Dear Friends –

After you read the following pages, which feature insight and intelligence from some of the best and brightest business leaders in the country, my hope is that you’ll attach new meaning to the concept of leadership in these uncertain times.

This new publication offers eight rich, provocative and insightful viewpoints from leaders in a variety of industries, including media, banking, insurance, clean technology, food, transportation, architecture design, and economic development.

- Colleen Brown talks about the importance of accountability at the top.
- Tay Yoshitani discusses the art of change.
- Harold Strunk believes that encouraging employees to seek new opportunities is essential.
- Mario Trueba thinks conveying confidence is critical.
- Richard Gergasko stresses the significance of building relationships with employees.
- Kevin Klustner argues that establishing trust from the top down is most meaningful.
- Steve McConnell explains why targeting high-revenue strategies really matters.
- And Chris Wallace emphasizes the necessity of focus and results.

Our intention is to offer a new perspective on leadership, by sharing personal, stimulating stories from experts that serve in executive roles across a multitude of industries. It’s my sincere belief that each leadership opinion expressed here is well worth pondering as we all do our best to navigate and succeed in today’s tough marketplace. If you have any questions, would like to discuss any of this material further, or have an idea for a future article - please be sure to reach out.

We are interested in your point of view and would very much want to hear from you.

Millions of words have been written about organizational leadership – especially in an anxious economy.
Colleen Brown
President / CEO
Fisher Communications

Colleen Brown is President & Chief Executive Officer of Fisher Communications. Fisher, a Seattle-based company, is a leader in local media innovation, focused on creating, aggregating, and distributing information and entertainment to a broad range of audiences. Fisher operates 18 television stations, including KOMO and KUNS in Seattle. The Company also owns Seattle’s KOMO Newsradio, KPLZ and 570 KVI. Brown began her career at KOMO and KUNS in Seattle. The Company also owns Seattle's KOMO Newsradio, KPLZ and 570 KVI. Brown began her career at KOMO and KUNS in Seattle.

Colleen Brown is President & Chief Executive Officer of Fisher Communications, one of the nation’s largest media companies. She currently serves as founder and chair of the Mobile500 Alliance and on the board of the Open Mobile Video Coalition, DataSphere, Inc., Port Blakely Companies, Washington Roundtable, University of Washington Foster School of Business, Seattle University Albers School of Business, and the United Way of King County. She graduated summa cum laude with a double major in political science and Business, and the United Way of King County. She graduated summa cum laude with a double major in political science and Business, and the United Way of King County.

Colleen Brown is President & Chief Executive Officer of Fisher Communications, one of the nation’s largest media companies. She currently serves as founder and chair of the Mobile500 Alliance and on the board of the Open Mobile Video Coalition, DataSphere, Inc., Port Blakely Companies, Washington Roundtable, University of Washington Foster School of Business, Seattle University Albers School of Business, and the United Way of King County. She graduated summa cum laude with a double major in political science and Business, and the United Way of King County.

What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

We need a new definition of “stability.” Today, more than ever, leaders must be willing to embrace change, innovate new ways of doing things, and demonstrate resilience. If these things are considered normal in an organization then the leadership has created “stability” in the organization. With virtually universal access to information by all stakeholders; the increasing frequency and speed of change continues to accelerate. Economic uncertainties at home and abroad add pressure on virtually everyone. Typically, with change and economic stress, fear is a natural emotion. By being open and receptive to change, planning for change and then making change happen there is a greater sense of confidence, purpose and empowerment in the organization.

What’s the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

A strong effective leader in today’s uncertain economy shares the leadership role with others members of the team. Stepping out from the formal leadership role, the shared approach is an informal team approach where the lead role shifts by the subject at hand. It allows the organization to tap the excitement and skill sets of others to get more done in a way that drives an even better outcome. By building trusted relationships within an organization through accessibility, transparency, communications and actions the shared leadership concept achieves a much higher sense of commitment and meaning to those involved. And one more thing to mention… keeping a clear perspective with a good dose of humor goes a long way to prepare and position the organization to face the uncertain economy.

How does leadership influence culture and strategy in a tough marketplace?

