

A PUBLICATION OF THE INVESTMENT RECOVERY ASSOCIATION

The Investment Recovery Business Journal

www.invrecovery.org



"Show me the money!" When it comes to the global economy, we all have more questions than answers. And when it comes to Investment Recovery, we need to hear from the experts about what to expect. Forewarned is forearmed, right? That's why noted global economist Dr. Anirban Basu was welcomed back to the Annual IRA Conference stage for his clear-eyed view of where the economy may be headed... with a little help from Tom Cruise.



Supply Chain: Fitting the Pieces Together.

A supply chain is all the bits and pieces...all the different factors that turn raw materials into a finished good—and how it travels from Point A to Point B. Some supply chains can be very small while others can be very large and complex depending on the industry. Page 9

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LESSONS FROM SERVICE: EMBRACING CHANGE

It is with great gratitude and honor that I step into the role of the Association's president. I have some very big shoes to fill, but I am excited to bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm to my colleagues. First, I want to thank past President Dawn Beutler, CMIR for her leadership through the unmatched challenges Investment Recovery had to face through the darkest days of the pandemic.

I've always been an advocate for lifelong learning. If there's one thing about IR, it's always changing—expanding its value and reaching into more sustainable solutions for our respective organizations and the planet. Before I left for Nashville, I knew that I would bring back some new vendor contacts and fresh approaches—that was a 'given' from my past conference experiences. But Nashville was different—much different.

I not only returned with a bounty of top-notch suppliers from the trade show floor, but I also came back with new peer relationships, leadership strategies, unique industry insights and proven tactics to handle my toughest asset valuations.

But most importantly, I returned with a deep conviction that the future of IR is unlimited – with unlimited opportunities. That was the 'fire in the belly' which motivated me to take on this important role. But, it was my career in the military that first taught me about unlimited opportunities to learn and to serve. Here are ten life lessons I learned in the service that will help guide my new role:

- **1: Take Care of Yourself.** You can't solve any other problems unless you ensure your own well-being first.
- **2: Know What's Important.** Avoid burnout by prioritizing goals for the greater good.

- **3: Be Positive.** Optimism is a major force for keeping morale and productivity high.
- **4: Read.** Reading expands not only your knowledge but your wisdom. It also forces you to be disciplined to make time for it.
- **5: Listen.** Know the difference between hearing and listening. Active listening to others shows respect and leads to understanding and learning.
- **6: Think.** In the military, we are schooled to follow orders, but we're also taught to think independently for personal growth in a changing world.
- **7: Follow Through.** Not doing what you say erodes credibility and empowers resistance. It also leads to low morale and minimal probability of success.
- **8: Focus on Results**. Never lose sight of bottom line results with the everyday 'busy-ness' of getting there.
- **9: Have a Mentor.** Every successful leader was inspired and fostered by one or more mentors.
- **10: Start Planning Now.** What are your short-term and long-term goals? The sooner you begin thinking about your future, the clearer it becomes.

This edition features some of the expert content from the Conference. The cover story gives us a leading economist's analysis of where we are—and where we might be headed regarding the economy. The feature story provides excellent insight into integrating IR into your supply chain—for bottom-line results.

Until next time, keep the peace.

—Dave Williams Georgia Transmission



A RISKY BUSINESS? Dr. Basu is Chairman & CEO of Sage Policy Group, Inc., an economic and policy consulting firm headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland with an office in Indonesia. The firm provides strategic analytical services to energy

"Show me the money!" became one of the most recognizable movie quotes from the Tom Cruise movie, *Jerry Maguire*. It, along with other Tom Cruise movie references, also became a recurring theme in a keynote presentation by Dr. Anirban Basu at the Annual Investment Recovery Conference & Trade Show in Nashville, TN.

suppliers, law firms, medical systems, government

agencies and real estate developers among others.

His topic? The current and potential future state of the 2024 US economy. As he explained, "Show me the money!," was his code for our nation's money supply and its critical importance to our economy's—good or bad performance. To date, are we getting good reviews...or getting panned as in a looming recession heading into 2024?

Read on.

