

# challenge



## Focus on Possibilities Not Problems During Difficult Times

Four Strategies that Work

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Today's unstable economy requires you to have a "we're going to succeed" attitude. When there is so much chaos, change always follows and leaves room for great opportunities. So how can you limit the damage caused by all the recent turmoil and negativity? You need to not only manage the change, but focus on the opportunities and take action to turn them into new jobs and bottom line profits.

It takes more than managing efficiently and effectively to turn chaos and change into calm, so you can focus on finding the opportunities. It also takes more than commitment to the "we're going to succeed" mantra to maintain market share and create future growth.

To manage the chaos of the current economic crisis and its potential damage to your business and employees, you need to be aware of what the chaos is doing. Are sales plummeting? Are your employees buying into the doom and gloom of the news cycle? Are you losing market share and dipping into financial reserves?

1. First and foremost, develop a plan for dealing with the chaos. By now everyone has or is developing a plan to financially deal with a long-term economic crisis but many have not yet developed a plan for dealing with the emotional crisis of watching their world around them crumble. The chaos created by moving from balance and stability to precariousness and uncertainty can be debilitating for all levels of a business enterprise.

Balance in the workplace must be re-established. This movement throughout a business can begin at any level - from a department head in the warehouse to the CEO of the organization. Begin to bring balance back into your business by re-visiting your company vision first, and then your company mission statement. Involve everyone in the company in this process from the top down, the bottom up and the inside out. Discover if these documents are still relevant during such an economic downturn.

By evaluating these documents as a whole company, instead of just by a limited few, you will help bring balance and a bit of stability back into the workplace. Make sure your mission statement is short - six words or less - so it can easily be memorized. This process will also help you expose problems that can be corrected and open doors to

new possibilities. Survival during difficult economic times is the mother of new ideas, products and techniques.

2. Communicate, communicate, communicate. Employees at all levels need a cheerleader; and they need to know someone is in their corner looking out for them and encouraging them. Communication is key; from all levels of management and leadership to all levels of employees. Communication is the glue that holds a thriving company together and helps manage a company struggling through difficult times.

Depending on the size of your business, use all of the electronic equipment you have to communicate: emails, CDs, videos, texting, social media sites, etc. Don't just send bad news such as chopping the budget for the fifth time in two months, or more people need to be laid off. Rather, focus on the good news or encouraging messages. The old adage, "no news is good news," no longer works.

Create an employee briefing sheet and add a motivational quote or a joke at the end to lift up their spirits. The more informed your employees are, the less precarious and uncertain they feel, thus the more efficient and productive they will be. Communication also builds better employee-employer relationships, which are important for long-term survival and growth.

3. Create a business vision board and place one in every department, lunch room and water cooler area. Unless you have electronic flat screens in those locations, the best way to create a vision board is with a bulletin board and push pins. The vision board should proudly display your company vision and mission statement. It should also feature your mantra such as "We're going to succeed!" To communicate more effectively, don't just use words on vision boards - add visuals such as pictures, graphs and charts.

Encourage everyone to submit ideas for inclusion on the board. One of those ideas just might be the key to showing you where to look for the next opportunity. By reading and seeing the company's future on your vision board, management and employees alike are encouraged and hopeful that a brighter more stable future lies ahead.

4. Begin with the end in mind with everything you do. Bringing balance and stability back into your business means staying focused on the positive, not the negative. When in doubt, ask the simple question "Will this move me (the company) closer to or further from accomplishing the mission?" A simple rule like this can be understood by everyone at every level of the business, whether your organization consists of two or two thousand.

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