

smooth operator

[PROFILE]

## Econation Sets New Example

Green operator tests the template for the transportation company of the future

By Jon LeSage

As of press time, the economy was sliding further, along with gasoline prices. One might think this would tie the knot on the green movement, as happened in the mid-1990s when federal fleet requirements softened and buyers fell in love with trucks and SUVs.

We know that the green trend is headed somewhere as yet undefined, but for now, it keeps a significant presence in the chauffeured transportation industry. A key reason why: U.S. dependence on foreign oil motivates transportation companies and their corporate accounts to focus on alternatives.

"You won't see green vehicles going away soon," says Ben Bloch, a managing partner for Econation, a chauffeured transportation company based in Los Angeles and San Diego. "We've really

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— BEN BLOCH

been lucky to grow in a tough time."

The company launched in January 2008 and is run by three managing partners with a background in management consulting. After serving corporate clients involved in environ-

mentally friendly building projects, and also through hearing concern about transportation options, Bloch and his associates realized that starting up a green-fleet chauffeured service provider would be a timely decision. Bloch says they spent time doing market research and talking to operators at PlanetTran and Santa Monica, Calif.-based ECOLIMO, and interviewing corporate decision makers on what they really want in ground transportation.

### An All-Green Fleet

Econation started up in Los Angeles with 10 cars, seven office staff, and a 24/7 operation. In the past year, the company grew quickly, established affiliate partnerships with New York-based operators, and opened a small satellite office in San Diego. The company now has a 22-vehicle all-green fleet made up of natural-gas-powered Town Cars, Toyota Priuses, hybrid GMC Yukons, Mercedes