

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

All over Europe, the Americas, and Asia, we have experienced an economy with a consistent high growth for more than five years. And suddenly, we have dropped into a recession that has shown little sign of abating.

What does all this mean? Have all business rules become obsolete? Is all corporate wisdom carefully acquired in recent years suddenly useless? What strategy should be chosen in order to survive? Unfortunately, there's no silver bullet. Yet, some patterns and trends are already visible.

First of all, many managers and entrepreneurs have, over the past few years, been making their business decisions based on belief rather than fact. Trust was paramount, evidence was lacking. We believe that the successful companies of the near future will be those who are fully transparent. Such companies are able to rely on trustworthy data and superior Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) control mechanisms: contemporary GRC concepts, processes, and systems that are used by skilled professionals as well as supervisory board members.

Secondly, we believe that those companies who are flexible and agile enough to instantly cut excessive fat from their corporate bones will be able to sustain operational excellence in the years to come. These companies will be able to naturally and continuously adapt the right size of their operations, matching the fluctuating demands of their marketplace.

Thirdly, we believe that, in the end, successful companies will be the ones still capable of producing profound and positive changes in products, services, distribution channels, and customer service practices despite tight resource management.

Such effects resulting from transparency, transformation, and innovation have to be addressed by managers in the economic context, which is, as we've already seen, at best uncertain. There is no predefined prospect for high growth. The challenge for managers is to select those issues that are most relevant for their firm. These will have to be addressed in line with an economic uncertainty that is expected to last for the next few years.

A low-growth economy with low structural change will not punish mediocre performers. Nor will a high-growth economy. But the economy in which we now live and operate is a low-growth economy with transparent price mechanisms and much structural change. It has little or no tolerance for non-adaptors and inferior performers.

The current economic climate requires more precision in strategic thinking, implemented more quickly and with a higher quality of execution. This demands transparent governance and full operational disclosure to succeed. In many ways, this is the key not just to surviving the recession, but to ensuring an innovative and plentiful future.

Quite a volatile background to set the scene for this edition of VIEW!

We begin with Business Transparency, taken from three different angles in three distinct, in-depth articles. The first deals with the question of how legislation on mandatory data breach notification might affect our corporate and personal lives.

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The second takes a completely different view on Transparency, by addressing the potential relationship between the perceived internal control systems of listed companies and their stock value. The third article concentrates on using Corporate Performance Management as a means of creating Transparency from both an internal and an external perspective.

Elsewhere in this edition of VIEW, we continue this focus on Business Transparency by providing some practical views on Transparency in HR practices, the Supply Chain, and the Internal Control Function.

Finally, we feature an interview with Dr Ely Plooij-van Gorsel on Business Transparency and Good Governance in Europe as well as a report on a Round Table conference on the subject, during which four of our very own thought leaders shared some interesting opinions.

On behalf of the Editorial Board and the contributors to this edition of VIEW, I wish you an enjoyable and inspirational read.

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Han van der Zee
For a full biography, please see page 31.

VIEW complements another regular publication of Atos Consulting: Look Out, which describes emerging trends in society, technology, the economy, and the political climate that will impact the way business is conducted. If you don't have your personal copy of Look Out, contact your Atos Consulting representative. It is well worth a look. You can also read more on Look Out by visiting www.lookout.atosconsulting.com.

