

Chairman's Report

Thrive or survive, the choice is yours

Can you believe it's already March? So much has been going on since the beginning of the year, that time has just got away. Only a few months ago, we were making New Year's resolutions and looking towards 2009 – which has been shaken by the economic crisis and will be a year of thrive or survive.

I have the choice whether to thrive or survive and I have chosen thrive. For us to thrive, we need the attitude that goes with the outcome, negative attitudes have no place in my mindset or when I'm in my workplace. I have chosen to steer away from 'the sky is falling' mindset and adopt a 'what's next - how can I make positive changes?'

Have you ever heard of somebody who suffered hysteria to such a degree that they convinced themselves of their own doom and sure enough, eventually fell ill or even died from such a negative mindset?

Mass hysteria involves a collective of people, whether a nation, a community or a group of people following a similar religion or cause. There have been many reported cases of mass hysteria throughout history. Some of the more notable, were the witch hunts in Europe in the 17th Century or the famous broadcast of War of the Worlds in 1938, when millions of people actually thought what they were hearing was true, causing mass hysteria throughout the United States. Then there are, of course, those deluded worshipers of man-made cults and dubious leaders who are ultimately led to do things they would not even consider if not for the mass hysteria that is stirred up.

If you listen to any financial analyst on the crash of '08, they will attempt to unravel the cause or causes of this event that has shaken the world. However, the more you read about the cause of what happened, it's clear that it was not just any one thing, but a multi-layered event that had many complex issues - some of which I have trouble getting my head around – that created the topple.

The one outlining factor that I can get my head around, is that of investor sentiment. Sentiment can be defined as "a general thought, sense or feeling." Sentiment can be advantageous or completely devastating. Sentiment did help drive up the value of stocks during the Dot Com boom - positive sentiment that caused an excitement that swept across the world. That excitement was so widespread, that it didn't take long for people to get rich on the boom. The over-priced shares of a lot of those businesses could not stand up and we saw a crash as a new sentiment resulted in panic selling.

Now, with a very negative atmosphere, it's even more important that individuals, communities, businesses and the nation, adopt a positive sentiment. The more people who do this, will help amplify this positive attitude and will mean that we, our industries and nation, will rise out from what could have been.

Companies and employees have the choice to brace or take action. It's the action of companies and the decisions of employees and managers that will make the difference. Deciding to invest in training, explore alternative methods of performing those age-old processes, learning about and implementing new technologies, interacting and communicating more than ever, sharing ideas and accepting ideas and help.

In a time of change, make it a positive change - don't stand on the sidelines and watch the world go by.

As a footnote to this topic of positive unity, I can say how amazing and fantastic it is, to see Victorians and the rest of Australia, pull together after the recent devastation of the bush fires that occurred here in my home state. This unity and positive attitude of "we will rebuild" makes me confident that we as a nation, are well positioned to come out on top. ■



SEAN HOUBEN - Chairman