

J.R. Bitzer

Principal
Bitzer Real Estate Partners/CORFAC
International • Denver
720-264-3486 • www.bitzerrep.com



J.R. Bitzer

companies, CMBS and government-sponsored enterprises.

Q. In your industry, where do you see new growth opportunities to replace lost revenue?

A. We were fortunate enough to partner with two local real estate firms, L.C. Fulenwider Inc. and REGen LLC, last year to form American Property Solutions Inc. American Property Solutions is a joint venture that provides the following services to assist: special servicers restructure distressed commercial real estate assets, receiver and trustee, property management, construction management, accounting and brokerage. Bitzer Real Estate Partners has benefitted by providing property-management services as well as commercial leasing and disposition of nonperforming commercial real estate assets.

Q. How do you expect national health care reform to affect your business?

A. We're in a very different situation than most small businesses, given the majority of our employees are independent contractors and responsible for their own health insurance. Our company is fortunate enough to have a couple of major clients within the health care industry, and those clients have been growing in recent years, which has positively affected our business, since our business is transaction-based and we're compensated when we help businesses add commercial space. On the flip side, the looming uncertainty regarding the future of national health care reform and its implementation has hindered the economy's growth both locally and nationally.

Q. Has access to capital improved, gotten worse or stayed the same for your business over the last few months?

A. Access to capital has definitely improved over the last few months, especially since mid-2010. Small businesses are still having a difficult time funding their daily operations as business lines of credit are still not readily available, but the environment is definitely improving as commercial banks continue to rid themselves of distressed assets and improve their balance sheets. Regarding commercial real estate loans, available capital has returned to the marketplace in more forms, including life insurance

Q. What benchmarks would you say would be the strongest indicator in your industry that the economy has truly recovered?

A. 2010 was a surprising good year for the commercial real estate market, especially the office-leasing market. While the office market has experienced four consecutive quarters of positive net absorption, the overall vacancy rate is still above what is considered market equilibrium of 10 percent. It's no secret that Denver needs greater sustained job growth to backfill the current inventory of vacant office space. The truest indicator the industry has fully recovered won't come anytime soon, until you begin to see cranes in the sky above Denver again.

John Winslow

Managing partner
Gill Capital Partners • Denver
303-296-6260 • www.gillinvest.com



John Winslow

Q. In your industry, where do you see new growth opportunities to replace lost revenue?

A. In the wealth-management industry, we have seen the greatest opportunities around providing a more holistic approach to managing clients' financial lives. People are living more complex lives, have more moving pieces to bring together, and want to spend what free time they have with family and pursuing their passions. Bringing additional services to the table not only simplifies the lives of clients, but also can generate additional revenue. Tying together all pieces of a client's life — such as investment, tax, estate, insurance and other aspects — makes life more simple and streamlined.

Q. How do you expect national health care reform to affect your business?

A. As a small business, it is extremely important to offer competitive benefits to retain and attract high-caliber employees. Large employers have historically had the upper hand in negotiating competitive insurance rates. Small employers have had to tolerate annual percentage increases well into the double digits.

The proposed national health care reform has created uncertainty. While the prospect of small businesses banding together to join small business health options programs and pooling their resources is enticing, benefits quality remains uncertain. Costs could continue to rise at alarming rates.

Q. Has access to capital improved, gotten worse or stayed about the same for your business over the last few months?

A. The availability of capital can mean the difference between extreme growth and stagnation. In recent months, we have seen more money in motion. Banks continue to offer capital to businesses with solid balance sheets, but a more intriguing source of capital is high-net-worth individuals looking to deploy capital to small businesses to achieve above-market yields. This group has built up large cash holdings over the last few years with the equity markets in turmoil. As economic risks continue to diminish and confidence slowly returns, more liquidity will return.

Q. What benchmarks would you say would be the strongest indicator in your industry that the economy has truly recovered?

A. As I mentioned previously, the movement of capital away from risk-averse investments and into other asset classes has indicated a rebound in confidence and a belief that opportunities are emerging in many different parts of the economy.

The prevailing sign of recovery is the creation and growth of new businesses. Starting a business takes a culmination of events — financing, securing talent, idea development and more.

We are seeing more businesses start and flourish than we have seen in a number of years. New ideas and businesses will be a driving force behind job creation, a missing piece of this economic recovery.

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