

Maybe Summers are for Vacations...

Remember all the wonderful memories of summer: Fishing with family, pick-up ball games, not a care in the world? You always counted down the days until school was out and summer fun began. I used to judge the beginning of summer as the last bell at the end of the last day of May. In a very eerie way this summer has felt a lot like a vacation... just not a planned vacation.

There has been a very distinct difference in phone activity and transactions taking place in the last three months. Some segments of the market are even quieter than others. In the earlier years of my career, business did always seem to slow down a bit during the summer; corporations planned fewer acquisitions, individuals went on their respective vacations and business predictably slowed down. In recent years, however, with all of the global expansion in our industry, the traditional lows of summer seemed to disappear, and selling cycles were much more even.

Not so this summer! I talk to my fellow aircraft sales professionals daily and we are all feeling the slow down. We can all agree on the weaker activity, so let's go beyond the symptoms of the weaker economy and get to the most logical way to rekindle activity and transactions.

Sometimes sellers will ask if price is the problem. Sometimes they ask if our advertising is positioned correctly for foreign business. Often they ask if we are directing the selling benefits correctly to the marketplace. It could be all of these things and I wish I could just tweak an ad, or expand placement and that the activity would pick up. Of course, one should reflect and review all of the above. But beyond those internal reviews, we are often just bound by fewer transactions taking place due to economic uncertainty and a reluctance to buy until more stability is perceived in our global economy. Many of those indicators are out of our control. So let's focus on those things that are in our control.

For me, the less the phone rings, the more I pick it up and dial out, and the more con-

versation I try to have with what I call industry touch-points; those people that may have only indirect access to buyers and sellers. I am calling more of my friends in the legal profession, reminding them of my ability to know markets and help them if they get a client request, and I am calling my friends at the maintenance facilities to say hello and keep them advised on market conditions. The bottom line is that I am not lying on my back under an apple tree waiting for an apple to fall into my hands. I am shaking the tree! I am keeping my communication skills honed, and my conversations relevant and informative.

I will admit that for the last several years the phones seemed to be ringing off of the wall, and today that has changed. But waiting for things to just happen has never been my style. Today we all must work harder to get the call that will make the difference in our business. I speak to dealers and brokers way too often that relate that their individual businesses have slowed down. I appreciate that as a brief discussion, but it cannot be a daily conversation. Just complaining about the market will in no way contribute to its getting back to a good place. We must all work harder and craft relevant discussion points to raise with prospects and clients.

These are good times for us all to add power to our sales process by learning about new aircraft designs and manufacturer offerings. Believe me there is plenty to learn. Dassault Falcon's introduction of the 7X, new state of the art avionics offerings, and Bombardier's new vision cockpit give us plenty to learn and plenty of reason to pick up the phone and share this new information with an old client. This will add power to your ability to start to develop new transaction opportunities. We cannot just sit back and hope for more calls and more sales; we must be stirring up activity through our own actions. Of course you can lower prices to try to get more activity. Of course you can shore up a deficiency with an offering, like having it painted or performing a major set of impending inspections, but nothing works as well as a stand alone solution. You must combine the

new pricing or freshly inspected aircraft with activity generated by proactive, very aggressive market communication. I assure you that if you come to work and announce to yourself that the summer

vacation is over, sharpen your pencils, prepare to work hard and be alert, you will find the Fall of 2008 to be rewarding.

I do not think single events can just automatically create significant change. I have heard many of my friends say "as soon as the election is over, things will be great." That is a nice thought, and if I thought that that alone would be significant enough to wipe out all of the bad economic happenings, I would just take a vacation until November 3rd. Granted, confidence that comes when an election finally does take place may contribute to differences in our market, but please don't sit back and wait for that to be a defining event, just consider it a possible contribution to our healthy future.

Most of what happens to us in our individual businesses will be about us. It will be about our ability to daily come to work, pick up the phone, call people and share market wisdom and create conversations that will sooner than later result in great new business. I know our bright days are ahead and business will rebound very soon!

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