

## LEADERSHIP

# Finding the Silver Lining in Our Current Economic Cloudiness

Doug Dwyer  
Contributing Editor

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I am just starting my vacation as I write this column. Writing this is my last bit of business to wrap up before giving my 100% focus to family, rest, relaxation and leisure fun. In checking the weather forecast, it stated high temperatures in the low 80s with a 30% chance of scattered showers and mild wind. Working with our DreamMaker owners and talking to many other companies in remodeling across the country, the economic forecast varies by location.

In business, like in our personal life, we have to find the silver lining in the forecast and how we might benefit from it. Depending on the area of the country you are from, the economic conditions have been changing from our perspective since July 2005. Some of the early markets are now rebounding, while others are about as predictable as the weather itself.

What do we know about the weather/nature that could help us in business? 1) It goes through natural cycles so we can be prepared for it. If you're in a rainy area, always have an umbrella handy, or if you have snow, have a windshield scraper and, possibly, chains for your tires. 2) The change in climate let's you know which kind of plants and trees best endure in your environment. 3) We must plan different activities around the weather to receive the greatest benefits from what is available to us. 4) There is no one perfect forecast or climate for anyone that wants optimum health, personally or professionally.

How do these apply to business?

1) Concerning natural cycles and being prepared, with marketing we may find that we need to utilize different techniques for attracting new customers. In other words, proactive marketing, like job signs, trade shows, direct mail, asking for referrals verses waiting on them, to name a few. Are you prepared for the economic weather changes that come with the life cycle of a business? If not, it will be a much tougher experience, just as it is when the natural weather changes. The difference is that it is typically more costly in business.

2) Natural climate changes affect the type of greenery that can survive and prosper. Just as your company and the economic climate effect staffing. Often times in business, this is when you find out who is truly a right match for your company, team and culture! Even though it can be extremely difficult during these times, it is equally as beneficial to all included. You're forced to lay off people or permanently let people go. If you choose well, your team will be stronger and the individual who was laid off will have an opportunity to find a place where they are a better match. It makes sense, but is just difficult to actually live through!

3) Without planning we miss opportunities that, in many cases, are easy to see if we will just invest the time. It takes a balance of looking at history – let's say for budgeting, while looking to the future to predict expenses that will naturally occur or will need to be eliminated due to growth or a downturn of business. I find it beneficial to have others involved in this process. In the end, you and I as leaders have to make the final decision. In addition, sales is a critical area to make sure you have a solid system in place in order to maximize your lead flow and your company's sales efforts.

4) As business owners, leaders of departments, etc., it takes adversity and challenges to sharpen our business and people skills. Without it, we will have a dull edge, thus be ineffective and inefficient in dealing with the opportunities that are coming around the corner.

Equipped with the right attitude and perspective of shifting our focus off the apparent bad conditions and onto the facts of a natural business growth cycle, we can make the needed changes to prosper to the next level of business and personal success.

Having checked out the weather on vacation, I am now prepared to enjoy and receive the greatest benefit of the time and opportunities available. When I return I will be better prepared to take advantage of, and enjoy, the business opportunities, the ability to touch people's lives in a positive way and the fun of business.