

Time really does fly, I hate to use that phrase but it has to be said that as we near the season of Jolly, that frightening reality of yet another year gone begins to sink in. Much like you I hope, (I'm almost sure that our breed have similar qualities to the average person) I take time to reflect on the last twelve months and more importantly, what our expectations at the beginning of the year might have been....frightening stuff given the economic downturn that the world has been up against.

I will not dwell on the issues that surrounded the economic crisis as I have in past articles, the realities of the doom and gloom and innuendos of an economic armageddon from the gurus of investment and finance have just about reached the pinnacle of becoming a bad joke. I have however, always made reference and drawn comparables to our very own economy and how the effects of the global fiasco might impact our own progress. Some clients and friends have joked at the fact that I return to this over and over again....the stability of our economy I mean, and how we seem to have sailed through some pretty stormy waters relatively unscathed.

What was our expectation? A question I had been asked by a number of individuals and organisations, not least the Chamber of

Commerce, who regularly keep in touch. Well.....in all seriousness, our outlook was one of concern; (but you have been bullish throughout the year, I hear you say) and you would be right to question the conflict. On the one hand, the evidence we had in terms of sales was there, nevertheless on the other was the pessimistic, negative side in which one would ask, how on earth does a small economy with an oversubscribed speculative market hold its own. I recall the last recession back in 1990; although I was a student at the time, my recollection of this time was of my father and the anguish that he had gone through with his own business and the fact that Gibraltar had been hugely affected as had our property market.....I also recall that we were affected in a somewhat delayed reaction, something that still rings in my mind.

Why the difference this time? Is there a difference, or are we in that delayed period, waiting in line?

I prefer to explore the possibilities of the first question.....mainly because the answer is simpler – and makes more sense. My view is that back in the 90's our economy was driven (still) by M.O.D; we were still very much a military base at heart albeit one that was being downsized by the day. When you consider who the main employers were,



what if any role the finance centre played, the way in which tourism was managed, the number of cruise liners visiting Gibraltar, you can very clearly appreciate that the fact that our economy was hardly prepared for any type of blow to its bows. Gibraltar was inextricably tied by umbilical cord to the U.K and there was never any chance of fending our position.

Today we find ourselves in a very different position, one that has allowed us to fall back on what we have grown to become...a self sufficient robust economy that is able to hold its own.

In the run up to Christmas and the New Year, I personally look forward to the year ahead on a much better psychological footing than that of the same period last year. Business (any business) is driven primarily by confidence and Gibraltar has indeed overcome its trials and tribulations, because we are confident in ourselves and in turn have created confidence in those seeking to relocate to Gibraltar for personal or business related reasons.

I truly hope that 2010 brings continued success to us all and in the words of CNN's Richard Quest, I wish you all a profitable year ahead.

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