Regardless of industry, there should be one common theme: the job should be more than a paycheck. I know that is a difficult in the current economy, but that is where an effective leader can really make a difference. In highly successful organizations, passion is a trait that trickles down, motivates employees and creates loyalty and stability. Leaders who demonstrate energy and purpose every single day can be instrumental in boosting morale and outstanding results. Furthermore, leaders who challenge employees to explore innovative ways to improve can foster a dynamic workplace environment, and as a result, create an atmosphere of empowerment.

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you’ve worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

Katharine Graham, who passed away in 2001, continues to have a tremendous influence on the media industry. She was a true visionary, who, despite not having expertise in the field, successfully stepped into the leadership role at the Washington Post and made the paper one of the most respected news organizations in the country. Her lasting legacy is her empowerment of reporters and strong belief in the public’s right to know. She was one of the early adopters of advocacy journalism, which is the foundation of the Post’s prominent role today in the nation’s radio stations. Under Katharine’s leadership, the Post was one of the first media outlets to adopt this approach and I believe they have set the standard for the rest of the industry.

We also can benefit from Katharine’s leadership principles of doing what was right and what was needed. That was especially true during the Watergate Era, when the Post wrote the defining stories of the day. For Fisher, that means continuing to hold the powerful accountable and using the reach of our stations to connect our communities, enable local commerce, and help our neighbors in times of need.
What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

“For me, leadership revolves around visibility with employees. It’s important to make sure that people understand the top team’s priorities. Employees must be confident that we are collectively taking the right actions for the business and commit to making the necessary changes for the business to adapt and succeed while anticipating future changes in the economy.

SeaBright Insurance Company specializes in workers’ compensation. With the economic downturn many jobs in the industries we cover were lost. Our business, and the workers compensation industry as a whole, faced significant challenges and potentially a large decline. But our people and our customer stood with us, because they knew exactly what we stood for, where we were, and where we had to go. It was critical for employees to understand priorities to enable each person to make the right decision to move the company forward. We kept employees focused on what they could do, and how they could contribute to our organization. I think another aspect of leadership is anticipating, as best as you can, the industry segments that will be doing well and recover first it’s not always easy to stay out in front, but that’s the leadership goal.”

What’s the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

“I believe it’s proactive and hands on. As I mentioned, employees need to see the top team, and hear the messages and priorities and the stories around what makes our business special and unique, more than usual these days. The messages should be delivered first hand, and not through a chain of command. Steady and seamless leadership is very stabilizing in an uncertain economy.”

How does leadership influence culture and strategy in a tough marketplace?

“We’ve introduced a number of initiatives in order to streamline our processes and change employee behavior to embrace and further these enhancements. With a tough economy, for example, we had challenges on the claims side of our business as a result of ever increasing medical costs. We took a hard look at how we handled these transactions. We built a better, more effective model that is paying off for us. Across the organization we are also making sure that management teams from our different functions work very closely together. Getting cross-functional teams more involved and focused on the fundamentals of the business is really important in a rough marketplace. Lastly, I would say that we’ve used the Socratic method quite a lot recently, questioning everything we do in order to be both solid and nimble in this sluggish growth environment.”

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you’ve worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

“There’s an executive I worked with at AIG who demonstrated incredible leadership. This executive’s efforts reshaped that organization during a particularly difficult and intense time, when it could have collapsed. This was a major rebuilding program, and it helped AIG become a serious competitor again. When I think of leading under real pressure, I think of this situation.”

Richard Gergasko is Chief Operating Officer of SeaBright Holdings, Inc. and President and Chief Operating Officer of the largest subsidiary, SeaBright Insurance Company. SeaBright has over 25 years’ worth of experience as a leading workers’ compensation insurance carrier. Prior to SeaBright, Gergasko served as Executive Vice President at Eagle Insurance Companies. He has also held a number of positions in the insurance industry, including Underwriting Vice President of American International Group’s (AIG) workers’ compensation specialty group, and various actuarial positions at Crum and Forster, William M. Mercer, Inc., and MBA, Inc. He is a fellow of the Casualty Actuarial Society, and a member of the American Academy of Actuaries. He holds a B.A. in statistics from Rutgers College.

