

North Valley Chamber of Commerce

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# BUSINESS TIMES

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Vol. 1, No. 6  
December 2012

## Entrepreneur Profile

**Steve Slutzah  
of Westside  
Tile and Stone  
Does It For  
The Love  
of Tile**

## Inside...

Internet  
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Trends &  
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VEDC  
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Employees



A Publication of the  
North Valley Regional  
Chamber of Commerce



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## **President's Message**

# **The State Should Scrap “Cap and Trade” for Now: The Cost is Just too High**

**DWP customers will be hit with a \$246 Million Price Tag and that's just one impact!**

**By Wayne Adelstein,  
President & CEO**

California unemployment remains stubbornly high at 10.6% and there are concerns about businesses leaving the state and loss of job opportunities for many workers. Nonetheless, the AB 32 “Cap and Trade” program went forward. The program, designed to reduce carbon emissions to the 1990 level by the year 2020 provides for carbon emitters who reduce their emissions to sell credits to higher emitters and those who cannot cost effectively reduce their emissions

According to the California Manufacturers and Technology Association, the AB 32 Program could cost families as much as \$2,500 per year and the Cap and Trade Program is a key part of the cost increase to taxpayers. This cost increase will be borne by water districts, sanitation agencies, energy providers, manufacturers and others, not just the business community. If these costs are passed on in the form of higher prices for goods, energy and utilities, the program could be catastrophic to small businesses fighting to survive.

Even more problematic is projected annual job losses at 76,000 to 107,000 the first year, growing to as much as 485,000 by 2020, according to a study by T2 & Associates. The study fur-

ther concludes that lost economic activity will be from \$250 to \$350 billion over ten years.

Here are just a few examples of the adverse impacts and unintended consequences, according to the study:

\* The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power would have to pay \$246 million a year for its electricity generation facilities in California alone.

\* UCLA would have to pay nearly \$11 million a year in AB 32 auction taxes.

\* A California winery would have to pay \$2.6 million a year for these AB 32 Auction Taxes or more than \$26 million over ten years in order to continue to produce wines in California.\*A food processing company in the central valley would have to pay \$3.7 million a year or \$37 million over a decade to continue processing central valley agricultural products.

\*A dairy company with four plants in the valley would have to pay \$8.3 million a year and \$83 million over ten years, in order to continue to produce fresh milk and dairy products in California.

So, why the big rush? With so much uncertainty about the economy there is no harm in stepping back and reassessing “Cap and Trade.” That would be the prudent thing to do.



**Wayne Adelstein**

## **Chairperson's Message**

# **California's Economy Looking Up... Sort of... Maybe...**

**By Paul Eisenstadt,  
Chairperson, NVRCC**

The good news is, some people think there is good news.

Local Assemblyman Bob Blumenfield, who chairs the Assembly Budget Committee is optimistic about budget surpluses in fiscal year 2014-15 based on the Legislative Analyst's recent fiscal outlook report, noting that “This is our best budget forecast since the high-tech boom over ten years ago. It is a testament to the hard work that we have done to bring financial stability to California. Yes, we still have more work to do. I hope and pray that our progress is not undone by partisan gridlock in Washington. As the nation approaches the fiscal cliff at the end of the year, the stock market is taking a hit and California's budget is paying the price.”

Rightfully so, Blumenfield's optimism is tempered with a dose of reality; all the stars might not line up.

So, lets not get too excited. The report, which no doubt every state politician will tout, doesn't shy away from the big “if.” It assumes a steady

growth in the economy and stock prices, and the feds not driving the nation over the so-called “fiscal-cliff.”

Those are big “If's,” especially a hoped for steady improvement of the economy. And, the report clearly states that not included in the projections is a forecast of cost-of-living adjustments for most state departments, the courts, universities and state employees. The assumption is that those budgets stay flat. That remains to be seen.

Sounds like a big chunk of costs aren't being accounted for, including the annual transfers to the mandated state reserve account. And what about the impact of “Cap and Trade” and volatile energy prices, which are hard to predict?

Being hopeful is one thing...being optimistic is another. Assemblyman Blumenfield and his fellow committee members have a tough job ahead. I wish them luck, a sober approach to the realities of California's political and economic environment and the strength to make the tough decisions that have to be made.



**Paul Eisenstadt**



# Steve Slut Zah of Westside Tile and Stone Does It for the Love of Tile

*Steve Slut Zah, owner of Westside Tile and Stone, Inc. of Canoga Park and Beverly Hills, will be the first to tell you that he doesn't sell tile, he sells a dream. That dream can be a bathroom, kitchen, tile motif for a foyer or entryway, flooring for a playroom, countertops for office desks and even material for commercial property or multi-family housing.*

His showrooms reflect his desire to create an extraordinary experience and ambiance for anyone entering his store. The various tiles that are arranged and displayed on the walls and free-standing displays are portrayed as works of art that allow customers to better visualize the various materials. Customers have the ability to touch and feel the artistic and hand painted tiles on the walls, bask in the luminescent glass tiles and awe at the stunning water-jet mosaics scattered throughout the showroom. The classical and timeless allure that natural stones give off are proudly shown in his showrooms along with the latest engineered tiles out of Italy meant to resemble fine wood.

