

# OPINION

Brampton

## BusinessTimes

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# Talking our way through tough economy

Cont. from page 1

If Canada is semi-secure from the havoc being wrought on the financial markets south of the border (we are the only industrialized nation not facing a single bank failure according to Michael Kinsley of The New Republic), the reality is this: our more risk-averse business culture is hog-tied to the U.S. markets since Uncle Sam is our biggest trading partner.

It's a macabre dance that fills everyone with dread, since the U.S. government seems stymied by the polemics of it all. Despite Obama's best intentions, partisan bickering could fritter away any chance of reawakening the giant.

Still, Lipkin is undaunted, and optimistic to a fault.

When he enters a room of business leaders, like he did last month at the Chamber Executives of Ontario annual meeting at the Holiday Inn Select in Brampton, he carries a positive message, and a toolbox full of affirmations.

He insists business leaders have to stay idealistic, and get control of their destiny.

In a world where control seems to be ever slipping away, he's eager to pull out the old bromide about "nothing to fear but fear itself."

Fear, says Lipkin, can be a motivational tool – or a dagger to the heart.

"You can use your fear, or you can be used by it, he says.

Life, according to Lipkin, is all about "shifting energy" and embracing opportunity.

What opportunity?

Lipkin admits that people feel let down and betrayed by the current economic system. The shift from blind obedience to American-style capitalism has now been replaced by a growing skepticism and a feeling that we are now paying the price for shameful acts of excess.

The key is not to get cynical about the process, he says.

Lipkin believes that 7 out of 10 of us find it difficult to believe or sustain optimism.

Obama's biggest challenge isn't the rejigging of the auto business, or saving the housing market, or resupplying the banks with cash. It's refiring the internal combustion engine that was once the indomitable American spirit.

Can we will ourselves into a comely state of confidence?

Yes, says Lipkin, although the world has changed before our very eyes.

Business success was easier a decade ago, in an ever-expanding economy. Then we got lazy. We didn't need to communicate with others.

## RICK DRENNAN

### EDITOR'S DESK



We forgot how to "woo" business.

"We have to get back to understand the core of what we are doing," says Lipkin.

How do you do that?

Lipkin and Visca will tell you. They're holding a two-day session on March 27 and 28 in King City. It's dubbed: inspiration-to-action – engaging conversation and interactive workshops.

Participants will learn that 2009 is a year of "thrival" and not just "survival."

It's called 'The Big Think: Inspire to Action', and Lipkin, president of Environics, is eager for business leaders to attend and reconnect with their peers. Communication is the key to pulling ourselves out of our present ennui, he says.

What's the challenge ahead?

"To creatively reinvent yourself for the revolution so you can thrive on challenge, change and crisis," states Lipkin, who adds: "The revolution has started. From New York to New Delhi, our worlds are being rocked. Whatever happens next, we all need to raise the value we bring to others to a whole new level – without burning ourselves out. That means we have to find a system that will motivate and mobilize us – not just today, but every day."

Are these stirring words, like Henry V addressing the troops before the Battle of Agincourt, or just new-Age doggerel?

Lipkin insists that the quality of your future is a direct function of the quality of conversations you have with the people in

your life. Extraordinary opportunities are created – one pre-eminent conversation at a time.

The Big Think includes a two-hour keynote address, and a two-hour conversation with Visca.

Visca is Lipkin with hair – another turbo-charged talker who left the world of architecture to build a company – Redchair Branding – that inspires.

He's been called upon by many Fortune 500 CEOs to creatively facilitate large team initiatives in order to draw out the best in creativity.

Visca calls himself a "serial entrepreneur" and admits that stirring people to be the best they can be is his true calling in life.

He's never faced a bigger challenge, as anxiety builds in the business community.

A literary critic once wrote that our lives must be self directed, and charged with a sense of purpose and connectedness. More and more, he says, we find ourselves living at a remove, with a feeling that life has gone blurry and has lost its singular intensity. We need to believe in our lives as destinies, as unfolding narratives that take on and manifest meaning that are distinctive if not distinguished.

Maybe that is what's been lost is this madcap pursuit of materialism.

The truth is this: yes, these are tough economic times; and yes, we're living through the collapse of an old economic order and the emergence of a new one; and yes, those who throw up their hands will suffer ignoble defeat; but those rare few who can walk the talk, will lead us forward into a new and even more fruitful economy.

It will be a more prosperous system that's open to all, and gives hope to all, and improves the condition of all.

Can words really stir us to do battle, like Henry V's St. Crispin's Day speech? Or is this all the concoction of poets and self-help gurus who don't have to do the dirty work of turning a profit in an economy on its knees?

