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## **Moving the right direction**

### **Leading Indicators point to economic recovery**

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#### **PR business picks up**

Public relations firms are among the first to feel pain when a recession is approaching, but they are also among the first to pick up business once a recovery begins, according to Carl Mueller, president and founder of Milwaukee-based Mueller Communications Inc.,

“Once recovery starts, companies will first start to rebuild their business, and they do that through marketing a new product or service line,” said Mueller. “What they don’t do is hire on new permanent staff, and so for a period of time they outsource a lot of that additional work to firms like ours.”

Over the last three to six months, Mueller and his employees have seen a steady uptick in current or former clients coming to them with new assignments and increased budgets. They have also seen an increase in new client activity, he said.

“We’ve seen a lot of our current clients coming back to us with bigger budgets which indicates they are getting back on the track they used to be,” he said.

Anne Zizzo, president and chief executive officer of Milwaukee-based Zizzo Group Advertising and PR, started seeing a turnaround near the end of 2009 and continued to see growth during the first quarter of 2010.

“Mostly due to the type of companies we are working with regionally, we are seeing a lot of companies holding their course. We aren’t seeing a lot of aggressive spending, but we aren’t seeing them cut back, and that’s a really good thing,” Zizzo said.

Nationally, Zizzo Group is picking up new clients in the health care industry, as well as the banking sector, she said. Mueller also indicated that those two industries were ramping up business.

Zizzo said her firm has added staff in the first quarter of 2010 and is exploring acquisition opportunities.

“As an ad agency in the Milwaukee community, we are being very bullish on 2010,” she said.

- Alysha Schertz