Leadership Means Building Real Relationships With Employees

Richard Gergasko
President / COO
SeaBright Insurance Company
Kevin Klustner
Chief Executive Officer
Powerit Solutions

What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

"Developing a vision and operational metric that can flex with uncertainty. Steady adherence to a company’s vision and mission is ideal, but in an uncertain economy, a company’s strategy and tactics may have to evolve as external, macro conditions change. That said, what is paramount is that leadership drives clarity around vision, objectives and metrics and then communicates it (constantly) to the rank and file. The single most important component of a healthy, vibrant company – one that can stick together and change to suit economic conditions – is trust. Employees need to trust that leadership is making the right decisions for the company. Employees know that with uncertain economic times come uncertain employment times. They accept that difficult decisions will need to be made. What is critical is that there is a level of trust equity built up between leadership and the employees that employees can draw on in difficult/challenging times. If employees trust management, they will stick with the mission. Constant communication and transparency is essential in building that equity."

What's the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

"Honesty, transparency and genuine commitment to putting the company's interest ahead of any self interest. Employees follow the lead of their leaders. If the employees sense leadership is scared or uncertain, employees will become scared and uncertain. If employees sense that leadership only cares about itself, employees will only care about themselves. If employees sense that leadership is not being honest with them, employees will not be honest with the company. All of which serves to undermine a strong corporate foundation which is essential for weathering economic winds."

What’s the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

Kevin Klustner is CEO of Powerit Solutions. Powerit Solutions makes the smart grid real, profitable, and effortless for energy-intensive businesses and utilities. There are now about 2,700 installations of Powerit technology in North America and Europe combined, and Powerit envisions enabling effortless control of energy use worldwide. A seasoned executive with a successful track record that ranges from Fortune 50 companies to venture-backed startups, Klustner has led firms into new markets, increased revenues dramatically, and helped companies take leadership positions in their existing markets. As the CEO of several startup companies, Klustner has built and managed relationships with customers, partners, and investors. In addition, he has led teams of up to 1,000 people, managed multibillion-dollar operations, and has significant international and corporate governance experience.

Leadership Means Earning the Trust of Employees

Leadership defines culture. A company’s culture emanates from leadership. Priorities, work environment, notions of success all derive from the tone and culture set by leadership. Culture doesn’t just happen among employees. Employees reflect, and work within, the cultural norms set by leadership. By extension, culture drives strategy. Perhaps not specific ‘this market or that market’ strategies. Rather, cultures determine whether companies can flex as macro forces change. A culture of honest communication, and one that embraces change, will lead to a culture of flexibility and long-term commitment to corporate success. A culture of selfishness and secrecy will lead to fragmentation of strategy that suits the self interests of factions."

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you’ve worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

"While I don’t have personal experience with them, I really admire the leadership team at Boeing. Virtually every decision is a ‘bet the company’ decision. And leadership seems to consistently make the right decision. Every decision has a 15-20 year life-cycle, so adherence to a strategy and competent execution is essential. Other than perhaps in pharmaceuticals, there’s no other industry where quality control literally is a life or death matter. And the quality of the Boeing product is exceptional. Leadership has a clear vision and mission for the company and its employees, and that’s reflected in employee commitment and dedication to winning on the economic playing field. Boeing makes money, and it adjusts execution when things aren’t quite right. And, oh yeah, they’re also the single largest American exporter. It’s easy to kid about the ‘Lazy B,’ but when you really think about what Boeing accomplishes every day, and over time, it’s pretty phenomenal."
Steve McConnell
Managing Partner
NBBJ

What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

“Strategies that target high relevance within your sector. You need to have perspective both inside and outside your business to help define clear targets. This leads to smart strategies that are specific to the enterprise. I also believe in a commitment to action to generate forward momentum. One key is to embrace incremental steps that lead to a big goal. This helps keep the focus on the journey—not simply the destination. Finally, it’s important to cultivate confidence within yourself and for all you work with to inspire and settle the team.”

What’s the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

“There are lots of effective styles. Yet they should be enabling in order to succeed and generate leverage. I agree with the adage that fear is the enemy - and danger is all around us in an uncertain economy. Leaders need to demonstrate a steady hand. It’s easy to worry and lose focus in a bad economy. Grip the wheel gently. If you’re too tight, you’ll lock up your organization.