Tile facilitators (they are not salespeople) are always on hand to personally guide customers throughout the gallery of products and help them find the perfect tile for their specific need and application. "I don't have sales people" Slut Zah explains, "I have facilitators who



help our customers make decisions that allow their dream to happen".

## His Love of Tile

Slut Zah's love affair with tile began in the early 1990s after he left a promising career as a marketing executive in the music industry when he accepted a sales position with Color Tile, a national tile chain. He found himself moving up to store manager in just a few months and on to Regional Sales Manager by the end of a year. After only his first year within the company, Steve was named Regional Manager of the Year, beating out 34 other Regional Managers. Steve was responsible for 120 stores throughout the Southwest, Texas, New York and Southern California. In 1996, Steve joined Valley Tile Factor outlet and opened three stores throughout Southern California and creating one of the most successful tile chains in the region.

During his tenure at Valley Tile, he joined the Ceramic Tile Institute in order to become a Certified Tile consultant and broadening his overall knowledge on the process of tile from the manufacturing standpoint all the way to the proper installation methods and guidelines. As he became more involved in the industry, his passion for tile led him to serve on the Board of Directors for the Ceramic Tile Institute for the next three years. To add to his already full plate of running tile stores and being active in the industry, Steve found the time to become a licensed contractor in 2000 and still carries that active license today.

After feeling the need to expand on his own, and growing tired of working for others, Steve decided to partner up with his long-time friend, Bruce Margrave to form an independent representative company for selling containers of tile and stone from around the world. While traveling the country and surveying the various tile stores available to the public, Steve started to consider opening his own store that would be unrivaled by the competition. His dream became a reality in 2005 when he opened up Westside Tile & Stone, Inc. in Canoga Park. After years of thought, Steve didn't want to open up just any store. He didn't want the typical retail tile outlet that lined up boxes and pallets on the showroom floor and resembled a storeroom or warehouse. He wanted the ultimate luxury showroom that his customer would take enjoyment just to stroll through and admire the beautify quality tiles offered at different prices ranges. This is exactly what Steve created at Westside Tile in Canoga Park in 2005, and this trend continues today.

Today his showroom offers over 150 different lines of materials that range from the stunning collection of Artistic Tile and their quality natural stones and gorgeous Water-jet mosaics to the luxury glass tiles that are manufactured from recycled content in North America from Oceanside Glass Tile. Quality manufacturers and distributors such as AKDO tile and their glass tile and natural stone mosaics line the walls in Canoga Park's showroom and are accentuated by the striking colors and tones found throughout Stone and Pewter Accents one-of-a-kind glass tile collection. Encore Ceramics offers a great

(Continued on page 6)


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# Inspire Your Employees

Great leaders don't tell people what they do or how they do it. They share why they do it, according to Simon Sinek, author of "Start with Why", a book that Star Tomlinson, owner of The Drain Co., recently led a discussion on at the Chamber's recent Business Success Round Table meeting.

Sinek believes companies that explain why they do what they do are more likely to gain trust and motivate their employees and customers alike. This resonates with Tomlinson, who says her motivation comes from her desire to carry on in her grandfather's footsteps. "My grandfather started this company. He wanted a business that would provide his family with jobs and would leave a legacy. I want to continue this legacy not only because I love what I do, but because it carries on my grandfather's dream. That's why its success is so important to me."

Sinek's basic premise is that the leaders who have succeeded such as Jobs at Apple, have done so by creating marketing messages that are polar opposites of everyone else's. He explains this with his "Golden Circle" theory. Sinek says most companies tell their audience what they do and how they do it, or what makes them different, and never include why they do it. Apple switches the order. It says why it does it, and

# START WITH WHY

HOW GREAT LEADERS INSPIRE  
EVERYONE TO TAKE ACTION  
SIMON SINEK

then goes on to explain what it does and how it does it.

For example, Sinek notes that if Apple were to create a conventional marketing message it might sound like: "We make great computers. They are beautifully designed, simple to use and user-friendly. Would you like to buy one?" Instead it says: "We believe in challenging the status quo in everything we do and thinking differently to make a change in the world. Our products are beautifully designed, simple to use and user-friendly. We make computers."

By getting their employees and customers to buy into their cause—thinking differently—they build loyalty and trust. People not only buy computers from Apple but MP3 players, phones, etc. When other computer firms, like Gateway and Dell, have tried to break into these product areas they have failed. Why? They were just as qualified as Apple to produce the products, but the consumers didn't have the same trust in them.

