From the December 2009 Issue

For most businesses, 2008 was a year they would rather forget. The headlines were merciless with stories of bankruptcies, foreclosures, layoffs, tight credit and the general discomfort in a country that was more used to jobs, profits and plenty.

The economic turmoil continues to leave its mark, and those who are surviving are doing so because of their ability to change their ways, become more efficient, or streamline operations and business practices. In many cases, that reflects changes fueled by technology, coupled with more deliberate attention to value received before they invest.

As the calendar flips to 2010, there will still be headlines of more bankruptcies and foreclosures, and stories of those whose jobs were lost as their 20th century version of a buggy building company lost its relevancy. Continuing to stay above the doom and gloom are those nimble entrepreneurs and business leaders agile enough to adapt. What they learned in 2009 has opened their eyes and brought into focus the changes they must make in order to keep their relevancy in the marketplace. Although my crystal ball is hazy, let's look at a few areas I predict will impact these agile leaders for 2010:

REMOTE CONNECTION

As gas prices rise and the reasons to always be "at the office" decline, the trend toward working remotely from home will increase.

Lesson learned from 2009: Some employees actually are more efficient when they work from home, away from distractions. Businesses, seeking more

experienced

see a focus on paying more attention to your clients as a sound business practice.

eck, even our local cable company is now calling after service tech visits to ask if everything got fixed correctly. The cable company! I'm one of millions. Who would have thought it?

The nimble will focus on tools like SharePoint and CRM that make it easier for them to deliver at a higher level to their clients.

Lesson learned from 2009: Customer satisfaction is not sufficient; customer loyalty is the goal. If all you have is an e-mail relationship, be careful. It can vanish into thin air. The nimble will create an environment where clients
want to do business with them. They will also return to the personal touch with their clients. The technology makes it too easy to communicate electronically;
it is time to make it personal and only use technology to support relationships
and not be them.

VALUE

Forget "Show Me The Features." Now the demand is "Show Me The Value," and there will be no investments if the value is not easy to see.

Lesson learned from 2009: Sometimes the value is not so clear. The nimble will have to work harder to be sure they can demonstrate value, and when they

can showcase that value then the prospects will become clients. And when

consider new ideas without being tied too firmly with the "way we have always done it."

The good news for the nimble (and everyone trying to be) is that there are wonderful tools and technologies that can help. Here's a sampling of those that will likely get the most attention:

- **Dashboards for more easily accessible metrics about the business.** We have less time to make decisions and are in need of current information at a moment's notice. Many of today's tools, from Excel to Crystal Xcelsius to many of today's accounting software, include some dashboard capability.
- **Collaboration tools that prevent duplication of work and protection of documents.** More on SharePoint in a minute.
- **Business Intelligence Tools, like the Excel-based tools from BizNet Software and Global Software.** Watch for a higher adoption rate because they address the hunger for slicing and dicing data in Excel and can provide a more comprehensive look at information for analysis in non GL areas.
- **The Niche** — Businesses find they can be more effective in areas where they have greater depth, so they will continue to refine how they can better serve their specialty niches. The nimble will focus on what they do best and where their high level of competency commands a premium. Today's pioneering companies who specialize in data

migration

the technology-based tools that are part of their systems, such as Positive
Pay, Electronic Banking, Cash Management and Business Alerts.

- **Business Activity Monitoring (BAM) tools**, like Vineyardsoft's
  KnowledgeSync, will be adopted to a greater degree by businesses that see
  that the "alert" is nice, but it is the incorporation of the
  workflow that brings the most value.
- **Windows SharePoint Services** (WSS) will be deployed by
  more companies to take advantage of the basic (yet high value) features
  like Search, Versioning and Checking In/Out as a foundational start.
- **Fiber-Optic networks will expand**, driving down prices
  to make them more accessible to the masses. This will help satisfy our increasing
  appetite for faster Internet and more bandwidth and address our lack of
  patience for slower speed alternatives.

A few other changes to be on the lookout for:

- Businesses will get more comfortable having their data hosted
  elsewhere.
- SaaS, subscription and pay-as-you-go pricing for applications will become
  more accepted as companies, anxious to hold onto their cash, get comfortable
  paying monthly for services.
- Revenue flow will contribute to a change in the business model of many

technology companies. There will be less "up front" payment

RESOURCES

- KnowledgeSync – BAM product (www.vineyardsoft.com)
- Windows SharePoint Services (WSS) and Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS) (www.microsoft.com/sharepoint)
- Crystal and Xcelsius (www.sap.com/solutions/sapbusinessobjects/sme/reporting-dashboarding)
- BizNet Software, developers of BizInsight (www.biznetsoftware.com)
- Global Software, developers of several Excel-based tools (www.glbsoft.com)

Technology