

My Take: Giving You The Business

Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
Monday, 01 March 2010 16:44



As winter continues to snow and blow its way somewhat in the direction of spring, we all seem to be itching for more green shoots and buds to begin showing up around our economic "houses."

(Sure, I touched on this subject in January, but I'm a sucker for reports of good business news, anecdotal and otherwise. Please indulge me as I throw a little more at you.)

From a personal perspective, learning that some hard-working old friends and young relatives have been called back to their jobs in the Texas gas fields, after having spent more than a few long months on lay-off, is big news. (I may take some chiding over this, but I think even they would admit that there's just so much fishin', huntin' and watchin' cereal commercials on TV that one really cares to do...)

Learning that the NPRA (National Petrochemical & Refiners Association) 2010 Reliability & Maintenance Conference (RMC) may already have sold out of exhibit space—*for the end of May*—could be even "bigger" good news. Through the grapevine, I've heard of at least one eager, new-to-this-event exhibitor being turned away for lack of space on the trade-show floor—*turned away before the end of February, no less*. Might there be others standing in line?

You can spin just about anything, but these two "feel-good" examples of tentative recovery don't look too much like the gloom-and-doom economic scenarios still being painted for us by various sources. Nor does the following story of Oregon's Bob Moore, who recently "gave" his employees full ownership of Bob's Red Mill Natural Foods, the multi-million-dollar business he had been building since the 1970s. [According to a February 17, 2010 article](#) by Dana Tims for *The Oregonian*

*, this means some 209 workers (from janitors on up), "now own the place and its 400 offerings of stone-ground flours, cereals and bread mixes." That "place" includes, among other things, a retail outlet and a 15-acre production facility where three shifts are running six days a week to turn out goods for distribution around the world.

My Take: Giving You The Business

Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
Monday, 01 March 2010 16:44

Investment bankers and mergers & acquisitions specialists will tell you that whenever a business is being divested, there's always some degree of pain—*emanating from any number of sources*. For example, perhaps an owner up and dies, and the heirs can't agree on a gracious sorting out of assets. Perhaps a new management team doesn't see eye-to-eye with an old one. Or, for whatever reason(s), perhaps the only option for a business sputtering along on life support is to go belly-up and/or into some type of receivership. No matter the cause, anyone who's ever been involved in a business divestiture can attest to the apprehension, fear and sense of utter helplessness such a situation can generate within a workforce. Mr. Moore, however, may have thrown a monkey-wrench into the theory that this pain is inevitable.

While it's a safe bet you won't find too many owners giving away businesses to non-family employees these days, what would you do if your employer happened to be one of them? Running a company—*or, more to the point, building a successful, sustainable business*—is not as easy as it might seem. Bob Moore apparently knows that all too well. It sounds as if he's going to stay around to help the new owners grow their new company. As he told Dana Tims, he still lays claim to the title of "boss."