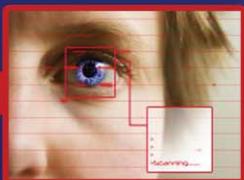
The goal, according to Sinek, is to do business with people who believe what you believe. "If you hire people just because they can do a job, they'll work for your money. But if you hire people who believe what you believe, they'll work for you with blood and sweat and tears."

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# Nine No-Nonsense Reasons Small Businesses Outsource Their Marketing Materials

By Robin Kellogg

We've all had those days when the phones are ringing off the hook, we're being pestered by emails and text messages, and we're trying to do 101 things at once. If you're a small business owner you probably have a lot of these days. One of the last things you want to do is take time out of your tight schedule to write content for your marketing materials. Who will do it, if you don't? You still have to write and distribute that press release about your new product line, update your website, or create content for your brochure. You've hired interns, asked employees to write it for you; tried to create it yourself, but it never gets done the way you want it done. There's got to be an easier way, you think.

There is! Hire a professional business and marketing writer to do it for you. Creating marketing content is a special skill. It not only requires knowledge about your industry and your specific business, but a sense about how to reach people on an emotional level, the point at which they want to do business with you, because they believe only you have what they need.

Here are nine reasons to consider using the services of a business and marketing writer:

1. You are strapped for time.
2. You want to pay for these services as you need them, rather than hire a full-time marketing and communications director.
3. You're on a shoestring marketing budget and you want to use it wisely.
4. You want to focus on what you do best; providing your product or services to your customers.
5. You want your marketing materials to look professional.

6. You need creative input.
7. You need someone who will give your marketing materials a consistent "voice" and a sense of continuity.
8. You are tired of wasting hours and hours of your precious time on something you prefer not to do.
9. You want to offer your customers a consistent flow of valuable information.

Your marketing is such an important part of your brand. Make it strong, make it effective, and make it count.

*Robin Kellogg, owner of Robin Kellogg Associates, has been helping individuals and small businesses solve their communications and marketing challenges since 2000. To reach Robin call: 818-993-5468 or email her at [robin@yourwritingresource.com](mailto:robin@yourwritingresource.com). She can also be found at [www.facebook.com/robinkelloggassociates](http://www.facebook.com/robinkelloggassociates), <http://twitter.com/robinlk18>, [linkedin.com/in/robinkelloggassociates](http://linkedin.com/in/robinkelloggassociates).*

**Advertorial**



Robin Kellogg

## Westside Tile and Stone

(Continued from page 4)

complimentary collection of tiles that are able to be used in any application you may have for it. With today's push for "Zen-Like" bathrooms and a "Contemporary Feel" come the likes of Island Stone and their beautiful pebble tiles along with the premium tiles from Villeroy and Boch. Voguebay Tile offers a twist on classic and modern styles by offering various tiles and mosaics that include glass, porcelain and even stone all mixed into one.

### Those Little Extras Count

Part of the Steve's dream in opening his store was to create a one-stop shop for contractors and customers to come too. Westside Tile not only offers all of the tiles one may need for their next project, but he also carries the extensive supporting cast of products needed to install such amazing products. The setting materials line the walls in the warehouse and offer contractors and homeowners all of the proper adhesives, grouts, cleaning products, and tools they need to efficiently and properly go about their next tile job. These specialty adhesives include Custom Building Products newest Fusion grout, the stunning Starlike Crystal grout, and the Laticrete Glass Adhesive. Westside Tile has also became the largest independent Schluter dealer in all of the Southern California by helping build one waterproof shower at a time with Schluter's extensive selection of waterproofing membranes. Not only does Westside Tile offer tile and installation products, but also the stunning Waterfall Bathroom Furniture pieces distributed through Artistic Tile.

Steve and his team are able to connect with their customers by offering some of the region's premier tile contractors. Throughout the years, Steve has amassed an amazing rolodex of the highest grade contractors that offer their superior service and quality at competitive prices.

Westside Tile and Stone is active in supporting the Tile industry. Memberships include the National Tile Contractors Association (NTCA) and The Ceramic Tile Distributors Association (CTDA). Through financial contributions support is given to the Tile Heritage Foundation and the Ceramic Tile Educational Foundation (CTEF). Often, you can find manufacturers, and contractors meeting at Westside Tile and Stone, to learn about the newest techniques and products or to discuss industry issues.

