



## It's autumn, time to prune the dead wood and get ready for spring ...

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The obvious thought here is that I am referring to pruning ones trees and scrubs so they can grow fuller and lush in the spring. While the analogy works, I am referring to performing a critical review of the strategic mission and goals in one's business and then taking the necessary steps to adjust them and be strategically positioned for the economic upturn which will occur, sooner or later.

In order to have survived during the past year or two many companies drastically reduced staffing levels, R&D expenditures, staff training, advertising and any other expense they could justify. The obvious consequence is that many companies are now mere skeletons of their former selves, but at least they are surviving. Many have not been so fortunate!

Economists are signaling that by all accounts the recession is near an end – it's only a matter of timing. Depending on your own circumstances and views, you may or may not agree. **Regardless, it is wise to anticipate an economic improvement and begin now to plan and prepare for rebuilding.**

This planning should be strategic and not short term ... the “good old days” will probably never return. If you are a survivor (congratulations!), but achieved it by taking some severe and drastic measures, it is recommended that you take a deep breath and go back to basics, because rebuilding in the upturn may prove to be just as traumatic as downsizing was during the downturn.

Specifically;

- **Revisit your original business plan:**
  - Does it still make sense?
  - Where do you now want to go and how will you achieve it?
- **Revisit your customer base:**
  - Have your customers survived?
  - How will you attract new ones?
  - Has your competition survived?
  - Who are they and what might they be doing differently?
  - What is your new marketing plan?

- **Revisit your financials:**
  - They probably do not portray a pretty picture!
  - What can be done to get your business back on line?
  - Do you need to refinance – if so, how?
  - What changes are needed?
  - When do you start spending again, and on what, in order to rebuild?
- **Revisit your infrastructure:**
  - Did you reduce space?
  - Will you need additional space and, if so, when?
  - Can you renegotiate your lease?
  
- **Revisit staff:**
  - Many firms cut staff to a bare minimum. While that was the proper tactic at the time, do you now have the correct staff skills and talent for the future? How will you get them?
  - **There are a lot of top quality individuals available in the market and now is a good time to upgrade your staff with real talent.**
  - **Caution:** Dealing with HR issues is a sensitive area and one must be careful how it is executed. However, in the end staffing upgrades always pay a big dividend.

Unfortunately, most business owners have now become so involved in their day-to-day activities that they have little or no time to execute these recommendations. Additionally, the business owner may be so overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted that he / she is no longer capable of facing the challenges and realities of what must be done to once again grow when the spring arrives. It is suggested that the best way to address this review is with the assistance of an impartial professional who will ask the tough questions and then proactively assist you as you **prune the dead wood and get ready for spring.**