Money supply—the highs and lows

An increase in the supply of money typically lowers interest rates, which, in turn, generates more investment and puts more money in the hands of consumers, thereby stimulating spending. Businesses respond by ordering more raw materials and increasing production. The increased business activity raises the demand for labor.

Opposite effects occur when the supply of money falls or when its rate of growth declines. Economic activity declines and either disinflation (reduced inflation) or deflation (falling prices) results. Banks lend less, businesses put off new projects, and consumer demand for home mortgages and car loans declines.

The pandemic and recovery

The US had a profound growth of the money supply during the pandemic and the early stages of recovery. It was no mistake. This was largely engineered by the US Federal Reserve Bank, which sought to reduce interest rates as close to zero as possible. This was an

ambitious effort to motivate us to spend and invest more money to refuel and power up the post-pandemic economy. And in a nutshell, it worked! By the second quarter of 2021, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was above its prepandemic level. Even with the economy coming undone by the pandemic in the spring of 2020, a little more than a year later we experienced a rapid economic recovery.

we've got major headwinds that could impact the economy such as higher interest rates, student debt, union strikes, the election and a looming governmental shutdown.

Unfortunately, that speedy bounce back brought with it an enduring bout of excess inflation of more than 6% - well above the Federal Reserve's 2% target rate. And why is this? Inflation is caused when the money supply in an economy grows at a faster rate than the economy's ability to produce goods and services, and that's where we found ourselves. The Consumer Price Index rose 6.8% between November 2020 and November 2021, spurred by price increases for gasoline, food and housing. Higher energy costs caused inflation to rise further in 2022, reaching 8.9%, a high not seen since the '80s.

As a result, the 'Feds' turned its attention to decreasing the money supply by shrinking its balance sheet, increasing interest rates and strategically encouraging us to borrow, spend and invest less. Although the money supply has in fact been shrinking recently, the cost of capital is rising in the form of higher interest rates. That leads us into some pretty 'risky business' (another Tom Cruise fan fave) in 2024, to be discussed later. But here's a hint: A period of inflation can signal an impending recession, as businesses react to higher costs by reducing production and increasing prices.

Where are we now?

But before we get into next year's forecast, where are we now? Over the past 12 months ending in

August 2023, the inflation rate was 3.7% following a previous period where the rate was slightly lower at 3.2% - according to US Labor Department data published on Sept. 13, 2023. It's better, but we haven't reached our 2% target. But what about consumer spending - a key driving force in the economy and a critical concept in economic theory? US consumer spending has held up remarkably well this year despite elevated inflation and higher interest

rates. However, this trend is not sustainable as wage growth is decelerating, pandemic savings are dwindling and household debt is rising rapidly. (The aggregate credit card debt at the household level just surpassed a trillion dollars. It may sound bad but that's not the worrisome fact—it's the rapid increase in credit card debt compared to prior recessions.)

Businesses appear to be scaling down their investments. For example, the rate of growth in equipment purchases has fallen over the last three quarters. And despite an unemployment rate of 3.8% with 8.8 million available unfilled jobs today, firms are already laying off workers. Recently, Amazon laid off 27,000 employees; Meta 21,000; and Accenture 19,000. CEOs are now clearly nervous as we approach 2024. And starting in October, new student loan repayment requirements will begin to impact many consumers.

Let's talk about the elephant in the room - recession.

First, some background on recessions: They are solely determined and defined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), an independent nonprofit that performs economic research.

NBER defines recession as a "significant decline in economic activity that is spread across the economy and that lasts more than a few months."

