

Cha-ching! Economic Solutions



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"If you would know what the Lord God thinks of money, you have only to look at those to whom he gives it."

— Maurcie Baring, novelist and critic

Open to the financial section of any major news source, with the possible exception of the *National Enquirer*, and it will become quite clear, even if you lack the business acumen of the late Archie Bunker, that the economy is in the "terlet."

One of America's top corporations in terms of brilliant executive decisions is the Ford Motor Company. Its introduction of the Edsel in 1957 attracted worldwide attention, quickly supplanting America's love affair with the 1954 Nash Metropolitan. This placed the company's executives in pole position for the "What Were They Thinking?" award, not to be challenged until Pontiac buoyantly offered the spectacularly ugly Aztek in 2000. Later, when Ford rebounded with the SUV Excursion as the largest

American vehicle to feature wheels taller than an 11-year-old child instead of the traditional tank treads, was that leadership was reconfirmed.

How is it then that Ford reports losses of \$800 billion dollars in the first fiscal quarter, \$69 bazillion dollars in the second quarter, sells off its Volvo and Maserati subsidiaries and still remains a viable corporate entity? Easy: A hostile takeover of Tonka Trucks and then outsourcing all actual manufacturing to Third World countries. Followed by downsizing the working staff to retain only the corporate jet pilots and executive washroom attendants, the upper echelon is able to maintain, even increase, its annual bonuses and stock options.

If big corporate honchos wearing suits more costly than your monthly gross can do it, you can, too. As CEO of your dental office, you need to tighten up

CONTINUES ON 713

DR. BOB, CONTINUED FROM 714

all aspects of your practice. Follow these essential steps to financial security:

- Eliminate staff meetings. All input other than your own is patently biased. If you need suggestions how to conduct your affairs, you can get it at home from familial sources, including the dog.

- Recognize that dentistry is evolving from a health care profession to a salvage industry dedicated to baby boomers who demand more than restorative procedures. Therapy involving Botox, massage of areas remote from the mouth, applications of very white porcelain to 60-year-old teeth, and employment of an esthetician are features of the current atmosphere. Read your dental magazines that arrive daily for confirmation.

- Economically, upgrading your reception room makes no sense. A friendly, homelike milieu fools no one any more than a similar effort at a bus station would disguise the fact that a Greyhound behemoth wreathed in carbon monoxide lies just beyond the door. To induce the desired degree of torpor in waiting patients, an in-house pharmacy with a choice of insurance-approved hypnotics is recommended.

- Everything in dentistry is now disposable. This started when Cooke-Waite stopped production of the syringe-holding jar with the semipermanent needle submerged in something resembling lime Kool-Aid. You are advised to issue each patient his own needle, syringe, bib, and prophy handpiece at a modest fee not to exceed 200 percent of wholesale. He can sterilize these things to any degree with which he feels comfortable. This should not be your problem; with so many scents to choose from, aromatherapy

is your problem. Prophy paste is free as long as the Nu-Pro convention samples last.

- Restrooms may be a convenience, but also a source of revenue when pay stalls are available. The same applies to vending machines for mouthwash. Your assistant can easily double as an attendant overseeing a selection of combs, towels, and a prominent bowl for tips, 30 percent of which should be hers, subject to federal

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and state taxes. Tap water limited to 3 cc is still an acceptable operating expense.

- The manufacturers of the tanning booths will soon market the coin-operating bleaching light. Patients will be able to dial in the degree of whiteness they deem necessary to smile in public again. You should get one for each operator in 10 years or less after you have depreciated your Cerec and digital X-ray equipment.

- The most important member of the dental team is the management consultant. Unrestrained by ancient ethical standards, the advantages of your office should not only be saturating your own city, but those in neighboring states as

well. When choosing a management person, a plus would be his or her contacts in Europe, South America, and East Asia. Just as certain celebrities must have their own hairdressers and makeup artists on call no matter where they are, you can enjoy the convenience of would-be patients coming to you. Your fee can still include the mileage cost, because money has no meaning to them, otherwise they would not wear \$1,000 shoes and clutch \$5,000 bug-eyed little creatures to their bosoms wherever they venture.

- All it takes is one idea to create a competitive edge. It doesn't have to be a good idea, but different, one that attracts attention. Plastic surgery involving buttock enhancement comes to mind, but this idea is even better without your looking idiotic: mobile dentistry. Yes! Nobody likes going to the dentist, so you go to them. If this catches on, there will soon be fleets of dentists freed from the tyranny of the stationary 8-by-10 operator.

- Cruise up to Santa Barbara and back in an afternoon. A competent assistant at the wheel, stopping in affluent neighborhoods along the way at upscale 7-Elevens with sit-down facilities while another assistant rings doorbells like a modern day Avon lady. Offering discount veneers and 30-second bleaching to procrastinators who wouldn't be in the old-fashioned dental office until they were experiencing intractable discomfort, it's an idea whose time has come.

Perhaps the Ford Motor Company would be interested in the development of mobile dental offices using the old, unsold Excursions if the CEOs of the various divisions were offered free dental care and we don't mention the Edsel ever again. ■■■■