

The Advisor

Organizational Effectiveness News & Trends

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10 Tactics for Tough Times



Do you have a business success story you'd like to share?

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Today's US economy is tough. Inflation, oil prices, and national politics dominate the headlines making it tempting to take a "wait and see" attitude. However, consider using this downturn to make your organization better, stronger, and faster. Read on to learn ten ways you can improve your business today!

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10 Tactics for Tough Times

Build Now to Grow Later (aka, Cut Wisely)

These days, top-line revenue can look uncertain and net income even more so. The natural response is to contract and slow down or stop discretionary spending. This can be sensible to a point. However, it is one thing to be lean as opposed to starving. We have found the following tactics useful in tough times:

1. Hold the line on product/service development, innovation, and retention of key talent. You can significantly improve your organization's ability to bounce back stronger.
2. Empower a cross-functional team to make actionable recommendations for targeted cuts. You can fuel growth and achieve far more than mandating across-the-board cuts.
3. Focus on resource allocation. You can build internal capabilities that enable strategic and essential work.

The Magic of the Impossible

An executive we worked with challenged his extended leadership team with a productivity target stretch goal and achieved amazing results. They had to find more efficient ways to deliver their services while maintaining superior quality, cycle time, and managing risk. The challenge - take out \$110 million in costs by year-end, even though the group record had only been \$60 million to date.

ClearPath Alliance helps executives facing complex challenges who want to accelerate their success.

We bring "process" thinking, customizable tools, and valuable experience to help you achieve great results.

Each leader had two weeks to come up with their proposed action plan. We were called in to design and facilitate a team off-site. The team prioritized the best ideas, coordinated initiatives, and allocated resources. The time spent resulted in: streamlined core processes, \$107.9 million saved, and innovative thinking about how work could get done. The team was recognized for its significant achievement and collaboration. And, while the stretch goal was not 100% attained, continuous improvement became the way work got done, versus a box to check. So, in tough times:

4. Use a stretch goal, when appropriate, to foster teamwork and a culture of sustainable continuous improvement. You can often achieve significantly more than you think you can.

Step Up Communication

In difficult times, authentic communication is imperative. Tough decisions must be made - and quickly. Significant benefits can be realized by taking the following actions:

5. Be data-driven, speak candidly while engaging in healthy debate, and coordinate actions. You can position your organization to ride out the storm and leap ahead of the business cycle.
6. Use inside-out and outside-in thinking. Leave the office and get out and talk to people! Knowledge is power.
7. Conduct monthly Sales & Operations Planning meetings. You can get key functions on the same page, surface customer issues, and uncover Supply Chain opportunities. Most importantly, you can optimize resources and rapidly respond to changing market conditions.
8. Spend time with customers. You can gain valuable insights based on what they say versus what they do, deepen relationships, and strengthen brand loyalty.
9. Meet with external stakeholders (e.g., suppliers, regulatory agencies, industry associations, market research firms). You can discover key trends and strengthen your competitive advantage.
10. Give special attention to front-line supervisors and employees. You can minimize organizational swirl, rumors, and the side effects of declining morale. Create a comprehensive two-way communication plan. Ensure each message outlines the critical issues, explains management's response, and asks for feedback. And use a variety of forums to reach all your staff (e.g., town halls, Intra-net letters, team meetings).

Actions to Take Now!

ClearPath Alliance has helped clients with the above actions, which you, too, may want to start today. To recap:

- 1) Use targeted cuts to optimize resource allocation
- 2) Challenge the organization with a stretch goal to better their best
- 3) Be visible and seek input from a variety of sources

Summary

Consider thoughtfully accelerating initiatives and discretionary spend versus waiting to see what will happen. Use this slump as an opportunity to improve your business plan, retain and recruit key talent, and streamline core processes. Those who plan, and take bold action now, will be further ahead of the competition and ready to strike as the economy improves. So, start today!

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Next Steps

If you are ready to take action and improve your organization's business performance call us at 858-292-5361.

The "Organizational Survey" is quick and effective way to determine the health of your business. Click on the link below to download a free survey and conduct your own confidential self-assessment.

[Organizational Survey](#)