

Businesses facing new economic realities head-on

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In my conversations last week with local business owners it appears that some businesses are responding by quickly adapting their business strategies to be proactive and face the new economic realities head on.

In a strong economy, businesses don't get nearly as penalized if they don't move quickly to adapt but in a slowdown economy, like the one we are facing today, it's critical that business models, systems and processes are analyzed to determine where the opportunities are and what needs to be modified or realigned.

The complex economic times that entrepreneurs and businesses are facing today has heightened the risk of failure in some business owner's minds. But there's another side of risk that in this climate is often not given the same amount of focus or due and that's the risk associated with not pursuing an alternative or opportunity.

Some Campbell River businesses may find the risks associated with operating their business during these periods of community transition and economic slowdowns have increased but a slow economy and transition do not shut down new opportunities. In fact, it could be argued that because there are fewer competitors who are willing to take the risk to serve untapped or underserved markets that it actually opens up new opportunities for competitive advantage and potentially much to gain.

It's those entrepreneurs who may also be better positioned to take advantage of the marketplace when we move beyond these current economic challenges. Clearly business owners need to be vigilant in assessing those opportunities but even now within our own community, there are new and realigned business opportunities being discussed and pursued. There is a real sense of hope and anticipation about what those opportunities might mean for the community and the positive impacts for sustainability.

In good economic times or slowdown, having a well researched and focused business plan remains one of the most effective and consistent business tools to identify and leverage opportunities and the best way to position yourself and the business. It still surprises me the number of people I meet who don't have a business plan and then seem caught off guard when the marketplace changes and economic shifts happen, as inevitably they will. And yet, it's small

businesses who need a business plan even more because of often limited resources that makes the risk of challenging circumstances to be exaggerated significantly.

The increasing complexity of business and the speed of change in the marketplace today place an increasing premium on financial knowledge, strategic planning and leadership. There is no longer the kind of margin for error that might have existed in the past and business owners may require new solution thinking in order to make better decisions for better performance. The business plan can become a powerful catalyst to step back from the daily pressures of operating the business consider the short-term opportunities that might have otherwise been overlooked.

There are significant resources readily available in our community on developing business plans and extensive online support as well. It's clear that business owners who have an updated business plan will have a greater opportunity for success as they maneuver through this transition and the inherent comparison and grading of reality against proposed business scenarios.

It's an interesting market for new startups to navigate in but regardless of whether you are just starting to think about a business operation in Campbell River or have had a long time standing operation here, there are new opportunities to capitalize on and adapt your business to meet the changing needs of the market.