



---

## Leaders Need to Stay Calm, Focused During Tough Economic Times

Everyone certainly knows how critical it is for leaders to stay focused during turbulent economic times but of course, this is much easier said than done. Right now, the question for many is: How do you stay focused when everything around you is utterly chaotic? As leaders and managers, it is their responsibility to create a sense of calm confidence to convey that no matter the current state, it too will pass and success is still possible and probable.

Holly G. Green, author and CEO, provides some tips for managers leading during turbulent times:

- **Employee energy.** Ask yourself what is most important for employees to stay focused on this week and next? Identify what is currently draining energy and how can you as a manager influence it? Chances are there may be informal thought leaders in the organization that you can depend on to help spread positive messages so make sure to utilize them. Ignoring problems is a big mistake so determine the biggest worries employees have and address them even if it is just acknowledging there is nothing you can do.
- **Customers.** It's important for leaders and managers to prioritize and establish which customers must be retained. Is there an executive sponsor assigned to each critical one? Determine ways to allocate or re-allocate current resources to these important customer relationships. Taking it one step further, make sure you know what your customers are concerned about. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to spend time just listening to them even if it is about something other than your own organization. You might be able to identify a hidden value that you can do or say to meet a particular need when others might be ignoring them.
- **Products and/or services.** Determine the products that require immediate attention. What development can be sped up to produce revenue sooner? Can you give away a free product or extend a service to build loyalty? Conversely, this is also a time to re-evaluate whether there are some products or upgrades that might need to go into a holding pattern for the time being.
- **Costs.** Are there costs that can be delayed or cut? Perhaps there are investments that can be postponed? Now it's important to remember that you do now want to make random cuts equally across the organization. Cutting equally is a silly exercise when you consider how important some initiatives or efforts are as compared to others. Tough economic conditions can provide us the opportunity to correct excesses and bad habits gained when the going was good. Remind employees to think more about cost savings. Reducing headcount should be a last resort especially during tough times. Building back your talent takes much more time than anyone ever anticipates and is a sure 'jump ship' signal to the rest of the organization.

As leaders begin to take the necessary steps to strengthen their organization, they should always make sure to provide insight on both 'what' and 'why'. Distill their messages into bite size pieces so their employees can grasp them, apply them and move on. Green recommends, disseminating the information in every channel available - intranet, memos, breakrooms, meetings, etc. Because a lack of this communication will only breed negativity and create additional problems.

Green also advises that leaders should demonstrate a quiet confidence through their own body language (including tone and inflection) in meetings and other public areas. Remember that actions often speak so loudly- often people cannot hear what's actually being said! Have faith that we can navigate through this period of instability and turmoil.

**Source:** Holly G. Green is the chief executive officer and managing director of The Human Factor, Inc. and the author of *MORE THAN A MINUTE: How to Be an Effective Leader and Manager in Today's Changing World*; <http://www.morethanaminute.com>.

*Reprinted with permission. © CCH*

---

© 2008 Administaff. All Rights Reserved.