After all, this vast shaking of the collective soul is very much about the physical and moral collapse of the four pillars of the financial world – the banks, the trust and loan companies, the insurance firms, and securities dealers.

The Glass Steagall mentality that separated these four pillars gave way to cross-pillar mergers and the eventual creation of the now dreaded investment banks like Lehman Brothers. The emergence of esoteric financial products like hedge funds, derivatives, and sub-prime mortgages, has led, in a perfect linear line, to what we suffer with today: a

voodoo financial system.

Gone were the careful, guarded, pinstriped conservative investment strategies of yesteryear.

The brainiacs from Harvard Business School preached the mantra of shareholder value until the tenets of careful money management were mocked into submission.

The past few years gave us Bre-X, Enron, the dotcom bubble, the sub-prime mortgage meltdown, Bernie Madoff, and the great unraveling of the world banking system.

These are symptoms of a greater ill: playing fast and loose with debt.

Lipkin says people lost sight of what debt meant. The invisible hand that guided our free markets simply loosened its grip as deregulation led to a lack of due diligence.

America's investment banks became casinos.

Toxic loans were trampled over as the sellers made a mad dash to collect their bonuses.

CEO compensation was injected with growth hormones.

The hat sizes of Wall Streeters increased seven fold.

Some of the people we trusted with our money were little better than carny barkers.

Every regulation had a loophole.

Every buck should produce 30 more.

The result: inane government bailouts.

At the macro level, Obama is trying to kickstart the economic recovery with a greater infusion of debt – which seems, on balance, like trying to save a drowning city by reopening the levees.

But then again, what other choices do we have?

At the micro level, Lipkin, says change comes with conversation – great talk.

Robbins says two things motivate people: pleasure and pain.

The pleasure principle was in place for more than a decade, and reached idiotic proportions under the directionless president, George W. Bush.

Now we're feeling the pain.

This is Lipkin's call to arms.

Can we really talk ourselves into a new world order?

Lipkin's book, 'One Life, One Meeting,' will give you proven, and powerful methods that help you bring out the best in people so they can bring out the best for you.

"We have to learn from each other," he says.

In other words, it's all about walking the talk.

For more information on *The Big Think*, call 905 528-6032 or [megan@redchairbranding.com](mailto:megan@redchairbranding.com)

## Letters to the editor:

Subject: Re: Building Code? 'We can do better'  
February Brampton Business Times

The article by Mr. (Rich) Letkeman entitled, 'Building Code? We can do better' (Feb. 2009), reported incorrectly that the Region of Peel's Chapelview housing development in Brampton, built by Martinway Construction Ltd., "...will be occupied by very-low-income and homeless or transient tenants late this year."

While the Region of Peel does provide a variety of programs and services that support the homeless and those in a transitory stage in housing, Chapelview is in fact, a modern, 200-unit apartment building in downtown Brampton that is geared towards housing market-rent seniors and singles, some of which may receive rent supplements.

Housing tenants with mixed-incomes is a widely held precept in the affordable housing sector that accommodates the needs of all residents and is a proven model, which contributes to the economic and social diversity of a community.

Our innovative partnership with Martinway Contracting Ltd., whose leadership is seeking LEED-Platinum certification with the help of Enermodal Engineering is a significant step towards environmental stewardship. It is anticipated that Chapelview would be the first social housing building to achieve Platinum-level LEED status in Canada.

And while assistance from other levels of government has been greatly appreciated, the demand for affordable housing in Peel far outweighs the resources and funding available. We also count on the support and innovation of our partners like Martinway and community leaders to continue working towards a goal of providing more affordable housing across the Region.

Keith Ward  
Commissioner of Human Services  
And General Manager of Peel Living  
Region of Peel



United Way  
of Peel Region

On behalf of United Way of Peel Region, I wish to thank everyone in our community for coming together and helping raise \$12,517,812 in our 2008 campaign. This is the second highest achievement in United Way's history and, given the challenging economic climate, a tremendous success.

Thanks to the outpouring of generosity of individuals, businesses and organizations across our community, United Way can continue to partner with local agencies to create lasting social change through building vibrant neighbourhoods, growing strong families, and developing resilient people. Funds raised will help support 118 vital programs, services and initiatives across Peel that help reduce poverty, strengthen families, assist abused women and children, assist seniors in maintaining their independence, and help immigrants and newcomers to settle and integrate.

We thank the hundreds of volunteers for their outstanding efforts. We especially thank the members of our 2008 Campaign Cabinet and our Campaign Chair, Sean Smith, President of IKON Office Solutions. His outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment to this year's campaign was truly inspirational.

Shelley White  
Chief Executive Officer  
United Way of Peel Region