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Protecting the image of a retail centers is critical to projecting strength and negating the fear

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Fear...that is the prevalent consumer outlook for 2009. All of us regardless of industry, position or income must deal with this powerful and often irrational emotion. Our employees, our companies, and our customers need to see concrete examples of strategic actions that mitigate the fear and demonstrate strength, resilience and hope.

Fear sells papers and enhances television ratings, which is why the media thrives on sending out adverse messages day after day. We read negative economic news in the daily paper and see the echoed propaganda aired on the nightly news. A business owner must rely on the expertise of branding professionals to enhance the image they portray with value engineered solutions to stay ahead of the competition.

Difficult choices need to be made, business and life practices revisited, new business models reviewed, and your core identity clearly envisioned. Focusing on your core values and the real unfiltered reason "Why?" an individual does business with you will lead to true actions that you and your organization can implement to build the message of strength and hope. Strength that we are here and will be here, we know who we are and what we can do to help you, our customer, succeed.

Portraying this message to your customer base must be consistent and well executed. In the retail shopping center market this becomes increasingly challenging as property managers and developers must deal with rising vacancies and lease price pressure. Protecting the image of your retail centers becomes critical to projecting strength and negating the fear.

Empty store fronts are depressing, to your wallet, and your customers mental state. This is where an opportunity lies to reinvent the empty space so the customer sees a positive reflection of themselves. Thru the use of creative imagery and lighting a center with lower occupancy can maintain the vibrancy that your customer is searching for. This small change to how an empty space is handled will tell your customers in a subtle but powerful way that we are strong and we will weather the storm just as they are in their own lives.

Conveying strength is often best done through subtle nuanced actions, rather than large grandiose actions. How quickly does a departing tenant have their signage removed, the tenant panels replaced, and storefront converted?

Simple, cost effective recommendations such as maintaining parking lot lighting, implementing new leasing information signage and converting vacant spaces into lively facades with lifestyle images all send the positive image that attract tenants and customers to your facility. Improving your environment with well thought out designs and first class signage will be reflected in your market position.

The savvy developer, business owner and architect realize the single most effective branding tool to

improve sales and create opportunity is on premise signage. Studies have shown that well developed sign programs outweigh all other forms of advertising when it comes to increasing business. The return on investment and newfound recognition in the community is an invaluable tool that no business should be without. Your investment in this identity program could be the single most important decision that you as an owner make. Typical participants of this process realize a 35 - 50% increase in sales volume in the year following the installation of their personalized brand identity program.

Your identity program also moves beyond what is commonly recognized as signs, and into the development of interesting architectural elements and dynamic storefront graphics to improve the overall look that embodies what your company is all about. Many companies can produce a sign, but only branding professionals will develop your identity and know how to maximize your dollars to produce a clear return on your investment.

Now is the time to improve your brand, and send a positive message about who you are to your prospective clients with a fresh new image.

Consulting with a sign company that recognizes the critical role your sign identity program has, will play a key role in securely positioning your brand in today's marketplace. We look forward to working with you in the near future.

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