

## The Chocolate Key ..... an end of year story

Imagine being locked and starving in a room with a hundred locked exit doors.

In your hand is a key, but it's made of chocolate. You can eat it, and your hunger will fade for a moment. Or you can try it in one of the many locks around you. Most will grind the key down to nothing, leaving you worse off and still trapped. But one, perhaps, might open.

Those who have never felt hunger will call it foolish to waste the key. But when you live in the locked room, the difference between certain endurance and possible escape is everything. A meal feeds the body, a chance feeds the soul.

That's why someone with nothing might spend their last few pounds on a lottery ticket.

To the comfortable, it seems irrational, the odds are microscopic. But when life offers no other exits, even the smallest non-zero chance of transformation feels more rational than the certainty of another hungry day. The lottery isn't just a gamble, it's the mathematical form of hope, the act of trying the key rather than quietly eating it.

And the same instinct appears in boardrooms every Q4.

When targets loom and the year runs out, companies "eat" their own chocolate keys, discounting heavily, trading away long-term loyalty for the brief sweetness of year-end revenue.

Each deal makes sense in the moment, but the locks those prices once opened, trust, value, brand integrity, wear down with every bite.

Before you press the "deal now" button, pause to count the real cost, the margin you'll lose in Q1 as customers wait for the next discount, the orders delayed, the credibility quietly melted away. Survival may feel like success, but not every locked door is worth the chocolate key it consumes.

If you believe that short term sacrifices are important to your organization and are impacting the margin growth you are seeking, then FL&A can help. Feel free to contact Stephen Martin at [smartin@franklynn.com](mailto:smartin@franklynn.com) for further discussion.