### Expanding the Empire

The last seven years have been both trying and brisk at the same time for Steve. While continuing to serve the Los Angeles Tile market, Steve always had his eye on expanding his business. While partnering with Mathew Weiner and Bruce Margrave, Steve decided to create his second store. As luck would have it, a property on Robertson Blvd in Beverly Hills became available and Westside Tile & Stone of Beverly Hills was born. "When we saw the space was available, we jumped on it" said Steve. During the early fall of 2012, Westside Tile officially opened its second set of doors for business in Beverly Hills. Steve believes that his formula of creating a luxury tile gallery along with having a talented staff is key to a stores success and his expansion has proved such. "Westside Tile and Stone isn't just another tile store, there is nothing else like it", because it's done "For the Love of Tile"

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# Business Education Workshops

Workshops are held at the valley Economic Development Center, 5121 Van Nuys Blvd., 3rd floor, in Van Nuys, unless another location is specified. Call 818-907-9977 or email your reservation to fboone@vedc.org., unless another contact person is identified. Workshops are free unless otherwise indicated.

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 3

Tax Tips for Small Business 5:30pm - 7:30pm

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4

Tax Tips for Small Business

5:30pm - 7:30pm Los Angeles Business Source Center – West Valley, 18645 Sherman Way, Suite 114, Reseda, Contact: 818-705-9977 or abanuelos@vedc.org

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5

Business Plan Essentials 6:00pm – 8:00pm

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6

Start Up Do's & Don'ts 6:00pm – 8:00pm

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 10

Financial Projections & Ratio Analysis for Small Business 5:30pm - 7:30pm

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11

Financial Projections & Ratio Analysis for Small Business

5:30pm - 7:30pm Los Angeles Business Source Center – West Valley, 18645 Sherman Way, Suite 114, Reseda, Contact: 818-705-9977 or abanuelos@vedc.org

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12

Market Research 6:00pm – 8:00pm

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12

Sales & Marketing 6:00pm – 8:00pm

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 12

All About Business Loans 4:30pm – 6:00pm

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13

E-Commerce Tools for Online Business

6:00pm – 8:00pm

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13

QuickBooks 6:00pm – 8:00pm

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18

Federal & State Payroll Tax Seminar 9:00am - 3:00pm

Los Angeles Business Source Center – West Valley, 18645 Sherman Way, Suite 114, Reseda, Contact: 818-705-9977 or abanuelos@vedc.org

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19

Expanding Your Target Market 6:00pm – 8:00pm

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20

Accounting & Bookkeeping 6:00pm – 8:00pm

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## Internet Marketing Trends and Opportunities

(Continued from page 3)

smart phone and many use it while shopping at one store to compare prices at another.

- YouTube, which used to rank videos on the number of visits, is now ranking them on the length of the engagement. The longer someone watches your video, the better you rank. So make them interesting!

- The faster the pages upload on your website the higher you rank.

One of the major changes is within Google. Google no longer wants to be a search engine, but a knowledge engine. To bring it closer to this ideal, Google has created the Knowledge Graph, a new algorithm that not only reads content but has a better understanding of the context and syntax of that content. The new system is even more dependent on site content that is correlated, connected, shared and incorporates coded markup language that allows Google to

zero in on specific pieces of the content.

What does your business need to succeed in this ever-evolving internet world? According to Safran everyone should have a:

- Personal website
- Business website
- Personal Facebook page
- Business Facebook page
- Google+ account

To make it all work he suggests taking a proactive approach. Ask your customers for reviews. Make it easy for them to lodge a complaint, and then resolve it quickly. Respond to any negative reviews online. Don't fool around with the review process (avoid fake reviews or entering reviews on behalf of your clients; don't pay for reviews). Communicate with your local competitors. Most of all, find someone to manage your online content, drive relevant traffic to it, and convert that traffic into paying customers.



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## DECEMBER BUSINESS CALENDAR NORTH VALLEY REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### Mark Your Calendar...

Dec. 7 Business Success Roundtable

Dec. 10 Senior Services Business Council

Dec. 14 Business Success Roundtable

Dec. 21 Business Success Roundtable

Dec. 28 Business Success Roundtable

\* Due to the holiday season there is no Mixer this month

\*\*\* See page 7 for December Business Education Workshops

### MEETING LOCATIONS

The Business Success Roundtable meets at 7am, and the Senior Services Business Council at noon. Both meet at Marie Calendar's Restaurant on Tampa and Business Center Dr.

Guests are welcome. \$15 with reservation; \$20 at the door.

For more info call the Chamber at (818) 349-5676

The unexpected always happens, so call the Chamber office at 818-349-5676 to confirm meeting dates and times.

### Business Success Roundtable December 14th

#### Guest Speaker



Legislative Update  
Chamber president, Wayne Adelstein will discuss newly enacted state legislation impacting California businesses

**Time: 7 A.M.  
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### Networking Breakfast December 11th

#### Guest Speaker



Mayoral Candidate  
Eric Garcetti

**Time: 7:00 A.M.  
Where: Orange Grove Bistro /CSUN University Club  
18111 Nordhoff Street,  
Northridge**

**\$20 with RSVP prior to Dec. 6th  
\$25 after Dec. 6th / \$30 at the door  
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