

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Over the past few years, we have seen the rise and the apparent fall of the world economy and the debate about whether we've been in a recession, depression, or any other miserable word addressing the downturn. We have experienced an economy with a consistently high growth for nearly five years, suddenly dropping into a recession or near recession, and showing no better prospects for the coming years than worm-like graphs.

What does this all mean? Have all business rules become obsolete? No, they have not. Is all wisdom acquired in the past suddenly useless? No, on the contrary. We need that wisdom to start the preparations for the upturn. What strategy to choose in order to survive? There's no silver bullet. Yet, we believe we should look at a glass half full, not half empty. Some up-swinging patterns are visible again. Revenues of stock-listed companies are stable or slightly increasing, profits are back again, despite high unemployment figures, and substantial state investment and subsidizing. There's some light at the end of the tunnel. We believe that the successful companies of the near future will be those who are able to sustain operational excellence, and who are also capable of producing profound changes in products, services, distribution channels, and practices, with powerful impact.

And there's more, especially beyond the boundaries of individual firms and their industries. The socio-political environment of firms has changed as well, and no less fundamentally than the economy. A variety of social groups demand from organizations sustainable development and entrepreneurship. An aging society also implies an aging workforce. Such a workforce requires new approaches for innovation processes within firms. This changing workforce also shifts the structure of the economy. For example, in the Netherlands, healthcare is the largest industry with 8% of the GNP. Its organization, operational processes, and governance require new approaches to combine the demand for high-level services with universal access and economies that society can afford. At the same time, the shift from hard goods and services to services and customer experiences continues. Gradually, the deeper effects of digital technology and the Internet become visible, especially on the issue of ownership and power in the economy.

Altogether, firms see themselves faced with a range of issues that vary from weak signals to burning questions (see Look Out, the annual Radar Screen of the Business & Technology Trends publication of Atos Consulting: www.lookout.atosconsulting.com). The challenge for managers is to select those issues

that are most relevant to their firm. These will have to be addressed in a way commensurate with the economic uncertainty we have experienced in recent times.

The greatest risk for not recovering from the crisis is that managers and entrepreneurs may have become risk-averse, slowing down innovation and structural change. They see a glass half empty: a slowing down of economic development and growth—a loss for all. The challenge is to look at a glass half full, to create explorative trust both within the firm and at the level of society. This, in turn, will enable innovation and structural change as enablers for future economic growth.

This is basically the background for this edition of VIEW. It is our firm belief that we all need to be ready to prepare for growth after the downturn—it's about time to grasp the opportunities rather than complain about the threats.

As usual, we'll address a host of subjects and issues. We'll begin by addressing the environmental and sustainability challenges in a fascinating article, contributed by our Spanish colleagues. We'll then have a look at the role of IT, ICT, and the CIO in an examination of the New Norm describing how global connectivity is changing the way the world communicates. Following on from this, we have two articles that analyze what this globally connected world really means for IT, and the way we should value (and thus measure) the role of IT within such an environment. Also, we'll have a look at the lengths to which innovation should or could be fostered through Innovation Workshops.

Then, we elaborate on our client's experience in preparing for the expected upturn in the economy. We have an example of the largest Dutch Telco, which is making money and enabling growth through monitoring and enforcing customer satisfaction, before further growing customers' wallet share by actively retaining that customer. Last but not least, the sometimes controversial human (employee) factor is discussed, stressing the importance of rebuilding consumer, employee, and society trust. This, according to the authors, will prove to be the decisive factor of business success in the upturn. Certainly, we'll see, but it needs to be said: the arguments are strong!

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

Han van der Zee
Chairman of the Editorial Board of VIEW



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.

