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President's message: "Be the change you want to see"

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Mahatma Ghandi once said, "Be the change you want to see." I believe that we, in the commercial real estate business must heed his words. With all of the negative media we are hearing and seeing today, the best thing we can do for our businesses is to create our own destiny. We must be the change!

Investors and owners are all hearing the same negative media we are, and they will use it as their reason for not moving forward. It is up to us to create the positive environment and move them off of the mark. Our job, in a sense, is to be the cheerleader. While it may be true that there are much tighter requirements on ROI and fewer resources out there for our clients, we must, as their real estate consultant, be the beacon of hope on the horizon.

We have always come out of the "Dark Side." As far back as World War II we have had negative economic times and have gotten through them. We survived the oil crisis of the 1970s, the Iran-Contra, the real estate issues and the recession of the 1980s, Desert Storm in the 1990s, 9/11 in 2001, and we will survive what is one of the longest recessions ever. It has always been a business cycle, and we will cycle out of this one too.

Confidence is the key. If we show our clients that we are confident that, this too will pass, they will take our lead. We can create our own news. Create positive, uplifting news...that will draw people to your universe. Bring them into your positive sphere of influence and they will partake! Remember, perception is reality. What I perceive to be true...is true for me. We can help people to perceive the positive side of this time in history.

How can we do this? Well, first we can stop agreeing with the doom and gloom predictions. This may be a reach, but I believe that in New England we will start to see an upturn in business before the fall of this year. Yes, THIS YEAR! In spite of all the predictions of five to ten years we are hearing, many practitioners I have spoken to have told me that their businesses are doing well and that the activity is definitely increasing. Activity is one thing, but closings are another, right? Well, yes, but since the activity had been so poor over the last several months, I see the increase as a very positive factor and deals are still closing. There is money out there! The smaller local and regional banks are lending; we must be the catalyst to bring these resources together.

Second, the stock market has definitely hurt the ability of our large investors, but the stock market is not necessarily the only predictor of the economy. The stock market is mostly based on large and mega companies. Our economy is driven by small businesses. In fact over 90% of our economy is based on small business!

Finally, the "Obama Effect" needs to have some time to work. This week President Obama signed H.R. 1105, the Omnibus Appropriations Bill, into law. In doing so, he ended our nearly eight-year battle to preserve the separation between banking and commerce. Specifically, this new law permanently bans large national banking conglomerates from entering the real estate business by

preventing the Treasury and Federal Reserve, by rule, order, or any other way, from opening the door to such activities.

Also, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 will have a positive impact on commercial real estate, primarily in three areas: green building and energy efficiency, business tax incentives, and investment in transportation and infrastructure. In addition, The Financial Stability Plan, announced by treasury secretary Timothy Geithner on February 10th, included a major expansion of the Term Asset-Backed Securities Loan Facility (TALF) to include commercial mortgage-backed securities (CMBS). The TALF had been presented in November, 2008 to address the credit shortfall in the consumer (credit card), auto, student loan, and small business credit markets. These are all good reasons to be optimistic.

Back in the 80s Peter Drucker said, "Every business is in business for one thing...the customer!" With that in mind, what can we do to help our business? Well, keeping our attitudes positive is first and foremost. This will definitely set you apart from most of the real estate industry, today. It will also draw people to your universe. Next, increase your customer service. Remember, the customer is the reason we are in business. Show your differentiation. What makes you better than the rest? Brainstorm ideas to set you apart from the competition. Hold yourself and your people accountable to the customers' needs. Tell your customer what you will do for them, and then exceed those expectations. And finally, know that we are not in the real estate business, we are in the marketing business!

Now, go forth and multiply... your sphere, your business and your clients.

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