



DESIGNING STRATEGIES

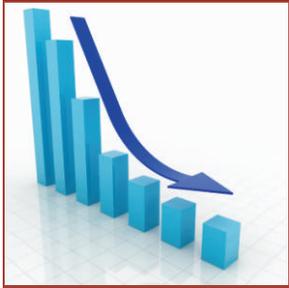
Business Strategies for the Design Industry

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After months of hemming and hawing, the media and powers that be finally conceded that we are, in fact, in a recession. No kidding! Not just a recession here in the US, but a full blown, worldwide recession that appears will leave no one untouched. You're already seeing effects on your company, how much further will it go? Costs are up, sales and revenue are down. Pending projects and outstanding bids have been put on the back burner. Everyone and everything seem to be in limbo, waiting to see how bad things will really get. Downsizing and layoffs may be imminent in spite of hopes of avoiding them.



Visualize

Now that the big secret is out in the open, what do you intend to do about it? All the exciting plans and strategies you developed for 2009 seem impossible to accomplish in this economic environment. Now it's all about survival and coming through the rough times intact and ready to hit the ground running when the economy picks up.

Where to begin? How about with your customer base? You already, to a great degree, have them available. You could decide to go out and find more new customers, but that could be an expensive endeavor. It costs five to ten times more to get a new customer than it does to develop an existing one, and could involve some major, and costly, marketing efforts. Existing customers already know you, your products and services, so you don't need to educate them about your company.

Analyze

It's time to think seriously about how to capitalize and build on your existing customer base. Stop, look, and listen to your customers and your staff. Train staff to deal with customers in an exemplary manner. Make sure they understand your expectations and the processes you want them to use in serving customers. Teach them the difference between listening and *hearing* what customers are saying. Instruct them to respond immediately to customer concerns, and to deliver on promises they make. If they say they will call back in an hour with a response, be sure they do, even if they do not yet have an answer or a solution. Be sure that the highest levels of communication are maintained to keep customers updated and apprized of any scheduling delays or price differences.

Customers are like gold, precious and valuable, and should be treated accordingly. Make sure your people treat customers with kindness and understanding, and handle their problems responsibly. Respect customers and their time. Don't make them have to repeatedly call to get a problem resolved. Make staff understand that everyone in the firm is involved in customer service. Manage customer expectations to avoid a spiral into disillusionment and anger. Surprise them by being ahead of schedule or at a price lower than your proposal. Provide an unexpected service or reward. Little things mean a lot.



Analyze your customer service practices and CRM processes, then develop strategies that allow you to make the most of existing customers during these turbulent times. When the economic slump passes, you will be well positioned for growth and success.

Strategize

Visualize - Analyze - Strategize
Plan for success!

The purpose of business is to create and keep a customer.

Peter Drucker

Maurer On The Move

February 18th

ASID Arizona So. Chapter - Arizona Designs Industry Partner Trade Expo
Tucson Convention Center
"Branding: It's Not Just for Cattle and Corporations"

June 15th

NeoCon Chicago
"Move Your Firm's Customer Experience to WOW!"

June 16th

NeoCon Chicago
"Develop Your On-line Presence"



Terri L. Maurer, FASID **NEWTOPICS in 2009: "Business Survival in Turbulent Times" and "Move Your Firm's Customer Experience to WOW!"**

Continuing Ed Ops!

Looking for a way to get designers into your showroom, or help a distributor attract new customers? Consider one of my continuing education programs on a variety of business topics, or a presentation on industry trends or timely topics like *generational diversity – designing for the generations, marketing and selling to the generationism* or *recruiting and retaining an age-diverse workforce*.

For a complete list of programs or for more information, please feel free to contact me directly at 330.666.0802 or tlmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com. Please remember to email me your questions. If space permits, they will be answered in future issues of **Designing Strategies**.