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INVESTING

BY DEREK PAIVA

GOT \$5 MILLION?

If you had \$5 million to invest, where would you put the money? Not likely in Hawaii, say a group of aggressive business executives. But if you had to bet on Hawaii, here are the companies that our panel of experts say have good growth prospects.

The old saying goes, a fool and his money are soon parted. Current zeitgeist says that anyone investing a substantial amount of money in Hawaii these days would be proving the adage right and taking a fitting for a straitjacket. In light of the state's sour economic fortunes of late, the wise investor is advised to put money on opportunities outside of the state to realize a decent return. The theory has gone from rumor to reality quicker than you can say, '80s nostalgia. Where does that leave Hawaii?

Not out to prove the theory right or

wrong, *Hawaii Business* asked six leading executives in the business community how they would each invest a hypothetical \$5 million if they were restricted to doing so only in Hawaii companies.

The ground rules were simple. The investments would be personal and not for their respective companies or employers. Investments had to be company specific, made in existing privately-held Hawaii-based companies. Though investments could be made in companies of any size, age or industry, investments couldn't be made in real

estate developments, limited partnerships or their own companies.

Some ended up bending the rules a little, but in the end, all responded with surprisingly candid commentary. Their answers lend insight into who is best positioned to move up the earnings growth ladder when Hawaii's economic fortunes turn brighter. First, an important disclaimer to these picks. Most of our participants said that if they really were making a personal investment of such grandeur, they would do so in other markets. Still, ... if they *had* to ...

IKAWA'S INVESTMENTS

ALLAN IKAWA

President, Big Island Candies, Inc.

BIO:

After selling his fishing boat and house and borrowing money from family and friends to start Big Island Candies in 1977, Ikawa has turned a once small business into a major local player in the retailing, developing and manufacturing of chocolate-covered products. A winner of numerous retailing awards and a member of the Hawaii Business Hall of Fame, Ikawa's success is a model of exceptional entrepreneurial know-how.

A FEW CHOICE WORDS:

Ikawa called investing such a large sum locally a challenge, as many Hawaii companies are financially or strategically ill-prepared to deal with the current downturn. "I'd invest in companies that have leaders, a staff vision, and are always on the 'cutting edge,'" says Ikawa. "I based my selections, first and foremost, on personalities rather than 'high tech' skills because 'high tech' becomes easily outdated."

Sam Choy's Restaurants (\$2 million)

Besides being a very marketable person, says Ikawa, locally renowned chef and restaurateur Choy has a knack for recruiting the best management team and advisers for his growing empire of eateries. Plus, says Ikawa: "Sam and I are born on the same day!"

M. Sonomura Contracting Co, Inc. (\$1.5 million)

Ikawa calls company President Roy Sonomura the driving force behind the long-tine Big Island contracting company's success. Among his strengths, says Ikawa, is intelligence, drive and an incredible work ethic.

"Not many people outside of Hilo know Roy," says Ikawa. "Roy runs a tight ship and knows every aspect of his business. He is one of the smartest people I know. When the economy turns, he'll definitely be in a position to grow." Ikawa believes that Sonomura, the master of a financially strong company with a good reputation, would make sure the investment was in good hands.

"Roy plays to win," enthuses Ikawa. As Yoda said, 'Do or do not. There is no try.' That's Roy."

Emme, Inc. (\$1 million)

Ikawa has high praise for former local television reporter cum multi-media whiz and entrepreneur Emme Tomimbang. "The girl from Kalihi has come a long way," says Ikawa. "She's looking to expand her horizons and venture into different opportunities. Her enthusiasm and creative ideas are noteworthy."

Predicts Ikawa: "Emme has the tools to take it to the next level."

Leadership Works (\$500,000)

A homegrown comprehensive consultation company for management, Leadership Works has an excellent knowledge of local culture and business that comes from its president and founder, Glenn Furuya, according to Ikawa.

"Glenn is an outstanding speaker, motivator and teacher," says Ikawa. "As entrepreneurs turn their companies over to the next generation, they'll require the help of a management

consultant. Most entrepreneurs have a hard time letting go and are not good teachers. Glenn specializes in coordinating this transition.”

Ikawa calls Leadership Works' 16 'laboratories' located in companies where Furuya works as a consultant to presidents and CEOs, essential to the development of intellectual capital for any corporation. “Leadership Works prepares people for the challenges of the work place,” says Ikawa. “From a marketing perspective, the field of corporate education is wide open. Leadership Works is a solid product.”