

## Turning the corner

As we close the door on 2009, hopes and expectations for a better year can't be more clearly needed. The challenges of the past year have been visited across the board. Now it's time to look and move forward.

The Great Recession, as the past year's massive decline in American fortune has been called, yields many lessons, not the least of which is finding our way back to fundamentals that first created a very profitable water treatment industry. The focus on returning to profitability must include a broader horizon in which to do more with less, and regain a foothold in the sector before a successful return to pre-2009 levels can be achieved.

"This, too, shall pass" is more relevant than ever. Economics is a treadmill of cycles, bouncing between feast and famine as the stock markets trade risk. This current down cycle is not forever. Be ready for the upswing and move quickly to reclaim your share of the market place.

Much of the water treatment industry is and has been tied to the housing market, but another venue has taken on a new mantle. Remodeling rather than up-trading is the choice of many homeowners. The contracts are smaller but no less important. Small is not a bad thing, especially if it leads to more and bigger business opportunities.

Customers are far more wary of spending their hard-earned dollars without calculating the up-front value of products and services. They are not, as previously anticipated, returning to their overly consumptive ways. In spite of historically low rates of return on savings and great wariness of investing in general, Americans are looking for value, commitment and loyalty, the basic tenets of ethical business practices.

Take the time to know your customer, and your employees. Invest as much in them as you want them to invest in you. Build loyalty with a willingness to foster change, and be at the forefront of the pack. Stand by your reputation in more than words and slogans. Be there for your customer and your employees; they will return the favor.

Every dealer and manufacturer has a vested interest in honing customer service skills, encouraging employee training, applying new technologies and expanding products, services and commitments. And what better time to do so than now? Although the economic forecast is still grim, there are glimmers of light at the end of the tunnel. Be ready for that oncoming train to appear as transportation to the next level.

Starting the new year with a positive outlook, in spite of the latest dismal reports, is a small step, but an important one. Without it, there can be no movement forward, and we must move forward to end this recession. Hire, train, buy, sell. Let's get back in the game!



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