

SPONSOR'S WORD

A clear focus

Every recession teaches us familiar lessons, and the past few years were no exception. As business owners, we are again smarter for having gone through the last economic dip. One advantage of the uncertain economy is that it forced us to focus—whether we liked it or not. If you are like me, you learned to monitor your business more closely, manage your cash and even reassess your profit structure. These are worthwhile lessons that all business owners need to learn, even if we don't fully appreciate them at the time.

As the economy starts to show signs of picking up, let's stay steadfast in the lessons we've learned. There are still plenty of challenges to keep us motivated. Fuel prices, rising taxes and unpredictable health care costs make all of us wary. But I've always believed you can find opportunity in any kind of economy. My great-grandfather started our family business in 1933 in the midst of the Great Depression. He had to set his priorities, stay focused and ignore the doom-and-gloom mindset that surrounded him at that time. But with a small loan borrowed against his life insurance policy, he slowly and steadily grew a business that would go on to sustain three more generations of employees.

Certainly, all of our success hinges on the weather to a certain extent, but there are many positive indicators that show we are moving in the right direction as an industry. The housing market is in recovery, consumer confidence is slowly improving and leading indicators point to a growing economy. As you go into the next year, remember to keep a clear focus on profitable growth. Selling short of your value is not a viable business model. It will only catch up with you in the near future and create a cycle of low price, low value that is hard to break. And, more importantly, it will hurt the entire Green Industry in the long run.

We, as an industry, need to find new opportunities to create value for our customers—even if it means continually finding more creative ways to do so. The year ahead has all the positive signs of providing an environment for profitable growth. The world of communications technology should provide a ripe opportunity for you to stay even closer to your customers seeking your professional advice and service.

Use these opportunities and the lessons of the last few years to come out of the gate strong, healthy and reenergized for your most successful year yet.

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