

By now we have all cleared our driveways returned to work and for the most part returned to our normal routines after the record snowfall temporarily altered our lives. We all have stories to tell, and I would like to tell you about a couple that happened to me.

12 year old son Ben was invited to play in the snow and spend the night at a friend's house the night the blizzard started to hit. I came home from work and Ben was already gone, except he did not have his pillow, sleeping bag, contact case and other essentials for a sleepover. Those items were not going to fly to his friend's house by themselves, so I was "elected" to be the deliverer. No problem, or that is what I thought. I took a wrong turn and ended up a block away from where I should have been.

Looking for a good place to turn around, I spied a spot that I thought was clear enough to get turned around and headed toward Ben. The car in the driveway gave me hope. I pulled into the driveway to turn around and when the car was placed into reverse, the wheels spun but the car did not move. Fortunately a kind neighbor helped pushed me back onto the street where I finally dropped off Ben's nighttime necessities. One more drive way to be pushed out of by several 6th grade boys and I was on my way home.

The next day was difficult getting to the bank. The cul de sac that I live on was not plowed, even though I had spent time clearing my driveway shovelful by cold, windy shovelful. We do not own a snow blower, but that is a story for another time. After a quick shower I changed into my suit and tie, put on my scarf and coat and embarked on my less than one mile journey to the bank. The first thing I noticed was that the plow had completed a pass down the side street I needed to get out. By not plowing our street, the plow created a wall of snow about waist high.

I had two choices, try and shovel a path in my suit or simply try and ram through just like in the car commercials. Testosterone kicked in and I decided to ram the pile. It was a glorious sight! Snow flew everywhere and when the car came to a stop, I found myself right in the middle of the snow bank. Nose of the car sticking into the side street, rear of the car blocking our street. For the second time in less than 24 hours, I couldn't move forward or backward. When I tried to get out of the car to examine the situation, the doors wouldn't open, the snow was too high and too tightly packed.

Thank goodness I had my cell phone. I called home, 75 feet away, and asked for help. My wife and 15 year old son Ted came to the rescue, digging out the car while I sat helplessly inside. When I was finally able to open the door and get out, I also helped dig out of my mistake. With my wife at the wheel and Ted and I pushing from the back, I was finally able to get unstuck and get to work.

As small business owners sometimes we are blinded by all the minutia that can engulf our day. Sometimes it piles so high that we don't know how to get through it all, so we try things that we think will work and get stuck. The key is to have people around you that can help assess the situation and will help get you moving again. Those people don't have to be part of your team, they can be customers, vendors, accountants, attorneys or hired consultants. We have to be smart enough to accept their help and advice.

Let's hope that your stories of the blizzard of '09 are entertaining, and once in a lifetime. I know that I am not looking forward to getting stuck again in the very near future.

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ankeny