

TOM

Nine Predictions for 2009

ASACKER

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” — *Viktor E. Frankl*

The reality of the coming year is that the precipitous decline in the economy will create a collective pause; a “space” of epic proportions for organizations and individuals. Yes, it will be unpleasant for many. But it will also be an opportunity in disguise for those willing to seize the moment.

#1 **The Earth will complete its 584 million mile, 67,000 mph trip around the Sun without incident**

I know, that’s a pretty lame *kick-off* prediction. But think about those numbers for a minute. We’re all outgrowths of a living mass that is rocketing through space around an enormous ball of fire. Does that make *any* sense to you? Me either. So stop trying to figure it all out. Stop trying to protect yourself from an unknowable future and instead be a connected and passionate part of the here and now. “What is important in life is life, and not the result of life.”—*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

#2 **Many things will change, but many people will not**

Most of us will be doing, thinking and feeling more or less the same things this time *next* year as we are now. If you don’t want that sameness, grab yourself by the collar and yank yourself off of that comfortable, well-worn path and onto the one less traveled *by you*. Let go of your past and grab onto your future. Because while you’re waiting for that grand insight to point you in the right direction, the beauty of life is flying right on by. “Without change, something sleeps inside us, and seldom awakens. The sleeper must awaken.”—*Frank Herbert*

#3 **Most people will sit quietly in their seats and watch life unfold around them**

A recent New Yorker magazine cartoon made it comically clear: There’s a lot that we all want to *experience*, but not much that we actually want to *do*. Most of us simply want to go along to get along and enjoy the ride. Well, the ride is slowing to a crawl. And when it starts back up, it’ll be a much different ride. What kind of ride? The best way to know *that* is to put yourself in charge of creating it. Grab the wheel and get moving. Let the pull of what excites you and what you care most deeply about be your guide. “The reason why worry kills more people than work is that more people worry than work.” —*Robert Frost*

#4 A lot of people and businesses will fail

That's the unfortunate nature of life. You try something, it doesn't work. You try something different, it works. If it works *big*, people copy you (or steal it). You try something new, failure *again*. If you're trying, if you're living, you will fail. So what? I remember college friends years ago telling me that they could never "do what I do." I didn't know what that meant, so I asked. "You know," one replied. "No security. Going out on your own." "Security is an illusion," I countered. "Everyone is 'on his own.' And for the record," I added. "I could never do what you all are doing." Live a life of no regrets. Seize this opportunity to learn and grow and experience, while everyone else snuggles deeper into their comfy routines. "He who has never failed somewhere, that man can not be great." —*Herman Melville*

#5 Many "friends" will be lost and many new ones made

Social networks are all the rage today: MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, LinkedIn, Twitter and Plaxo, as well as the many recurring *real world* gatherings. And indeed, they can be great ways to stay connected and to gain attention. But many of the people who have "friended" you through these groups did so for a reason; their reason. And once that reason goes away, so will they. Don't sweat it. Keep connecting. Keep reaching out and sharing with people with similar interests and beliefs. But also, spend more slow and deep time with your family and your *true* friends; those who accept and care about the *real* you, not the *social status* you. "In prosperity, our friends know us; in adversity, we know our friends." —*John Churton Collins*

#6 The passionate will not only survive, they will thrive

What's bugging you? Whatever it is, for your sake—and for those unwilling or unable to change—do something about it! That's the key to growth and success. The inventor David Levy referred to it as the curse effect: "Whenever I hear someone curse, it's a sign to invent something." Well, perhaps that someone is you and that "cursing" is resonating between your ears. If so, don't let it irritate you and drain your life and passion. Use it to fuel you and drive you forward. The future belongs to those unwilling to accept the stifling status quo; to those who stay puzzled, excited, frustrated and surprised. "Whenever anything is being accomplished, it is being done, I have learned, by a monomaniac with a mission." —*Peter Drucker*

#7 Success will go to those with the best questions, not those with the cleverest answers

Do you know the definition of an expert? An expert is someone who knows more and more about less and less until he knows absolutely everything about nothing? And a generalist? A generalist, like so many afflicted with digital A.D.D., is someone who knows less and less about more and more until he knows absolutely nothing about everything. Successful people know that they'll *never* know enough, especially about what really

matters. So, they pay attention. They catch on and refocus rapidly. They never stop trying and learning. They're driven by the questions, by their desire to understand and to change things. "All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure."— *Mark Twain*

#8 Execution is the new strategy

E.L. Doctorow wrote, "Planning to write is not writing." Here's the funny thing: Writing is not writing. It's editing. You're really not sure where you're going until well after you've begun; until you've put pen to paper (or type to page). And then, the work unfolds in unpredictable and mysterious ways. Sure, vision and planning are important. But with the accelerating pace of change in today's world, the important insights are more likely to come through doing and editing, than through speculating and strategizing. "Change will lead to insight far more often than insight will lead to change."— *Milton H. Erickson*

#9 Making a difference will trump making a buck

Walt Disney's mantra was, "I don't make movies to make money. I make money to make movies." What about you? Why do you make money? Think really hard and long about that simple question. If you've been putting off being passionate about your work in order to make a lot of money, now may be the time for you to make a change. Why? Because the business of making money simply to make more money is quickly coming to an end. The future is *not* in making a buck; it's in making a difference. "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."— *Winston Churchill*

That's it. My nine clear-eyed prognostications for 2009. Email me next December and let me know how I did. In the meantime, please pass this around to your friends and colleagues. It may help them understand, and more importantly deal with, their impending "space" in the coming New Year.

The great Danish physicist Niels Henrik David Bohr wrote, "Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future." But, the first woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, Edna St. Vincent Millay, reminds us, "It's not true that life is one damn thing after another; it's one damned thing over and over." Physics and poetry. Such is the nature of our paradoxical world. Just remember, it's *your* future that you have control over, and only *you* have the power to change that one damn thing. Stay passionate and God speed!

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Tom Asacker writes, teaches, and speaks about radically new practices and ideas for success in chaotic times. He is an independent brand adviser and author of critically acclaimed books including *A Clear Eye for Branding* and *Sandbox Wisdom*, and his latest, *A Little Less Conversation*. Visit www.aclareye.com to learn more.