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I Predict . . .



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By Eve Gumpel compiled this report.
WomenEntrepreneur.com

We asked our columnists to offer some predictions for the coming year in their areas of expertise. Some are on the dire side of the register, some are hopeful, and all are intriguing. We'll have to see what kind of prognosticators these women turn out to be.

Herewith, our experts' expectations for the coming year.

"Small business owners will still be fighting an uphill battle to persuade banks to lend them money!"

--**Rosalind Resnick**, "[Money Matters](#)" columnist, [Vest Pocket Consultant blogger](#), founder of [Access Business Consulting](#)

"Women over 55 will move to the very top of the list for starting new businesses. With the economic downturn and unemployment statistics, After 55s just know they will go to the bottom of the stack of resumes and see that now "it's our time" (which is the SilverVixens tagline).

--**Bonnie Price**, "[After 55](#)" columnist and [blogger](#), founder of [SilverVixens.com](#)

"Someone will develop an eReader that will switch to audio at the touch of a button (complete with speakers and headphones). Why? The Kindle and others are still too expensive and some of us would argue that they are no more portable than a paperback book. However, if I could jump in my car and have the same book I was reading now be read to me as I drive, or via earphones as I exercise or take my dog for a walk. . . I might be inclined to cough up the money for another gadget."

--**Diane Danielson**, [Top Shelf Reading Picks](#) blogger, founder of [Downtown Women's Club](#)

"**Clarity** (This drives all the trends below). The 'black box' aura that surrounds social media activity will slowly dissolve, and measurements and ROI will be easier to grasp. This is due in part to organizations becoming clearer about their goals and, as a result, becoming clearer about what metrics to measure. That means they'll be better able to see what's working and what's not.

"**Focus**. Streamlined social media use and activities by organizations means less flailing about and more purpose-driven social media activity.

"**Engagement**. It's all about marketing through engagement and connection, not direct sales. To the extent that businesses understand this, they will be able to increase sales. To put it crudely, engagement equals money--eventually. Businesses need to learn to practice delayed gratification and be a bit more patient about seeing the link between social media and sales.

"**Mobile**. Even more mobile social media activity. Our 'always-on' culture, pregnant with BlackBerries and iPhones, means the increased mobile social trend will lead to more mobile business. If your website can't be viewed and products can't be purchased properly from a smart phone, you might want to make addressing that handicap a priority in 2010."

--**Lena West**, "[Seriously Social](#)" columnist and [blogger](#), and CEO of [xynoMedia Technology](#)

"I predict increasing use of "murketing" (stealth marketing, such as Starbuck's anti-Starbucks indie-looking coffee houses; and Pabst Blue Ribbon buying the beer for parties and events and not making a big deal about its sponsorship) and a resulting backlash by consumers, who will want to know when a corporation is behind a gimmick designed to make them buy something. Consumers will demand "marketing provenance" as part of the trend toward demanding more authenticity and transparency from companies."

--**Lynn M. Parker**, "[Branding for Real](#)" columnist, principal of [Parker LePia](#)

In 2010 more business owners will finally get 'it' or get heartily stomped by their competition. The 'it's that net-based activities, interactive portals and ad space are not for the other guy or for larger organizations with better marketing and advertising budgets--but for everyone who is serious about making money--from the local pizzeria and hair salon to regional and national brands.

"The light will dawn and the aha moment will be when they know for sure that 'it' is all about creating diverse and very strategic inbound marketing channels via social networking and other online spaces/vehicles (like blogging, e-newsletters and regular ol' e-mail), leading to a rockin', well branded, intuitively organized, content and keyword-rich SEO sales engine--their website.

" 'It' is also about authentic dialogue and communities, geo-segmenting messages and offers, using a variety of tech tools and apps, creatively using videos, lot's of 'em, and keeping track of--and revamping as needed--those very telling web traffic stats.

