

Birtcher Development & Investments
Legacy of Leadership, a monthly video series

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Dan Young, President/Community Development, The Irvine Company

Boosting Morale

The best way to make an impact on morale is, to number one, have people's trust. When you say something, it's got to be the truth. If you establish the trust then you can maintain morale even in the most difficult of circumstances.

The second critical ingredient is a sense of humor – you've got to have fun doing what you're doing and you've got to be able to laugh at circumstances that maybe seem more tragic than funny. You've got to be able to say – well look, we're going to band together, we're going to enjoy each other's company, we're going to trust each other and even when times are tough and a lot of people cut and run, we're not going to and we're going to get through it. They have to believe that you're going to do everything you can to get them through it.

Develop an E-Strategy

There is so much advertising in the marketplace today that people zone it out, for the most part, they ignore so much of it. We've seen so much traditional ad copy that people look beyond it. When they look beyond it, they tend to look at your product and it becomes a commodity, what's the cheapest value? In order to bring value to it, you've got to meet them where they are, you've got to give them fresh communication, and for this generation, that means you better have an e-strategy or you're probably not going to have anybody listening to you.

Patience & Relationships

I think to take advantage of a downturn like this one you have to do a couple of things. Number one, you have to be more patient than normal. A lot of people are looking at how they can get new projects underway right away because they want to be on the front end of the next up-cycle. I think in this circumstance, you want to see a lot more recovery than you have in past recessions, so being patient to me is a strategy.

Secondly, a strategy is to develop relationships. Right when people are wondering what's going to happen in the next up-cycle, they want to take advantage of new opportunities. Now is the time to get out and meet people to say, "What are you thinking about?" and "What could we do together?" Let's be patient as to when we do it, but let's think about some new partnerships, let's think about some new market area and let's think about some new products that we can go out with.

Know What You Don't Know

If you run a real estate company, you can't know everything there is to know. You can't be the leasing expert, and the finance expert and the construction expert. You have to be the kind of leader that goes out and hires to your weaknesses - get experts in those things that you're not an expert in and be able to lead them even though they are the expert. So, I think really the art of leadership in a real estate company is to know what you don't know; to find people who are expert in those areas and who will accept you as the leader - even though you're not the expert.

Recognizing the Recovery

This is a case where, of all the things we've read about that have gone wrong in the financial markets, or any particular sector of the marketplace, what's universal is a complete and utter loss of confidence. When we start to see confidence building and the measure of confidence from different companies that are in the business of measuring it, then I think we can start to see that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I wouldn't be fooled by any one quarter's manufacturing numbers, or other kinds of indicators of productivity, without knowing that there is also a restoration of confidence.

The second is that the financial markets have to be fully repaired. You have to see people being able to access banks for loans, traditionally, not in the way that we saw toward the end of this cycle where we saw lending that shouldn't have taken place, but traditional lending has to come back on the market.

Each month throughout 2009, Birtcher will post a new video to its website, www.birtcherdevelopment.com.

Video produced by [Birtcher Development and Investments](#) and [Idea Hall](#).

Dan Young Biography

Dan Young
President/Community Development
The Irvine Company

Dan Young is president of Irvine Community Development Company LLC (ICDC), an affiliate of the Irvine Company responsible for all residential development on The Irvine Ranch®.

As president of ICDC, Mr. Young guides all facets of the Irvine Company's community master-planning and development process, which began more than 45 years ago. From the villages of Woodbury, Northpark and Woodbridge in Irvine, to the coastal communities of Crystal Cove and Newport Coast, the residential communities on The Irvine Ranch have won many national awards and are admired for their unique character and livability.

Mr. Young came to the Irvine Company in November 1999, after a 20-year career as a real-estate developer and a consultant to the industry. In his previous role with the Irvine Company, he served as executive vice president of Entitlement and Public Affairs, overseeing the company's entitlement on The Irvine Ranch.

His community involvement includes 11 years on the Santa Ana City Council, including eight years as mayor. In his official capacity as mayor, Mr. Young also served on the board of directors of several regional agencies, including the Metropolitan Water District and the Orange County Transportation Authority.

Mr. Young received his bachelor's degree from California State University, Fullerton, and his master's degree in public administration from the University of Southern California.

For more information, visit www.theirvineco.com