

It's grow or go time

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS / MANAGING EDITOR

THE WORST recession since the 1930s has ended — or so read recent headlines. Although welcome news, it might come as a bit of a shock, or with a snort of derision, to some perusing their books.

Even if the economy has passed a textbook definition of recession, few prognosticators expect a quick return to prosperity. Words such as “slow” and “tentative” are appended to most fiscal pronouncements. Jobs and consumer

spending must rebound significantly before the nation loosens a notch or two on the economic belt it's been tightening for two years.

So now what?

Is it time to start hiring and adding services in preparation for an upswing? Should you cut back or maintain the status quo if the recovery stagnates — or worse, the economy takes another dive? Anyone who promises definitive answers about where we'll be in six months is certifiably insane or attended the Bernie Madoff school of ethics. But that doesn't mean we can't or shouldn't prepare.

Start by taking a hard look in the mirror. Assess where you stand and where you have room for improvement. There are, no doubt, areas that have been neglected during these challenging times. Evaluate your customers and service offerings. Make sure they're good fits. And look for acquisition opportunities. Like plants that die each year and soil that reabsorbs their nutrients, businesses that don't survive economically this winter can provide fertilizer for those that do.

On the following pages, the editors of *Landscape Management* have collected sage advice from some of the most fertile minds in

the Green Industry. We've divided our Business Planner 2010 into three sections — People Power, Strategic Solutions and Tools & Techniques, to target key growth opportunities.

Follow a group of executives as they learn from one another during a peer-review group process. Listen to veteran business owner Wayne Volz offer advice about surviving the challenges of this economy. Get the most out of what you have. Read our quintet of regular columnists: Bruce Wilson, Jim Wilson, Kevin Kehoe, Jim Paluch and Tyler Whitaker. Learn how to stay competitive from marketing whiz Harvey Goldglantz and how to train managers to think like owners from Jonathan Goldhill, our resident growth coach. Last but not least, survey new time- and money-saving tools designed especially for landscape and lawn care professionals.

We can't accurately predict the state of the economy six months from now. But as 2009 nears its end, we can say with a degree of confidence hope for an impending recover is in the air. Next year, we hope to be writing about how to manage your explosive growth. Until then, we offer our Business Planner 2010 — another keeper issue designed to help you turn today's obstacles into tomorrow's opportunities. **LM**

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