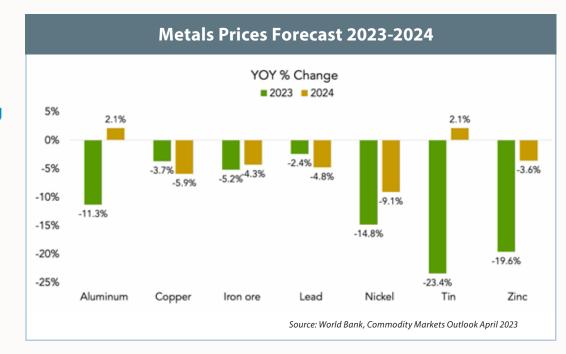
Hard vs. a soft landing

As mentioned earlier, the 'Feds' are trying to curb inflation by raising the interest rates. Since March 2022, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark short-term rate eleven times, from near zero to roughly 5.4 percent. The rate hikes have been intended to defeat the worst bout of inflation in more than 40 years. Here's

where it gets tricky; if the 'Feds' raise interest rates a lot, it may cause a recession – known as a hard landing. However, if the 'Feds' can raise interest rates just enough to slow the economy and reduce inflation without causing a recession, it has achieved what is known as a soft landing. But here's the challenge: Is it economically possible to engineer a soft landing without driving us into a recession or is it 'mission impossible?' (for you Tom Cruise fans).

Ominous business blips on the economic radar

Dr. Basu wished he could be more 'mission possible' optimistic. But data from The Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (which has reliably predicted earlier recessions) is telling us 'something wicked this way comes.' Going into 2024, we've got major headwinds that could impact the economy such as higher interest rates, student debt, union strikes, the election and a looming governmental shutdown. (The clock is ticking as of this writing.) And here's a key indicator: This year's business inventories have all risen—with the retail sector leading all others. As consumers have held back on their spending, a few major retailers like Target, Macy's and Foot Locker are seeing their margins shrink. This produces a domino effect. The retailer is forced to aggressively



discount merchandise to move it. Consequently, retailers can't buy as much from the wholesalers, who in turn, see their inventories rise. The wholesalers then can't buy as much from the manufacturers who see their inventories rise. That domino effect can severely dampen economic growth.

And according to Dr. Basu—this next scenario literally screams a recession is coming in 2024. For well over a year, we've had what's known as an inverted yield curve, meaning the interest paid by 10-year Treasury bonds has been lower than shorter-term debt, like two-year Treasury bonds. Historically, inverted yield curves have been a fairly reliable indicator that a recession is likely. So, what does this mean for Investment Recovery?

And for IR???

Simply put, the economy is going to get weaker, pushing most commodity prices down. And what about other countries—like China? Their projected growth is expected to cool down as well. So, when you've got the world's two largest economies with projected downturns—you've got a metals crisis.

According to the World Bank—with the exception of tin and aluminum with modest price increases in 2024—all other metals prices are expected to fall in 2024—with nickel taking a 9.1% tumble.

Dr. Basu bluntly stated that the outlook isn't pretty and predicts a recession could happen in the next 12 months. His less-thanrosy forecast includes the following:

- It's going to get better before it gets worse.
- The global and US economies are weakening, borrowing costs are higher, and excess inflation persists.
- Certain segments stand to hold up better than others, such as public construction, grocery stores and multi-family housing.
- At some point, the Federal Reserve will stop raising rates, representing a key inflection point for the economy.
- Recessionary conditions will prevail at some time over the next 12 months.

