



The first half of 2020 has been unprecedented. There has been some good, a lot of bad and even some ugly. But when I step back and think of one word that sums it all up, it is change. Looking back at where we were as recently as mid-February, our industry was slated for powerful growth and business-as-usual meant powering forward like any other year. It's hard to believe where we are today.

When the pandemic caused a national emergency to be declared on March 13, our business and professional lives were changed forever. Our offices became rooms in our homes, and social plans were quickly obsolete.

As we struggled with this new reality, we also experienced another tragedy: The killing of George Floyd at the hands of police as he fearfully decried, "I can't breathe." This was the tipping point in a long-standing demand for justice in the names of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Walter Scott, Breonna Taylor and many other innocent black lives lost to police violence before George Floyd. His death was a wake-up call for many that racism and inequality are far from a thing of the past. The subsequent protests and continued growth of the Black Lives Matter movement have one common message—this needs to change, now.

As the leader of one of the largest business units at Mitchell | Genex, I try to remain calm, kind and positive throughout any storm—cultural, economic, or otherwise. The events of 2020, given some perspective, are actually driving some positive change.

A Push to Change Our Culture for the Better

With the amplification of the Black Lives Matter movement, businesses and leaders in all industries were forced to take a good hard look in the mirror. I know that I am constantly pausing to take a hard look in the mirror and asking myself, "Am I doing enough?" The heightened focus on social injustice in this country

inspired some of the biggest names in insurance, including us, to take public stands on the importance of embracing diversity and accepting our co-workers regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality or background.

But that's not enough. We must also be willing to examine the ways that inclusion and equity are lacking within our organizations and communities and commit to taking real action. It all starts with deeply and intently listening to our people, and I am very proud to say that I have launched a companywide Listening Tour that creates a safe space for employees to give voice to their experiences and empowers them to co-lead the culture changes that will make us better.

“It all starts with deeply and intently listening to our people.”

Throughout the past several months we have also seen a number of inspiring stories of companies and people working together to lift each other up in these trying times. A great story that comes to mind occurred at Genex, which had [a number of case managers see beyond the paperwork to help struggling employees get back to work](#).

It was also great to see various organizations around the industry like [ican](#) and [Insurance Business Magazine](#) come together to ensure we put a spotlight on diversity and raise up those among us who are minorities. This is especially important because, as the [Harvard Business Review pointed out](#), COVID-19 has had a very disproportionate impact on Black and Latino health care workers in the U.S.

Perseverance Determines the Outcome

We've all seen and read about how the pandemic has forced us to embrace advanced technologies, virtual working and [automation](#). The good news is that these changes not only help us work more efficiently and find a better work-life balance, but also encourage diversity and acceptance in the workplace.

“Now is not the time to sit on the sideline; it's quite the opposite. Now is the time to invest.”

In the face of such drastic changes, the easy choice is to pump the brakes, sit on the side of the road and wait for the storm to pass. As evidenced by [USA Today's report on top stocks thriving during the pandemic](#), the companies who continue taking risks and investing in time-saving cost-cutting solutions for clients and end users will continue to thrive. We saw retail giants like Lowe's and Walmart change operating models at an extreme pace, while many of the nation's top auto insurers took advantage of changes in driving habits and [returned premiums](#) to maintain customer satisfaction.

Now is not the time to sit on the sideline; it's quite the opposite. Now is the time to invest in your company

processes, marketing and culture. Mitchell has taken that to heart, and we continue innovating and persevering every day to stay true to our mission of empowering better outcomes for our customers.

What Will the Remainder of 2020 Look Like?

I'm afraid to even guess what the rest of the year will be like. The good news is that in many ways it's up to us. Many companies, including Mitchell | Genex, have made renewed calls to build a sense of belonging and ensure there is no place for discrimination in the workplace. We are leaning into the individuality, diversity and resilience of our employees in order to help our businesses thrive as we figure out our new normal.

I'd love to say we've got it figured out, but if the past has taught us one thing, it is that change is harder to embrace than we think, and slow to stick. I look forward to continue working arm and arm with the Mitchell | Genex team and our customers to positively harness the changes of this year for the better.