" 'It' is doing all this while concentrating on what you do best--and engaging a kick-butt team of professionals to get where you want to go: a marketing pro (for strategy, planning, project management, social media/traditional campaign development, etc.) a seasoned web and print copywriter, a talented graphic designer and webmaster, and an SEO and PPC click expert."

--**Pattie Simone**, "[Inside Sales & Marketing](#)" columnist, president of [Write-Communications.com](#) and [Marketing-Advantage.net](#), and founder of [WomenCentric.net](#)

"The government needs more money but has less tax revenue than ever before. So where is the government going to get this money? From you!

"I predict individual income tax rates will increase. We already know that taxpayers with higher incomes are going to see their tax rates go up, but I'm willing to bet we'll see higher tax rates from top to bottom of the income scale.

"I predict that the long-term capital gains tax rate will rise to 20 percent, if not higher.

"I predict the word 'surtax' will be your new middle name. People earning more than \$200,000 are going to be hit with taxes upon taxes upon surtaxes to fund health care and all those bailouts and spending programs.

Bonus prediction: When the IRS starts showing your medical benefits on your W-2, watch out. It's only a matter of time before they start taxing those, too.

--**Roni Deutch**, "[The Tax Lady](#)" columnist, founder and owner of the tax resolution law firm [Roni Lynn Deutch, A Professional Tax Corporation](#) and [Roni Deutch Tax Center](#), a tax preparation franchise

"The commercial real estate asset class will be re-set in 2010, like the residential mortgage re-set that shocked the overall economy. The marketplace will experience an unknown ripple effect. This will lead to more difficulties obtaining financing.

"Financing will continue to be difficult into 2010; most small business will turn to non-bank, asset-based lending and pay more interest on the amount borrowed.

"More businesses will be forced into bankruptcy court or will close due to the slow economy.

"Unemployment will continue to rise until banks start lending to small business, which creates the majority of jobs in a tough economy. Hence, we'll see the crime rate go up, too.

"A huge amount of new businesses will be created due to the high unemployment rate. Many will be franchises.

"Small business will continue to lead innovation in the marketplace.

"The stock market will face another downturn as soon as commercial real estate becomes a recognizable problem. A majority of investors will still hold in cash position. More people who are near retirement will buy [annuities](#) to keep their principal safe.

"People who already retired prior to the financial crisis will continue to be the driving force for the travel and entertainment business. They are the only demographic actually stimulating the economy.

"More businesses will buy services from local, smaller firms. Bigger and regional firms will continue to face the challenge of retaining and recruiting small-business clients.

"Marketing-related company services will thrive in 2010; a huge amount of money will be spent on creative marketing.

"Organic, green initiatives and renewable energy will continue to be the hottest investment trend."

--**Chia-Li Chien**, "[Financial Independence](#)" columnist, principal of [Chien Associates](#)

"I absolutely predict that you will see many new home-based and low-cost business opportunities in 2010. You can see by many of the new businesses from Entrepreneur's franchise list that home-based businesses are rising to the top. With shows like The Big Idea and Shark Tank, the entrepreneurial spirit is ignited. People are seeing real people gain success by following their dreams. It's no longer out of reach. Similarly, you will see the rise of mompreneurs as moms realize that they can have it all. Mothers are realizing they can have a stimulating career that is supportive of family if they create it for themselves."

--**Lisa Druxman**, "[Mompreneur](#)" columnist, founder and CEO of fitness franchise [Stroller Strides](#)

"My prediction for 2010 is not as much a prediction as a challenge. I challenge entrepreneurial mothers to execute a well-known business practice. It's one that is simple, though not necessarily easy. Many business owners, entrepreneurial mothers included, typically leave it to chance or know that they need to or should do this, they just don't.

"Intrigued? I'm telling you--this is not brain surgery.

"Offer more to your current clients. Look at ways to help them meet their individual challenges, which will naturally and organically lead to more up-sell opportunities.

"My prediction is that the most successful entrepreneurial mothers in 2010 will be the ones who actually strategize, execute and measure added value for their current clients."

