

Get ready to grow

"Ask five economists and you'll get five different answers; six if one went to Harvard."

Edgar R Fielder (1929-2003), Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy (1971-1975) during the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

The season may be autumnal, but some commentators have detected the 'green shoots' of a new economic spring. Given that many of these same commentators failed to see the cold winds of recession until they were upon us, perhaps a healthy dose of Ed Fielder's scepticism is prudent!

However – sooner or later – recovery will indeed dawn and those organisations that have survived will emerge from their bunkers, blinking in the unfamiliar sunshine. If you're one of them, just how fit will your firm be to take advantage of the improving business climate? Well, if you followed our advice from February this year ("**Survival of the fittest, not the thinnest**"), you will not be completely weakened. But recession will have taken its toll on resources, activity and confidence.

You may have fewer people, and those who have gone may have been experienced veterans. The impact of this loss of skills and knowledge will quickly become apparent as the growth imperative reasserts itself.

A logjam of projects and initiatives will clamour for the investment of time, attention and scarce working capital. Different functions will have their own different priorities, escalating the scope for internal conflict and contradictions.

Existing clients will be emerging from their own shelters and new clients may also appear, 'orphaned' by those of your competitors who did not make it or did not look after them in quieter times. It will be tempting to indulge in a feeding frenzy – grabbing as much business as you can, whatever its quality. But the terms and conditions under which we begin to trade with both groups will set long-term expectations for the future.

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SEND TO A FRIEND

Forward Insight

CONTACT US

HuthwaiteFleming,
4 Forty Green Courtyard,
Forty Green, Bledlow, Bucks
HP27 9PN
Tel: +44(0)1844 274244
info@huthwaitefleming.com
www.huthwaitefleming.com

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Over the next few months, we're going to be sharing with you some insights on how to move from survival to growth mode, for example:

- The findings from our latest research project, which examines the negotiation 'maturity' of a large-scale sample of Global 2000 organisations. The relationship between their differing levels of maturity and net income performance makes for startling reading
- The personal persuasion skills you might need if you want to align your firm behind the task of developing its negotiation maturity
- Translate account strategies and plans into actions and outcomes using the next element in our electronic sales 'toolbox'
- How our new Virtual Training Campus can help develop or refresh your firm's client relationship skills without people having to leave their desks, even if they are continents apart.

They are mostly ideas that you can implement even if the business climate confines us all to the bunker for a while yet. Because, when it comes to forecasting, we're with Ed. One of his other observations was:

"He who lives by the crystal ball soon learns to eat ground glass"

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