

# Chamber's strategy is to brighten the new year

## THE CHAMBER VIEW

by Pamela Tumpap



**H**appy holidays! As we celebrate the holidays and are thankful for all we have, we at the Maui

Chamber of Commerce also are planning toward a bright new year. It is time to focus on renewal, including activities to stimulate the economy, sustain businesses, create jobs, support our residents' needs and protect the environment. We move onward, keeping the triple-bottom-line — economically, socially and environmentally responsible — view of sustainability in mind.

Our chamber's focus over the coming months will be to help:

- Stimulate the economy. We support our existing industries, such as agriculture and high technology; promote increased funding for the visitor

industry and developments that provide work for the construction industry; encourage action to leverage dollars, improve infrastructure, protect culture and the environment, and benefit the community. We also support emerging economic-development programs, such as alternative energy, and health care.

- Reduce the cost of doing business. Activities in this area range from fighting legislation and policies at the state and county levels that will increase the cost of doing business to creating new partnerships and programs that provide cost savings for businesses. The latter programs include our member-to-member discount program and our planned group health insurance that will allow chamber members to reduce their health insurance expense.

We at the chamber also will focus on business-survival techniques, being more strategic and improving the bottom line by:

- Planning for healthier enterprises. It is time to dust off

the business plans, and review and update or completely revamp them. Many businesses need to refine their niche and target markets; create strong, unique selling propositions; target advertising dollars more effectively; revisit operational needs; and create realistic budgets that allow for setting money aside for rainy days. Businesses also must identify short-, medium- and long-term cash needs, recognizing that financial markets will want to see improved credit ratings and strong business plans. We will continue to offer programs to assist businesses with such planning.

- Assessing and improving cash- and work-flow management. Such management begins with reviewing current financial information in order to understand where business lies; quickly adjust to changing circumstances, if needed; and make better decisions for tomorrow, including addressing business workload to appropriately meet demand. Many busi-

nesses face work-force reductions, from reduced hours to layoffs. While it is important to right-size one's work force to keep the business afloat, we will offer creative solutions for keeping loyal employees and addressing scheduling challenges.

- Creating marketing opportunities. Customers are needed now, and businesses must be proactive in keeping existing customers and attracting new ones. This is not the time to reduce dollars spent on marketing and advertising. Instead, it is important to enhance marketing efforts and target advertising dollars. Throughout the coming year, the chamber will continue to offer many networking opportunities, from luncheons to our monthly Business After Hours events. We and our members understand the importance of relationship marketing, and how to use this invaluable and affordable marketing tool for business success. We also offer

cost-effective advertising solutions in print and electronic media to get targeted messages out. And, we will provide additional training programs so our members more effectively reach their target markets.

- Benefiting from seminars, workshops and training. We will continue to offer a variety of training programs to meet members' needs so they can expand their knowledge and improve their practices and skills. This process keeps more money in-house through enhanced productivity, more efficient operations, better delivery of existing services, new service offerings and reduced use of outside services.

- Preparing for the future. We will promote and inform about long-range planning, disaster-preparedness and savings programs to help businesses not only survive, but thrive.

A trio of January chamber events starts with the Business Education Committee's free workshop on "Surviving These

Economic Times" Jan. 16. Our monthly Business After Hours will be held Jan. 22 at the Park Plaza in the Maui Research & Technology Park in Kihei, sponsored by Pacific Rim Land and Goodfellow Bros. And, our annual luncheon with Gov. Linda Lingle will be held Jan. 30, sponsored by Pacific Lightnet Communications.

The new year will be filled with programs and opportunities to maximize the return our members receive on their chamber investment.

Beyond the dictum "Necessity is the mother of all invention," advance planning and preparation create stronger, more financially sound businesses. In these lean times, we want to help our members focus on survival now, while keeping a long-term perspective, so that together we can move as swiftly as possible from recovery to renewal and success.

■ *Pamela Tumpap is president of the Maui Chamber of Commerce.*