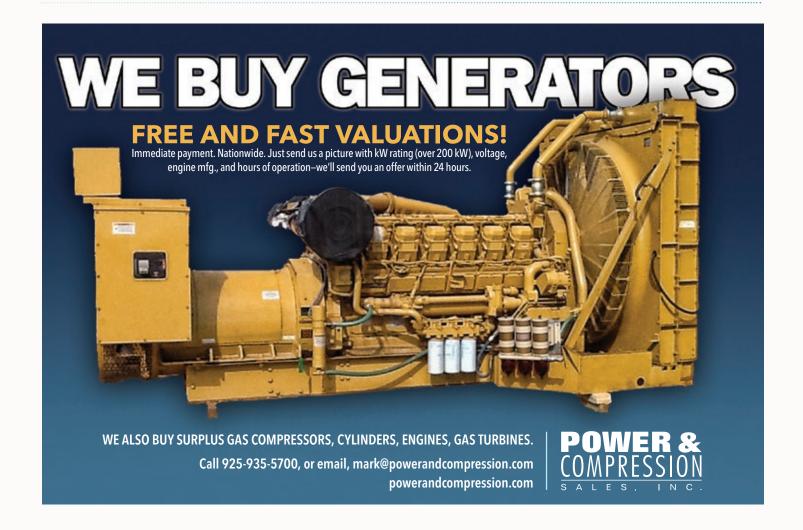
Mixed reviews

Dr. Basu openly admitted that his predictions are based on the best available data, and analysis could or could not become reality. He joked that economists tend to be pessimistic as they never dated in college. But forewarned is forearmed—and IR professionals are realists with resilience and can cope with all kinds of economic challenges. So folks, let's all welcome 2024 with eyes wide open—not *Eyes Wide Shut*. (Thanks for all the cool references, Tom!)

Additional sources:

www.conference-board.org, "Economic Forecast for the US Economy," 2023

www.investopedia.com, "Money Supply definition: Types and How It Affects the Economy," Feb. 12, 2023





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- **Expanded network:** As a CMIR candidate, you'll have collaborative opportunities to meet virtually and share ideas with fellow CMIR candidates and mentors.

How do I apply and prepare?

When you apply for the Certified Manager of Investment Recovery designation, you are on your way to demonstrating that you are among the best. You should definitely make CMIR certification your immediate goal if you have/are:

- Employed currently as an IR manager, supervisor, or provide support within an IR department with three (3) or more years of experience.
- Acceptable character, ability, and reputation.
- Pledged in writing to adhere to the Investment Recovery Association Code of Ethics.
- Developed 35 points from your Personal Data Form (PDF).
- Prepared for the exam by studying the Investment Recovery Handbook: Adding Value to the Supply Chain is available to use as a review. This publication is available on Amazon.



I'm a CMIR. How do I recertify?

Each CMIR reaches the first recertification date on the first January 1st, following the date appearing on the certificate attesting to the certification. A \$50 (member) or \$100 (non-member) fee is due each five-year recertification filing to maintain the designation.



Get started today!

Download the CMIR application. www.invrecovery.org/cmir



Supply Chain: Fitting the Pieces Together

Christi Roorda, CMIR, Associate Director of Operations, Linde Gas & Equipment Inc.

From the earliest days of Investment Recovery, its supply chain value was focused on the end-of-life disposition of idle assets. For those in IR, this was a business fact of life. However, in the supply chain sector, IR was often overlooked as an integral part of the supply chain process. Once the product reached the end user, that process was complete. Game over. However, in 2014, ASSET 2.0 published an article, "Investment Recovery: The Missing Link in the Supply Chain." It described how the activities involved with the procurement of equipment

and raw materials to manufacture a product may become obsolete, discarded or left idle once their initial production was no longer needed.

Since then, IR has been demonstrating and expanding its essential value to an organization's sustainability and supply chain programs—for both bottom-line results and environmental stewardship.

For the supply chain in particular, IR is no longer the missing link—but a vital nexus for production and logistical success.

At the 2023 Conference and Trade Show, Christi Roorda, CMIR, Associate Director of Operations, Linde Gas & Equipment Inc., presented "Supply Chain: Fitting the Pieces Together". She described her career journey starting out in IR and then switching over to supply chain management. Christi saw first-hand how IR could



Christi Roorda, CMIR, presenting at the IRA Conference & Tradeshow in Nashville, TN.

support their efforts further up the in the supply "food chain."

Christi has more than 18 years in the industrial gases sector—which she learned has a very unique supply chain. Their raw material is captured air—both free and abundant. It is then separated into component gases, compressed, repackaged into cylinders and shipped via pipeline, truck or bulk trailer out to the retailer. The biggest supplier to fuel this process? Electricity.

When she first started her job at Praxair (later called Linde) they didn't have an IR function. She was breaking new ground and blazing trails in uncharted territory. They said, "Go Christi! Run with it! Do what you can. Sell some junk and let us know how it goes." So back then, she didn't know what she didn't know until her first Investment Recovery Association Conference—year after year provided her with practical knowledge from both peers and vendors alike to deliver bottom-line results.

