the future."

## **One for the Procrastinators, In This Life, We Don't Have an Unlimited Time to Act...**

In February 2008, I was playing around with Excel and decided to create two graphs to visually describe my life in a simple way, in terms of the number of days already experienced and the number of remaining days. The two graphs are shown below. The key assumption in this Excel calculation is that I know the date of my birth and the date of my death. Since most people do not know the date of their death, I took a wild guess and used my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Anyway, the results are below. I call the second graph my "Pacman Graph."

Some of this may seem downright morbid, yet I think it is realistic. Practically every day we deal with situations in life where something we use is wearing out or that it is obsolete, and will have to be replaced. In a real sense, that includes our bodies. Of course, the goal should always be to maintain health and hope for as long a life as possible, but death is inevitable for all of us.

These graphs to me just serve as a visual reminder that we don't have all the time in the world to get things done. People like me need this and it has helped me because sometimes I have been known to procrastinate until I kick it into high gear. Special Offer: If you would want a copy of this Excel file to create your own graph, please send me an e-mail to [slater@billslater.com](mailto:slater@billslater.com) and request the Excel file used to create those Life Graphs. Please note that because how Excel uses date arithmetic, these date calculations are based on consistent 360-day years, just as in Accounting.



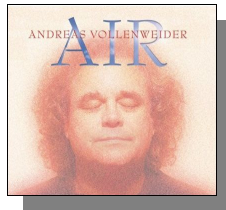
## Music

For as long as I can remember, music has played a big part in my life. This includes music from the perspective of being a listener and also from the perspective of being a musician. But for many years, my guitar, named "Claudia" sat idle in the corner of my room, gathering dust and probably very sad from my reluctance to start playing again. Fall 2009 was a point where restrung and retuned Claudia and started practicing and playing again. This led to performing weekly in public at a local Open Mic Free Stage. To my pleasant surprise, my playing and singing were very well received and I met some new acquaintance and friends. So that was something that I didn't expect to do as I looked forward into 2009, this time last year.

## Air

Another real surprise in the world of music was the release of Andreas Vollenweider's new music CD that is simply titled "Air." As a devoted fan since 1985, I have had a longstanding love affair with everything in his extensive catalog of amazing music. And I was thrown off guard as I had seen a video of Andreas explaining why he produced Air in 2009. His justification for producing Air was that he sensed that people were too stressed out in the world and that he wanted to give them something that would really help them relax. And I was actually skeptical about the Air before getting my hands on a copy. Well, I have never used an end of year letter to do this, but I will go out on a limb and recommend this CD because the music on it is really excellent, and the sequence of the songs is designed to take you gently on a trip into the magical world of Vollenweider's mind, where he playfully guides the listener into one beautiful soundscape after another. It took me three listens, but I was hooked and now it's one of my favorite Vollenweider CDs, right up there on par with Caverna Magica, White Winds, Book of Roses, and Kryptos, which are all among Vollenweider's greatest masterpieces.





## **Conclusion**

In closing, I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this. I wish you each a happy, healthy, productive new year, and I hope to hear from you during 2010.

Sincerely,

Bill

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December 24, 2009

Christmas Eve, in Warsaw, Poland

William F. Slater, III, Joanna K. Roguska, and Wiesia Roguska