How does leadership influence culture and strategy in a tough marketplace?

“Leadership impacts culture and strategy at the highest level. It can validate or invalidate culture and strategy. If leaders aren’t leading then vision clarity will be lost and culture will erode which leads to confusion and inefficiency. Leaders should be self-aware and realize they’re being watched. Everyone in the organization is looking for clues and assessing your sensibilities. So, in my view, strategy should be informed by one’s confidence in the organization’s ability to execute and create value. Finally, you have to be willing to say ‘no’ to things that don’t align with the journey to success that is informed by your strategy.”

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you’ve worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

“Dan Ivanoff is a remarkable individual, in my opinion. He represents a story of visionary leadership, outsmarting the competition, calculated risk-taking, and success over the last 10 years. When you look at the most recent real-estate cycle, he’s had a big impact. To achieve this track record, he orchestrated insightful primary research to guide his strategy. Then there was courage and conviction that sustained smart execution on that strategy.”
What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

“You have to ensure that there’s a sound strategy for the business that focuses the organization’s efforts around its core competencies. This strategy must be very focused, easy to understand, and clearly communicated throughout the organization. In tough times, it’s extremely important to have the entire organization aligned and working toward the same common goals.

I also think it’s important to keep a keen eye on your markets for new opportunities. In tough times, opportunities arise in many fashions. You must be able to quickly identify the opportunities and move quickly to capture them before someone else does. That may be new products, or whole new categories of products or services. It may be acquisitions or mergers. Or it may be taking advantage of historically low interest rates to invest in your businesses capabilities. Finally, you have to make sure the organization understands that in tough times great opportunities can appear, and you have to encourage people to seek out these opportunities.”

What’s the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

“I think the best leadership style is always to be open, honest and participative, but this is more critical in tough times. You need to tap into the collective brainpower of the entire organization to find ways to be more productive, more efficient, and more innovative, if you want to maximize your chances of success. People need to feel they have some input into their fate, and including them in the solution is the best way I have found to keep them motivated, and to encourage them to take on the challenges of a tough economy.”

How does leadership influence culture and strategy in a tough marketplace?

“Culture is always driven by actions, not words. People look to the behavior of their leaders as models for their own behavior. In tough times, it’s very important to set the example for the organization. When times get tough, it’s time to roll up your sleeves and get the right people in the room to define a strategy that deals with the issues at hand. The organization needs to feel like it can count on the leadership of the company to set a course through the difficult period of time. Communicating a solid strategy that people can understand, and conveying a positive attitude, provides a level of confidence for an organization. The organization has a much better chance of taking on a can-do attitude in this environment, as opposed to an environment of fear and little direction, which creates uncertainty.”

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you’ve worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

“Lou Gentine of Sargento Foods. I haven’t worked with the folks from Sargento, but the work they have done to educate consumers about their products has been well done. They have leveraged packaging and advertising to tell their story directly to consumers. As a result, they have shown some nice market share gains over the past few years.”

Harold Strunk is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA), a cooperative of approximately 105 dairy farming families guided by century-old values of quality, cooperation, integrity, stewardship and responsiveness. Tillamook is known for its award winning, naturally aged Tillamook cheddars, and also offers a variety of other cheeses, ice cream, butter, sour cream and yogurt. With more than 20 years of dairy marketing and sales experience, Strunk’s resume includes nine years at Eagle Family Foods and 12 years at Borden in Columbus, Ohio. Strunk attended East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania, where he played football and graduated with a B.A. in education.
What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

"Conveying confidence to colleagues is essential. You need to let them know that even though things around them are burning, we can find answers together as a team. You are basically saying: 'Work with me. Things look bad. But things will get better. The sun will come up. And once we survive, we will thrive.' If colleagues believe in you, they will look to you for leadership during the bad times. When things are good, they're less likely to look to you."

What's the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

"A forthright style is best. You must articulate optimism. Not unbridled optimism, but restrained optimism. And accessibility is key. You need to be available when things get bumpy, and you have to communicate even more. This isn't just a CEO effort, either. I believe the entire top team has to be involved here."

How does leadership influence culture and strategy in a tough marketplace?