Supply chain and IR: A strategic partnership

Once she transitioned from IR into her new role, she had a distinct perspective on how IR could impact the supply chain. Christi emphasized that by gaining an in-depth understanding of each step of an organization's supply chain, IR professionals can find potential opportunities to add value.

Customer Service: First and foremost, with IR partnering with the supply chain, the overall objective is to provide excellent customer service. For those of us on the industrial side, it's easy to forget about our customers. Sometimes, when we think about the customer experience, we fail to consider all the critical, interdependent steps needed to produce a finished product, its timely retail distribution and finally—consumer usage and satisfaction. If you were the end user, what could make the experience better? (An example from the Cox Communications Net Zero program had their IR team's input on redesigning more sustainable and user-friendly packaging options.)

Operating costs: Of equal importance and will most certainly catapult your IR function to superstardom is uncovering ways to control costs. With Christi now on the operations side of the business, she had a total 'eye-opener' in terms of ranking priorities, making decisions at warp speed and minimizing downtime. So, the thought of taking precious time to really think things through for 'nickel and dime' results did not work for them in real time. IR professionals can step in and offer their expertise in various cost-cutting ways, from more robust asset utilization to cost-effective disposition options to more sustainable raw materials sourcing. Besides wanting to help our companies financially, we also need to preserve their image as a reputable and high-quality organization. That means taking a more comprehensive approach beyond your daily IR function to ensure the whole organization benefits from the service you provide.

Asset utilization: Many of you from large organizations like Linde know there are undiscovered pockets of idle materials just waiting to be found and evaluated as an asset. There's so much out there if you know where to look for these 'secret pockets' of stuff. So, we need to ensure we are maximizing the use of these assets, which could mean any ways of ethical and financially beneficial disposition. It's what we do every day. But it also means close collaboration with the supply chain stakeholders to understand where these pockets can be found, what assets they need and when they need them.

Flexibility and agility: When it comes to having the ability to pivot and adapt to any situation that can occur at any time—IR folks have those qualities in spades. But here again, it takes collaboration with your supply chain colleagues to know when those unanticipated

needs arise. Maybe a supplier couldn't deliver. This is when IR can step in and help out with an idle asset in your inventory – or perhaps you know someone from your network who could provide the needed material or equipment. For Christi at Linde, she was the "I gotta guy" go-to when others had exhausted their contacts and resources. So, if that's not you—expand your role as the "I gotta guy" person in your organization. This not only adds value to your role personally and the IR function but also fosters cross-department collaboration.

And those qualities of being adaptable as never before were put to the test in 2020 with the pandemic—the game changer of all supply chain disruptors.

Supply chain disruptors—the log jammers

Supply chains can be disrupted by both external and internal factors. They can be as small as a single part shortage or a truck out of service due to a global pandemic. The supply chain is a finely tuned, complex network that relies on interconnected people, processes and products. Disruption can strike anywhere and anytime. But first, let's take a look at the outside forces that can jam the supply chain and what we can do to overcome them.

Since 2020, it's been a totally different world we've all weathered and are still powering through. Let's look at the different disruptors that can pop up externally to a greater extent and internally to a lesser degree. And most importantly, what problems do they present and how IR and the supply chain can work together to overcome them.

External disruptors

Globalization: Linde depends on global sourcing to keep costs down and to boost profitability. That's why they spent a great deal of time finding the most costeffective resources to run their business successfully. But the risks can be high as any number of events beyond our borders, such as political instability, natural disasters and a pandemic—any and all can disrupt the supply chain. If something happens on the other side of the world where access to raw materials is cut off, you need to have contingency suppliers in your back pocket.

Just-in-time (JIT) inventory: As most of us already know, the goal of JIT is to have the minimum amount of inventory on hand to meet production demand. JIT reduces waste, minimizes warehousing costs and obsolescence, improves cash flow and optimizes labor. Although it is considered a best practice in manufacturing, it's one of the weakest links in the supply chain should a disruption occur. And here again, if your organization utilizes JIT, you need a backup solution should a disruption deplete your JIT inventory.