--**Kim Lysik Di Santi**, "[The Mother Lode](#)" columnist, president of [Total Strategy](#)

"In 2010 what we call "work" will become even more of a means to an end, often with that end being a more passionate, purpose-filled pursuit. Employees and even business owners are doing double duty to maintain their day jobs on the one hand and ramp up new endeavors on the other--whether new businesses or charitable efforts more aligned with unrequited personal interests.

"I think this activity will accelerate largely as a result of this punishing recession."

--**Beth Zimmerman**, "[The Strategist](#)" columnist, principal of [Cerebellas LLC](#)

"As our business clients look to build their businesses, we're seeing an increase in growing through supplier diversity programs. For our minority, women and service-disabled veteran-owned entrepreneur clients, our bankers work with them to teach them how to become part of the bank's contracting and procurement process, help them match their company's products and services with the bank's needs and help them gain recognition with the bank's purchasing decision makers." "All parties benefit," says Richard Chacon, Union Bank's Supplier Diversity Manager. "Entrepreneurs benefit from the assistance and the increased business as we aim to increase the number of diverse businesses from whom we buy products and services."

--**Martha Pineda**, "[Ask Your Banker](#)" columnist, [priority banking manager](#), Union Bank, N.A.

"My prediction for 2010 is that more people will seek out self-employment opportunities than ever before. Many will finally be inspired to take the leap into applying their own enthusiasm and methodology toward running a business, and I believe a good percentage of people will turn to their own family for support (financially and emotionally) for their new endeavor.

"It was easy for us to see that 2009 exhibited an unconscionable corporate mentality. People were left as collateral damage due to corporate greed. I predict an entrepreneurial wave will occur in the U.S.--from cottage industries to fabulous internet opportunities and franchising.

"The days of working for the same company with an eye on a stable [retirement](#) are over. Instead of spending at the rate we did four years ago, many will invest in themselves.

"I believe we now see that it's our time to excel on our own--we have nothing to lose."

--**Cynthia McKay**, "[Building a Million-Dollar Business](#)" columnist, principal of The McKay Group LLC

For many years, the line between PR and media was rock solid. Things were either done by PR people or done by journalists. A press release was a press release. A news article was a news article. Few things balanced between the two. These past couple of years, we've seen many situations where PR people are asked to put on a journalist's hat and provide content--sometimes for traditional media, sometimes for web-based media. Sometimes, the work is identifiable as coming from a company. Sometimes it's not. Readers, viewers and listeners are left to figure it out on their own.

As we move into 2010, I predict that far more blurring of PR and journalism is just around the corner. As traditional media struggle with too-few writers and web-based media develop an insatiable thirst for content, more and more non-journalists will be needed to fill the gaps.

As a PR person, I am glad to see additional opportunities for our clients to gain coverage, and the chance to get the story "right." And as someone who has worn both hats, I know how to maintain integrity in this blurry environment. However, as a consumer of news, these blurry lines have me worried. Too many PR people are blatantly promotional when they should be informational and educational. To counteract this, media outlets need to develop guidelines for all contributors to ensure that the news pages don't turn into glorified advertising. And consumers need to ratchet up their skepticism a notch or two when reading anything. You just never know these days who is writing what . . . or why.

--**Hilary Kaye**, "[PR Like a Pro](#)" columnist, president of [HKA Inc.](#)

"I truly hope I'm wrong about this one, but I see a rise in collections problems. With the economy still in tight straits and a very likely (and substantial) tax increase to fund the bailouts, stimulus packages and health-care programs, small businesses will find cash flow even tighter in 2010.

"Businesses will either be chasing after their clients to get paid or other companies will be chasing after them to get paid--and the IRS and Department of Labor will be chasing everyone to get their hands on income and employment taxes (to replenish the depleted Treasuries)--whether or not the amounts are actually overdue.

"I've already heard of situations where small-business owners were hit up for back sales tax when the company was never in a retail business to begin with."

--**Nina Kaufman**, "[Business Law Advisor](#)" columnist, [Making It Legal](#)/blogger, principal of [Ask the Business Lawyer](#)