

5 ways to help your library survive the recession



The recession has affected our lives profoundly. In 2009, more people are delaying marriage, fewer folks are moving, and immigration has slowed. The 2008 U.S. census indicates that 55% of families are now two income families, 10% of adult residents are veterans, 5% of Americans now live in a multigenerational household, and 2.3% of families depend on welfare. It has also been proven that tough times create golden opportunities for business. For example, Xerox and Motorola were founded during the Great Depression, and innovation giants Apple and Microsoft began during the downturn of the mid-1970's. So, how do we help our libraries survive the recession of 2009?

- **Be flexible with our customers.** If a six week loan period is requested by customers, why not? Report after report has indicated that the optimum loan period to assure cost effective service is 4 + weeks. It is a whole new world out there, and we need to look at everything we do, and evaluate its relevance, effectiveness, and cost. Libraries need to be open to change.
- **Get back to basics.** If budget cutting is in your library's future, make your tough decision based on your library's mission. Is it to supply cake pans or to provide access to information?
- **Listen to your customers.** Two-way dialogue builds market share and makes customers feel like they are a valued part of the organization. These are the informed customers who will support and defend us, so we need to listen to them!! Let your customers know, by your actions, that you are listening.
- **Focus on clear communication.** The more precise your communication is, the more credible you will become. In tough times, when everyone is defending their budget, "government speak" will not make you any friends.
- **Now is the time for innovation.** You can't shrink your way to greatness, and that's what many dying businesses try to do. They hunker down and wait for things to get better. As scary as it may seem, **now** is the time to try a new service or way of doing business; just think of Apple! It does not have to cost money to be innovative, it just takes passion and willingness to try something new!!!

Flexibility, focusing on the basics and innovation, listening to our customers, and clear communications will help your library survive these challenging times. We are on the upward climb. Have a great week!