"I think when things are tough you have to emphasize that your business isn't broken. It's fundamentally solid, and your people are doing right by customers. If you, as a leader, can assure people that the fundamentals are good, and that the team is good, then you can compartmentalize the bad news. There is always good stuff and good opportunities happening during tough times. So you don't focus exclusively on the bad news. In terms of the business, you can make a lot of money during bad times if you think counter-intuitively. And you need to communicate this to your people."

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you've worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

"Clearly, I admire straight-forwardness, and people who move things ahead with hard jobs. So, my picks I have gone outside of my industry and personal relationships: Pope John Paul II, Colin Powell, and Condoleezza Rice. Each showed moral clarity, and they led well during complex times. Plus, the people who worked with them had great respect for them."

Mario Trueba is President and Chief Executive Officer of Sabadell United Bank. Serving the South Florida area, Sabadell United provides business and personal banking services to professionals, entrepreneurs, and their companies. Trueba was born in Havana, Cuba in 1959. In 1984, he entered the banking industry on the heels of the Flagship / Sun Bank merger. In 1989, he joined United National Bank, and was instrumental in engineering its sale to Mellon. He then remained with Mellon and ran two of its large Florida businesses. He later lead Mellon United's divestiture to Sabadell (a European banking giant) in early 2010. He is a Past-Chair of Leadership Florida and is a Trustee of St. Thomas University. He is also a member of the Orange Bowl Committee and Dean’s Council of the Florida International University School of Business. He earned an undergraduate degree at St. Thomas University, and an MBA at Florida International University.

He is a Past-Chair of Leadership Florida and is a Trustee of St. Thomas University. He is also a member of the Orange Bowl Committee and Dean’s Council of the Florida International University School of Business. He earned an undergraduate degree at St. Thomas University, and an MBA at Florida International University.
What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

“The key is staying focused and continuing to deliver results. When we recruit companies to move to North Texas and Irving, we always stress results. That’s what’s important. We may have more tough times ahead, but staying focused on results and the mission at hand is the way to push through it all. There are several ways to do this. Planning and preparing, and following the business plan, is essential. And you cannot wait or procrastinate. The plan has carefully defined objectives, targets and key performance metrics. You have to stay focused on meeting them. Finally, you need to act quickly on opportunities. And, without question, you must execute properly.”

What’s the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

“Hiring the right people really matters, and really counts. After that, as a leader, you need to stay out of the way. Surround yourself with people who are smarter than you, and then just lead through the team. In a sense, the whole organization must lead together. I think stressing the basics of resource expenditures and spending on research and development has to be included in the mix as well. People really need to know what they are selling, so this R&D focus on measurement is important. Analysis is also crucial. And I believe in celebrating successes when the organization has them. But, in the end, it comes down to execution.”

How does leadership influence culture and strategy in a tough marketplace?

“We have limited resrouces, and a limited number of folks are fulfilling a multiplicity of jobs. Surround yourself with people who are smarter than you, and then just lead through the team. In a sense, the whole organization must lead together. I think stressing the basics of resource expenditures and spending on research and development has to be included in the mix as well. People really need to know what they are selling, so this R&D focus on measurement is important. Analysis is also crucial. And I believe in celebrating successes when the organization has them. But, in the end, it comes down to execution.”

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you’ve worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

“Tom Donohue, the President and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He was previously a leader in the trucking business. And he turned things around in a hard economic time, and in a politically charged time. He’s a no-nonsense leader. He says, ‘Here’s our mission, let’s accomplish it.’ He stays on target. And, during hard times, it’s easy to not stay on target. It’s easy to get bogged down with other activities and challenges. But he is very focused. And he stays focused, even though he’s always offering something new for members and customers.”

Leadership Means Staying Focused and Continuing to Drive Results

Chris Wallace is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Irving-Las Colinas (Texas) Chamber of Commerce, the fourth largest Chamber in North Texas and the first national Five-Star Accredited Chamber in Texas. He also manages the Irving Economic Development Partnership. Wallace serves on the prestigious U.S. Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100 and as a Trustee of the Institute for Organization Management as well as a Regent of Northeast Institute at Villanova University. During his leadership at the Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber, he has successfully persuaded corporations such as Celanese, Research in Motion (Blackberry), Fluor Corporation, TXU Energy, Consolidated Electrical Distributors and Health Management Systems to establish their headquarters in Irving-Las Colinas.

