



Cooler Heads Prevail **by Aaron Crowley**

When business is booming, it is easy to appear the superstar CEO. Fat margins and high demand provide a wide cushion for sloppy management and lackluster discipline, usually masquerading under the guise of expertise and competency.

Remember the high flying tech CEO's, brilliant day traders, and homebuilding magnates? During the respective booms, they were all making money and considered luminaries in their fields.

But good times are not indefinite and many managers bomb when the boom disappears.

During contractions and declining demand, real leaders and managers emerge. Under duress and during a crisis a seasoned executive remains cool and collected and calmly makes decisions.

An untested newbie panics and overreacts, flails and fumbles.

There is a dual lesson here for the stone industry.

For a long long time, the sky has been the limit for just about anyone involved in the granite slab business. Years of consecutive growth in demand for the product and unprecedented popularity, provided a false sense of security; a feeling of invincibility.

Feeling invincible is so 2007.

As if the dramatic decline in housing and credit crunch weren't enough of a challenge, the sudden blitz of bad press regarding radon and radiation is shaping up to be a test few would volunteer to take.

The economy will recover, but the long term viability of granite counters and the credibility of the industry will hinge upon how we as individual fabricators respond to our customers and how we as an industry responds in shaping public opinion.

So long as we maintain our composure, remain calm, cool and collected we will be of the mind to find answers and solutions that will instill confidence in the mind of the consumer.

If our collective response is one of panic and overreaction or arrogant dismissal, we run the risk of fumbling and flailing into decisions that may do irreparable damage to our industry.

For the sake of the consumer and our livelihoods;

We must first acknowledge that radon/radiation is a valid concern worthy of immediate discussion and debate. Blowing it off or dismissing it as an unfounded attack by a competing industry only delays the inevitable. A seasoned executive never ignores a threat.

We must seek conclusive scientific evidence on the issue and create solutions accordingly. Solid, unbiased research needs to be conducted and fast. The more sources and statistics that are available for public consumption, the more openly the issue can be debated and the quicker a consensus can be reached. Appearing as though we are afraid of the truth will be a catastrophe. A leader uses the facts at hand to make good decisions.

We must not attempt to demonize or destroy our opponents or their arguments. This issue can be turned into an advantage, so long as we are seeking the safety of our customers and presenting creative solutions for their concerns. A brilliant manager avoids petty distractions and pursues opportunities.

So as this economy finds its legs and the radon/radiation issue plays itself out, let us all maintain our composure and *be* the cooler heads that prevail!