

Business Review

'09 ECONOMIC FORECAST by Mark Gorton, Jean Gruss and Dave Szymanski

From the Trenches

There are pundits, ivory tower profs and media purveyors of doom, then there are those entrepreneurs and businessmen in the trenches of everyday business warfare. Here is their boots-on-the-ground outlook.



KRISTEN LEVINE

Founder and Chief Executive Officer

Fetching Communications

Tarpon Springs

- **Regional economy:** Early 2009 will be a time when people continue to cut back on unnecessary expenditures such as dining out, travel and entertainment, Levine says. However, in 2009 people will resume spending, but more cautiously. Health care will remain steady, while service industries will take a hit because people will go longer in between services. People will go back to doing things themselves, like cutting the grass, washing the dog and cleaning the house. Overall, the Gulf Coast economy will survive 2009 rather than make gains. Hopefully, that will stabilize uncertainties and we will be poised for an economic healing in 2010, Levine says.

- **Industry:** When times are tough, people turn to the things most important to them, such as their pets, Levine says. So for instance, this year Bay area pet owners focused on providing pets with necessities, but cut back on luxuries such as fancy collars. Levine believes the pet industry will "dog paddle" through 2009, making steady but slower strides, as opposed to the tremendous gains it has seen since 1997. (In 1997, pet owners spent \$17 billion on pets. In 2007, \$41 billion.) Veterinarians will still see some pull back in spending from consumers. Services such as grooming will see pet owners cutting back.

- **Business:** Fetching enjoyed steady growth this year because of new business in the veterinary arena. Looking at 2009, Levine expects Fetching will see growth. Its clients in the veterinary and humane education business want to commit larger budgets to marketing.