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CEOs interpret Obama's agenda

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Companies looking to diversify their client base in 2009 would be wise to consider contracting with the federal government – a large, stable client that isn't likely to go out of business any time soon. But before the government will invest in you, you have to invest in wooing the government – a process that involves patiently sifting



through mountains of red tape and dedicating considerable time and resources before you ever see a dime. It's not an easy market to crack, but for companies that take a systematic approach to winning government



work, the payback is substantial. In this month's i3, seasoned government contractors share how they overcome the challenges of winning and



executing on a government contract.

The U.S. government saw a change in leadership last month with the inauguration of president Barack Obama. During his campaign, Obama talked about big



changes for the country – changes in the economy, in foreign policy, in healthcare, in energy policies, in taxes, in education and other issues. But what will that change look like for the



nation's business owners, particularly the businesses small and large that drive the local economy? SmartCEO surveyed CEOs to find out what changes they think are on the horizon and what it means for their businesses.



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# changing hands

## CEOS POSTULATE OBAMA'S IMPACT ON LOCAL BUSINESS

BY JEANINE GAJEWSKI

During his campaign, president Barack Obama promised us "change" – change in the economy, in foreign policy, in healthcare, in energy policies, in taxes, in education and other issues. If the election results were any indication, the majority of Americans wanted a change in the direction of this country's leadership, as well. But what will that change look like for the nation's business owners, particularly the businesses small and large that drive the local economy? *SmartCEO* surveyed CEOs to find out what changes they think are on the horizon and what it means for their businesses.

### THE ECONOMY

"If people's perception is that things are changing overall for the better, I think that will be good for business in general. It is very much a consumer-driven economy, and if people feel things are getting better, then they'll spend money. It doesn't matter if they are better or not. Perception is reality."

MIKE BREY, CEO, Hobbyworks



"More than usual, because of the economic crisis, there is opportunity for more real change. People are going to be eager to move more aggressively than would an administration that was inheriting a more stable situation. Washington is inherently averse to change by its nature, but because of what's going on nationally and globally with the economy, it provides an opportunity to have change get some traction."

MAX BROWN, partner and co-founder, 360jmg



"I think that [Obama] will spend the majority of his first term sorting out this financial crisis. Some of it is just normal ebb and flow of capitalism – we had too many excesses in the system, and now we are cleansing it out. But I think you'll see the real Obama at the end of his term. I really think he's a far left socialist in centrist clothing. That said, I think that most of his major selections for his Cabinet have been centrist ... I don't think any of [his leftist policies are] going to happen in his first few years. His people are way too smart for that."

CARL WRIGHT, CEO, Stephen James Associates



"I'd like to believe [Obama] is an innovator and will do things differently, but you have a very large organization that has been operating a certain way for a long time. It will be hard to move it in another direction. I think there will be some dramatic changes, but I think they won't happen immediately because there are some obvious things he has to attend to. Obviously I don't want the economy where it is, but I think the government is making strides in the right direction in terms of being innovative and cutting edge and I think there are a lot of good changes happening."

DAVID I. SONDE, managing partner, Winvale Group



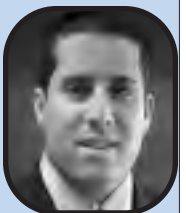
"We haven't even felt the pinch yet on the economy. There isn't another shoe to drop – there are many shoes waiting to drop. Credit card defaults, adjustable-rate mortgages that will be coming due in two, three and four years bringing us to perhaps an even larger number of foreclosures. What about the \$100 billion boondoggles of failed projects in Iraq? And what about our existing debt – the highest it's ever been. I hope since things are so dire that Obama and his staff will hit the ground running and have the opportunity to get a lot done. But I pray for him; I can't imagine a worse mess to inherit."

NORM GRANDSTAFF, president, Ideas Communicated, LLC

### LOCAL AND SMALL BUSINESS

"We plan to be front and center helping this economy come back. All I can say is, as a business owner, we are putting our money where our mouth is. We are in the process of hiring and staffing up for 2009. We are going to be creating jobs. We see very active space for our company. It's been tough for a few years, but we are excited now."

RICHARD SAMIT, CEO, Fraser Forbes



"Obama's candidacy has been helpful in my business because his campaign embodied the importance of branding. We saw a branded campaign versus one that was not, and Obama won. A lot of our customers are asking us to do something for them employing Obama's tactics, partly because Obama was so successful. The entire country needed a new brand, and Obama brings that. We are willing to try something new here."

ANTHONY PAPPAS, president, Pappas Group

"Obama talked about providing relief on taxes for small and start-up companies. He talked about giving small business owners a \$500 'making work pay' tax credit. I don't know how much of a difference that will make, but I know that if you deduct \$500 from my taxes, hey, I'll take it. It's a lot of money for small and home-based business owners. That will be helpful in this economy because every dollar counts. Obama also sounds like he supports entrepreneurship and job growth. He talked about creating a national network of public-private business incubators. If you have these new businesses, they are going to need to know how to grow that business, and my company coaches entrepreneurs, so I see this as a huge opportunity for my business."

EMMY M. VICKERS, CEO, Emmy Vickers Enterprises, LLC



"In this environment, regardless of your politics, I think there are a lot of people who want to see change right now. But change can also be scary. Speaking as a busi-