What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

“The key is staying focused and continuing to deliver results. When we recruit companies to move to North Texas and Irving, we always stress results. That’s what’s important. We may have more tough times ahead, but staying focused on results and the mission at hand is the way to push through it all. There are several ways to do this. Planning and preparing, and following the business plan, is essential. And you cannot wait or procrastinate. The plan has carefully defined objectives, targets and key performance metrics. You have to stay focused on meeting them. Finally, you need to act quickly on opportunities. And, without question, you must execute properly.”

What’s the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

“Hiring the right people really matters, and really counts. After that, as a leader, you need to stay out of the way. Surround yourself with people who are smarter than you, and then just lead through the team. In a sense, the whole organization must lead together. I think stressing the basics of resource expenditures and spending on research and development has to be included in the mix as well. People really need to know what they are selling, so this R&D focus on measurement is important. Analysis is also crucial. And I believe in celebrating successes when the organization has them. But, in the end, it comes down to execution.”

How does leadership influence culture and strategy in a tough marketplace?

“We have limited resources, and a limited number of folks are fulfilling a multiplicity of jobs. Yet we’re still seeking the same outcomes. So we need to be targeted, and we must avoid distractions. That means avoiding the busy work that gets in the way of important results. The other variable is simple determination. You have to keep your energy high and focus on goals. That can be exhausting. But you must be consistent through the process. As my grandfather once said, ‘Wise up.’ This is certainly true when it comes to hard times and limited resources.”

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you’ve worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

“Tom Donohue, the President and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He was previously a leader in the trucking business. And he turned things around in a hard economic time, and in a politically charged time. He’s a no-nonsense leader. He says, ‘Here’s our mission, let’s accomplish it.’ He stays on target. And, during hard times, it’s easy to not stay on target. It’s easy to get bogged down with other activities and challenges. But he is very focused. And he stays focused, even though he’s always offering something new for members and customers.”
What are the most important things a leader can do to help get his or her organization, and the economy, to a place of greater stability?

“Leaders must understand not only where the market is headed, but what it takes to be competitive in that new market – which may mean making significant changes so that you adapt. There’s an art to that, and to bringing all stakeholders together in difficult or turbulent times. It’s imperative that leaders motivate everyone so that they’re all moving in the same direction.”

What’s the best leadership style in an uncertain economy?

“I don’t know that a leader’s style changes in response to an uncertain economy; but in those times, you are typically faced with limited resources – financial, staff, and time. Those limitations mean you must remain exceptionally focused. In normal economic times, you have more latitude to experiment. You don’t have that luxury when times are uncertain – you have to exercise laser-like focus.”

How does leadership influence culture and strategy in a tough marketplace?

“It’s easy for everyone in an institution to become discouraged in difficult times. The leader has a responsibility to model an upbeat outlook, to show that he or she believes that the organization can, and will, weather the storm.

A leader must also face reality: When staff members are discouraged, or events are going the wrong way, leadership means showing the path forward and maintaining a positive atmosphere that motivates everyone to move through the difficulty.”

Can you name a leader – either someone in your industry, or someone you’ve worked for or collaborated with – who has helped his or her organization survive and thrive in the current economy?

“I have been very impressed with the leadership of Alaska Airlines in recent years. The economic downturn hit the airline industry hard, yet Alaska continues to thrive. When you compare their performance with the trends in air travel – they have managed the organization very well, and are now poised to take advantage of economic recovery.”

Tay Yoshitani joined the Port of Seattle as its CEO in March 2007. He carries out policies set by the Port Commission and leads the Port’s operating divisions, including the sixth largest container port in the nation, and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, which welcomed more than 32.8 million passengers in 2011. When he took the helm, Yoshitani set about ensuring that the organization’s commitment to sustainability rivaled its success as an economic engine. A U.S. Army veteran, Yoshitani has a Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point, and earned his MBA at Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. He serves on the National Center for APEC Board and on the boards of a number of local Seattle civic and trade-related organizations.