

# Thank God for the Recession

by Jim Dittman

We've ridden the crest of an economic wave for several years now. And whether you believe it has come crashing down on the beach or will just slap lazily against it, the fast and easy ride is over for now.

We are in a recession, and we'll all be the better for it.

We're supposed to be in the business of finding solutions ... the business of motivating sales people to sell, customers to buy, and people to work harder, smarter, more productively. It's up to us to look around and find ways to deal with the tougher times, reasons to celebrate our business spirit ... to electrify ourselves ... and arm ourselves and our people to deal with the days ahead.

## A Womb for Brilliant Ideas

Tougher times, like any crisis faced squarely, are healthy. Great ideas flourish in prosperous times, but they are born in tougher times. Creative solutions multiply in direct proportion to the difficulty of the problems. And when do we have more problems than when the economy is in the state we're in now?

When the nation's on a roll, the living gets easy. People do things from habit because no more is called for. We can make a living by just doing things well ... not differently, not imaginatively ... just well. But "just well" won't do when we're in an economic valley. And anyone who doubts that notion need simply

read the business press to see the mental agility being exercised to deal with our current environment.

Tougher times get flabby minds back in shape ... make thinkers out of people who haven't been or haven't had to be.

## Emotional Gratification

Look back for a moment. You've just closed a major new contract, you've hit new sales and profit highs. You look around and find that so has everyone else ... including some people who couldn't carry your briefcase. It happens all the time when the economy is good.

Now, move the setting forward to the present. You've just closed a new deal, hired some great new talent, had another great idea. You look around and hear the other guy saying, "The only thing standing between me and prosperity is two more rate cuts."

A warm glow of satisfaction sets in when you realize that you're doing things that others say can't be done; you've taken control while others are being controlled by their excuses; you are, in fact, one of those overachievers who lead other people into the future.

And before you walk away, you could suggest to the guy next to you that since tight capital is on everyone's minds, he might want to create an incentive program to contract his receivables. Oh never

mind, he probably wouldn't listen anyway.

## The Men from the Boys, the Women from the Girls

There are some people who simply should not be in the role they currently occupy in the business they are in. In the good times, anyone with half a brain can make a living. A good old-fashioned slump makes life a little tougher for the professionals, but it makes it impossible for the amateurs. Which

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is a good thing because the amateurs will probably be happier in a place where the Federal Reserve Board doesn't stand between them and prosperity.

## Residual Benefits

When the tough times are over, we are all the better for the experience ... just as the steel is stronger for having been through the fire. And one of the most important benefits is that we have been prepared for the next tough times. Oh, you know there'll be more ... and more ... and more.

But the most enduring benefit of any economic convulsion is this. If we remember the extraordinary success we had when we applied heaping doses of imagination and creativity, and then continue to recognize the edge that intense, non-linear thinking gives us, we will carve out a special place for ourselves that lasts through the good and the bad.

## Normal Isn't Anymore

“When are we going to get back to normal?” How many times have you heard that line uttered lately? Well, my friend, we're never getting back to normal. This is normal.

One crisis after another. Rapidly accelerating change. Recession, inflation, prosperity. New markets being born ... others dying. The only constant on which we can rely is that when the tough times abate,

they will be followed by another problem that some will view as disaster and others will see as a challenge.

How well we deal with these tough times is a matter of attitude. They give each of us an opportunity to reach deep down inside ourselves to fulfill our own true, full, human potential.

Recessions start and end with attitude. You know how to predict

them. Recessions occur when enough people believe they will occur. And if you know how they start, then you know how they end ... when enough people believe they will end.

We are marketers. And we now have a marketing task at hand. We have an idea to market to our clients, our associates, our employees, our peers, ourselves.

The recession is over.