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## Silence is not golden in the business world



### Other Views

Dan Ward

Most investors know pulling completely out of the stock market in times like this is a bad move. If you're not in the market when the rebound occurs, you have zero chance of realizing any gains.

The same is true for businesses and the relationships they maintain with their past, current and future customers. If you stop talking to the people who make your

business a success, will they remember you when they have more money to spend?

With budgets shrinking across the board, it can be easy for a business to decide it must pull back, "go silent" and ride out the storm.

But silence is not a strategy — it is a white flag of surrender, the equivalent of burying cash in a can in the backyard. Silence merely buries relationships with the false hope that they'll remain and grow when spring arrives.

Maintaining important relationships during tough times requires honest, open and frequent communication. It requires an effort to remain top-of-mind among the audiences on which your company's success depends. It also requires fresh thinking to remain relevant.

For instance, even in the midst of a near

collapse in the housing market, one master-planned community on Florida's Treasure Coast is maintaining relationships by scheduling regular concerts and festivals in the town square. More than 6,000 people attended New Year's Eve events. That's 6,000 potential homebuyers who just enjoyed a great time in a community they are likely to remember.

There are many other ways to maintain communication with current and future customers.

Maintaining a Web site with regular updates is essential. Blog posts and news feeds can refresh a site quickly and give visitors a reason to return. Search engine optimization helps a Web site maintain high search rankings.

Direct communication is easy and inexpensive. A regular update from the CEO to top customers maintains and builds awareness.

Preparing employees as ambassadors creates multiple spokespeople to carry the company's message. Employees should know and understand the company's mission and vision, and should be able to communicate this in their daily interactions.

Regardless of the strategy, a commitment to communication has never been more important. In the business world, silence is never golden.

**DAN WARD** is a vice president and partner with Curley & Pynn Public Relations Management Inc.

curley & pynn

Public Relations • Marketing • Public Affairs

*The Strategic Firm®*

258 Southhall Lane, Suite 430  
Maitland, FL 32751

P: (407) 423-8006 | F: (407) 648-5869

[TheStrategicFirm.com](http://TheStrategicFirm.com)

