

## You can't shrink your way to greatness!

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result each time. In library land, we often either do nothing – putting our head in the sand and hoping the recession will pass us by – or we try something new without the end user in mind and lose the very customers who have supported us over the years.

For example:

- An upscale shoe store experiences a decline in business, so they have less money to spend on great sales staff and trendy inventory. They decide to keep the stock a bit longer and cut back on cleaning the store. Of course, business declines. The business owner does nothing and eventually has an empty, dirty shoe store that's out of business.
- A doctor moves to a new office with very poor parking. As a result, he has fewer patients, less cash flow, and doesn't invest as much in training a new scheduler. Patients get frustrated when they can't find a parking spot and have to deal with a poorly trained scheduler. They quickly move to a practitioner who makes going to the doctor easy.
- A local newspaper, in these financially challenging times, has fewer advertisers, so they don't invest as much staff time in covering local stories. People stop reading the local newspaper, because the only local news stories are the obituaries! As a result, advertisers have less reason to advertise, which leaves less money for local content, which means the local newspaper closes. With no new ideas, it becomes a vicious circle.

As Tom Peters, CEO of TAP Information Services, has said on several occasions, "You can't shrink your way to greatness." Yet, that's what many dying businesses try to do. They hunker down and wait for things to get better. The reality is that this recession isn't just a little wave in the economy; it's a tsunami. The new financial reality requires brave leaders to seek new and innovative solutions. We are facing a whole new way of doing things.

Right now, your library may still have some cash, some customers, and some momentum. Instead of squandering it on a long, slow, death spiral, do something new and innovative: start a building project, pilot new products, use new channels of communication to reach a whole new community of users. It does not all have to start with money; it starts with a vision!

Change is a bear, but it's better than death.

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