Labor issues: From unfilled positions to labor disputes, what alternatives do you have in place to literally keep operations running? For example, Linde is understaffed with truck drivers and there is a constant shuffle to find alternative ways for product transport. What alternatives does your organization have for open positions and transport in key logistical areas?

Internal Disruptors:

Internal disruptors, from poor planning/ communication to errors/delays, a lack of contingency plans, and unrealistic delivery dates, could all translate into unhappy customers and damage to the brand.

So, how can IR help? If you are thinking about expanded networking and collaboration within your organization, you're right!

IR—the new link for avoiding disruptors

We get it. It's easy to stay focused on your IR responsibilities without thinking about all the disruptors along the way. Still, there are certainly opportunities where IR can add value to the supply chain.

Most importantly, network across the organization in key logistics areas to both understand needs and offer your services should a disruption occur. In her IR capacity, Christi was proactive in inserting herself into her company's supply chain process—from early planning to transport.

This is where collaboration and open communication can not only avoid errors but also prepare for contingency situations. The bottom line is getting that product out the door in a timely manner to keep our customers happy.

- Get involved with different areas of the organization that are critical pieces of your supply chain.
- Help with contingency plans—be the "I gotta guy" resource.
- Talk with your suppliers about how they could help out during a disruption.

Missing link no more

So be a strong networker, collaborator and the "I gotta guy" go-to person in your organization—to help elevate IR's function and your role. ■



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We'd like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our speakers, attendees, exhibitors and sponsors for helping to make our conference and trade show a roaring success!

You weren't just participants; you were our life force! Your enthusiasm, curiosity and willingness to engage made this event buzzing with ideas with the world's most engaged audience. Kudos to you! We hope you had as much fun as we did and we can't wait to see you again next year.



The IRA Board in a pre-conference strategy session.



Keynote Speaker: Economist Dr. Anirban Basu provided a sobering forecast of our nation's economy – and what that means to IR.



Mark Hutson, CMIR, The Mosaic Company on how his company is integrating IR with sustainability with major bottom-line results.



Curtis Schopp, National Salvage & Service Corp, provided insight on sustainable wood recycling solutions.



Keynote speaker Bryan Williams, VP. TVA, discussed his secrets of success regarding motivation, leadership and staff empowerment.



Ron Brooks, CMIR Fellow, R. Brooks Consulting, led a practical workshop on proven methodologies of Asset Valuation.



Christi Roorda, CMIR, Linde, on how to integrate IR with your organization's supply chain.



IRA's new president Dave Williams with outgoing president Dawn Beutler, CMIR.



An inspired 'fireside chat' with IR executives discussing personal/professional experiences on IR and sustainability.



Veteran CMIRs welcomed the newly credentialed who just passed the challenging exam—Jonah Shell from REUZEit, and Megan Behm from National Grid.



Jonah Shell, CMIR, REUZEit, discussed a case study on the GHG impact of equipment reuse vs. recycling.



An expert panel shared their knowledge on demolition, dismantlement, decommission and disposal.



What's your IR hot topic? Attendees had the spotlight to lead and share the latest trends and best practices.



Monday night reception: Mixing fun and networking at Nashville's famous *Wild Horse Saloon*. Attendees stormed the line dance floor after a sumptuous buffet.

TRADE SHOW

Between educational sessions, attendees and exhibitors discussed IR products and services at the Trade Show, where they got a chance to network and meet potential clients, partners, and suppliers.









EXHIBITOR RAPID FIRE

Some exhibitors took the stage with "AHA!" moments of optimizing value from your assets.



Scott Seelman, **EPIC**



Tracy Hammond, **Jackson Demolition**



Chip Hunter, **EMR Recycling**



Art Sferlazzo, R Baker & Son



Anne Bailey & Jon Lapczenski, A-Line E.D.S.



Kim Castaldo, **Silicon Valley Disposition**



Nick Vora, **Integrated Demolition &** Remediation



Jonathan Julian, **JJ Kane Auctions**



Pat Hance, The Pipeyard



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News of the Investment Recovery Association

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ASSET 2.0: The Investment Recovery Business Journal is published by the Investment Recovery Association.

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