

# Times call for solid planning, strategies

## THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



**W**e are all feeling the pinch from rising fuel prices, increased costs, reduced visitor counts,

fallout from the mortgage crisis, that holding pattern that comes with a presidential election, and an overall slowing of the economy. We are continuing to hear how these challenges are impacting businesses and their employees, and the tremendous efforts that are being made by owners to stay open, bring in more business and keep their people employed.

There is no doubt that the challenges are mounting, and we do not know when it will peak and the recovery will begin. However, we must avoid rash decisions and stick with solid planning.

Often in times like this, you will see knee-jerk reactions, with businesses cutting back on marketing and affiliation dollars; but they are not the right answers. Those reactions are like taking down the sign and turning off the lights for businesses that already are struggling to keep people coming through their doors.

Now is the time to dust off that business plan — and if one doesn't exist, create one! — to refocus, to retool and to plan strategically for the future.

Maui Chamber of Commerce staff members are here to help! In addition to our ongoing legislative advocacy to improve the business sector, economy and community, our monthly Business After Hours events provide networking opportunities that create new clients, resources, solutions and friends. Our major events help members stay informed, hear from key elected officials and receive economic updates. Effective advertising and promotional avenues — such as our quarterly Connections newsletter, Web site, weekly eNews and sponsorship opportunities — assist members to get their messages out and

reach their target audience. Regular training programs aid businesses in improving their operations.

Moreover, we have added a few new programs recently to further help during these tough times — including activities that reduce marketing costs, expand markets, develop leadership and improve operations — as follows:

- Partnering with The Maui News to provide chamber members with an advertising discount. All chamber members who include the chamber logo in their Maui News retail display or classified display advertising receive a 5 percent discount on each ad. This is exclusively for chamber members since only chamber members are allowed to use the chamber logo in their advertising. Imagine saving 5 percent of your annual Maui News advertising budget; it can be a substantial savings.

- Selling an Annual Business After Hours Pass for \$100, saving members who took advantage of this offer \$30, or 23 percent.

- Offering a free seminar to help businesses consider importing and exporting as a means of expanding their businesses, gaining new customers, and positioning their company in a global marketplace in partnership with the Foreign Trade Zone 9. Participants heard from a variety of speakers, including the High Technology Development Corp., Business Action

Center, U.S. Small Business Administration-Hawaii District Office, Hawaii Foreign-Trade Zone 9 and U.S. Export Assistance Center. Speakers elaborated on programs aimed at helping members position their business in changing times, leverage resources, be in compliance with law, understand our global economy and take advantage of new market opportunities while minimizing risks.

- Working with Glenn Furuya of Leadership Works to offer Leadership Island Style with an additional \$100 discount for chamber members. Leadership Island Style is a one-of-a-kind, world-class leadership experience that is comprehensive, practical and profound. Focused on developing organizational leadership, improving systems and boosting teamwork, participants will learn the basic elements of "The Leadership Code," discover their personal "social style" and immerse themselves in performance-boosting inspiration and information necessary to transform themselves and the organizations they serve.

- Partnering with Maui Community College to offer our members the "7 Habits for Managers" training at a special chamber member rate of \$236 per person, versus the regular rate of \$289. This program is aimed at helping businesses leverage hidden resources, define contributions to the organization, hold team members ac-

countable, give constructive feedback, and unleash the potential of their team to achieve crucial goals.

- Offering weekly "Business Builder" tips to our members through eNews. These tips are positive, practical things businesses can do to market and promote their business, improve customer service, streamline operations, and help the bottom line.

We will continue to create initiatives and programs that add value to one's membership in the chamber and work toward overall systems and solutions that help to reduce the cost of doing business, improve our economy and strengthen our community.

These economic times will drive change and innovation. Positive outcomes will come about if we have and implement solid plans, think beyond current circumstances, and move forward strategically.

As Napoleon Hill said in his "Think and Grow Rich" book: "Leaders of the world have always been people who harnessed, and put into practical use, the intangible, unseen forces of unborn opportunity."

We are all in this together. Let's work together to go from weathering the storm to creating new opportunities and thus emerge stronger, more unified and poised for a bright future.

■ *Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*