



DESIGNING STRATEGIES

Business Strategies for the Design Industry

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Let me take this opportunity to send out my very best wishes to each of you as we enter the busy and exciting holiday season.

Those who have adapted to survive these very turbulent economic times have much to be thankful

for. Those who looked to the future and did what was necessary to be poised for growth as we work our way through an uncertain economy have much to be thankful for. Those who shared ideas and tactics with fellow industry members should be thanked for their open hearts and generosity.

Personally, I am thankful for each of you who continue to read and respond to 'Designing Strategies.' Your support and positive comments are most encouraging and greatly appreciated. I wish you the very best of the holiday season.

Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.

Vince Lombardi

Plans For Moving Into 2010

Developing relationships is key to business success, whether you are connect with suppliers, customers or strategic alliance partners. Take advantage of new ways to meet people and build relationships through social media sites on the Internet.

Having a website is important, but in today's market for customers, it is just the base line of an on-line presence. The most recent additions to our business seminars are 'Develop Your On-line Presence' and 'Move Your Customers' Experience to WOW!'. Both were offered at Neocon in June and well attended by designers, architects and industry.

Consider offering one of these programs in your area, as a sponsor for an event or host one for the design community in your showroom. We are already booking into 2010 so contact Terri Maurer at:

tlmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com or 330.666.0802 to discuss scheduling these or our other business programs.

It's hard to miss all the articles and buzz around building community.

It's the latest and greatest strategy for developing customer loyalty...at least that's what some believe. The early adopters to this line of thinking came up with all sorts of loyalty programs...buy 10 cups of coffee, keep your card punched and get the 11th cup free. Fly the friendly skies on our airline, collect points and *maybe* you can get a free flight somewhere. Carry our little card in your wallet and get special pricing reserved for our special customers.



What about the 'community' that works within your offices, showrooms, store fronts and factories? How engaged are they as your internal community? Have you done anything to show your appreciation for their loyalty? How loyal will they be when the economy turns around? What, if anything, have you done to build that community and make your staff want to belong? These and other questions that pertain to your success coming out of the recession need to be answered.

You may rationalize that employees you did not have to lay off when the economy tanked are the lucky ones.

They still have jobs, a pay check and benefits. They also have an extremely high level of stress. Some feel those who were laid off were the lucky ones. They got to stay, get the same pay and do all or part of someone else's job. Pressure is on them to perform at a very high level of productivity. Some face long days; others face overtime as well. Some have even faced pay cuts. Just because they still have jobs doesn't mean they aren't worried that if things don't turn around soon, they, too can be in the unemployment lines.



Waiting for the other shoe to drop can create a lot of tension for this 'lucky' group. These employees need support. They need to know you care and appreciate the load they are carrying to help keep the company afloat in tough times. Are you paying attention? Are you watching and listening for signs of dissatisfaction or frustration? What can you do to develop or strengthen your community? How can you do to show them they are a vital part of your company and its success? How can you get everyone on the same page, working together for the common good...inspired and engaged?

It's no secret that money is tight. While big bonuses may not be possible, even small pay increases let people know they are valued. Big, expensive holiday parties may not be in the budget, but how about smaller get-togethers over lunch, or after work? Simply acknowledging their time and efforts with a pizza party or fresh baked cookies from the neighborhood bakery on Friday afternoon will go a long way to creating memories. Recognize their contributions by recognizing them in your newsletter, intranet site, a note on the bulletin board. Focus on the group...the community...that has brought you this far and will carry you into the future.



The best strategy for getting through this recession is to look forward, beyond this miserable economy. When things pick up, and they will – will you be in a position to move forward quickly as funds are freed up and people start spending again? Part of this strategy will require that you have a strong, engaged and ready staff. Now is the time to develop your community if you haven't done so already. Make them feel they belong to something bigger than themselves. Find ways to train them for that future you have planned. Include them in your planning at some level to show their input is valuable. Include some simple strategies in your plan for 2010 to build your internal community and support your employees so they will be there to support you.

Visualize

Analyze

Strategize