

OUTLOOK

By Bruce F. Shank, Editor

The high energy, aggressive business tactics of the 60's and 70's have temporarily fallen to the conservative, cautious methods of the 80's. Emphasis has switched from growth to control. Accordingly, concern over share of market and constant growth is now focused upon efficiency and taking care of the core business.

The questions now are: Will the pace and excitement of the 60's return? Will we be able to rein in our thought from new ventures to improving our basic skills? Will a temporary return to improvement of skills prepare us for another round of growth when recession lifts? And will we be satisfied with our positions in life and get off the fortune hunter kick?

Don't kid yourself. Although we will benefit from the temporary concentration on current skills, we will never have the slow, exacting

pace of previous generations. Technology will not permit stagnation.

So, while we wait for the cloud to lift, we should be researching ways to expand our businesses. That computer you thought may not be necessary should be ordered and an employee trained to run it. If you have put off building needed storage space, get the blueprints back out and get bids. Hire a trainee for positions where growth will require backup like an accounting assistant, shipping clerk, or salesman. Now is the greatest opportunity to train for future needs.

How about design training for landscape contractors? My sources tell me enrollment in two- and four-year landscape design courses is high. As typical residential installations reach \$5,000, copying out of landscape photo books will not work. Knowledge of low main-

tenance plant material and energy saving design is a valuable asset to the modern landscape contractor. Better knowledge of landscape structures is also advised. If landscape architects can specify structures at a cost two-and-one-half times the cost of plant material, so can landscape contractors with design capability.

Finally, do not moderate price increases expecting lower costs. The investment for growth has not vanished. If investment is delayed, invest in short term certificates. Don't pay off cheap credit. Be ready to roll when the opportunity is identified.

The businessman who uses slow periods to prepare for future opportunities will find economic recovery an organized, goal-oriented progression rather than a total rebuilding process.

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