

Working Solutions

Adding Value During a Recession

During massive layoffs and/or other downsizings even the most people-focused organizations risk becoming out-of-touch during tough times. Whether you're a supervisor or employee, you're undoubtedly experiencing stress and anxiety in the workplace. And no one can seem to get away from it. Everywhere you go—the post office or the grocery store or your child's school—people are talking about the recession.

They're grimly reporting the latest tidbit of bad economic news. They're making dire predictions about soup lines, crime waves and banks collapsing. And even those not spouting doom and gloom seem to be drifting around in a "dull fog". This national case of the blues not only feels bad, it actually *perpetuates* the dilemma the nation is in.

A society in a depression can't think it's way out of a crisis.

Yes, we're in a tight spot, and it's going to take innovation to get out of it. But before we can even begin to tackle our economic and social issues, we have to get to an emotional place where we're able to move forward. We have to be able to do our best work, and right now that's not happening.

This has to change. The stress Americans are feeling is having serious consequences. The American Psychological Association says that as many as 80% of us are stressed about personal finances and the economy. A poll recently released by the American Sleep Foundation indicates that one-third of Americans are losing sleep over these issues. Too much stress and not enough sleep is a recipe for failure.

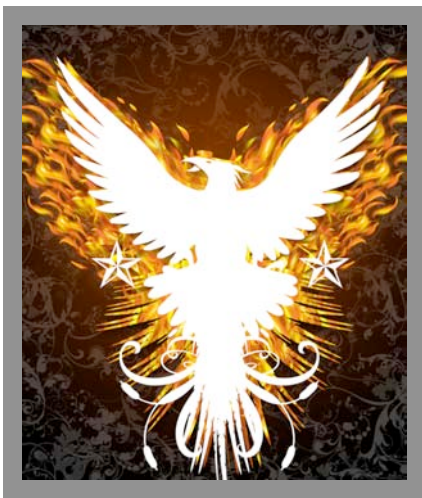
We are the economy. We can make it whatever we want it to be. America needs to realize that the economy is *us*. Our thoughts behaviors, actions and moods collectively create it. We can do a lot of things to help the economy such as working hard and most importantly replacing our psychology of fear with one of trust.



“We are the economy. We can make it whatever we want it to be”

Great leadership can get us through this crisis–

Studying NFL coaches and business leaders, Jon Gordon author of “The Energy Bus: 10 Rules to Fuel Your Life, Work and Team with Positive Energy” has discovered that great leadership is really a *transfer of belief*. Great leaders share the belief, vision and passion with others, and in the process they inspire others to believe and act. Great leaders are positively contagious and they instill confidence and belief in others. For instance, great sales managers inspire their sales people to believe in themselves and their product or service. Great teachers inspire and empower their students to believe in themselves. Best of all, you don’t need a title to be a leader. You just need to lead.



Just as the phoenix rises from the ashes, great ideas and new business ventures are born during economic hardships. Consider that GE, Disney and Microsoft were all born during recessions. It seems that when times are tough, people are more open to new ideas, new products and new ways of doing things. For instance, smart political and business leaders are working on alternative energy, green technologies, and other innovative ideas. In other words, there’s never been a better time to think big, create a vision, and take action. Consider that the Empire State Building, Golden Gate Bridge, and Hoover Dam were all built during the Great Depression. With more people living in fear and fewer people taking initiative, the rewards and recognition will be greater for those willing to work hard and dedicate themselves to building a great business, product or service. Those with a positive attitude and great work ethic will shine.

Creating a personal mission statement- Just as some great companies were started during challenging economic times, many people find themselves having to reinvent themselves or their lifestyle. Significant challenges can often spur people towards a complete re-evaluation of their sense of purpose. If you find yourself in this situation, you might want to consider developing a personal mission statement.

Developing a personal mission statement offers us an opportunity to identify what is most important to us. It can also enable us to chart a new course if we find ourselves at a crossroad. Steven Covey (in *First Things First*) refers to developing a mission statement as "connecting with your own unique purpose and the profound satisfaction that comes from fulfilling it." A personal mission statement can help us to identify our core values and beliefs.

Steps towards developing a personal mission statement- Step 1) Identify past successes. Write them down and try to find a common theme.

Step 2) Identify core values. Brainstorm a list your key attributes. Perhaps these are things that others have told you they admired about you. These can help you understand who you are and what your priorities are. Make the list as long as necessary and then try to narrow it down to five or six of your most important values. And finally, see if you can choose the most important value to you.

Step 3) Identify contributions you could make. Make a list of the ways you could make a difference. In an ideal situation, how could you best contribute to:

- The world in general
- Your family
- Your employer or future employers
- Your friends
- Your community

Step 4) Identify your goals. Take some time to reflect on your priorities in life and the goals you have for yourself. From this process, make a list of your goals both short term (up to three years) and long term (three years and beyond).

Step 5) Write a mission statement. Based on the first four steps and a better understanding of yourself, begin writing your personal mission statement.

Share the results of this process with someone you are close to and ask for their feedback. Finally, remember a mission statement is not written in stone. Review your career, job and mission statement annually. Make adjustments as needed.

How Can I Break Out of a Rut?

Taking any of the following steps can lead to big changes in your life:

Career Changes: Learn new job skill. Pick something you have always wanted to learn, such as learning a new software application. Take a class at a community college or through your organization's training program.

Earn that college degree. Study a course catalog to determine what it takes to get started. Or earn the professional certification given by the professional association in your field. Inform your supervisor or human resources director of your goal.

Subscribe to a professional or career journal in your field. If you already subscribe to one, contribute an article or letter to the editor.

Find a mentor. Choose a successful person in your field who can teach nuances you may not learn in a class or on the job.

Personal Development: Reduce the amount of time you spend watching television by an hour a day. Use the extra time for something special, such as reading a book, taking a class, visiting a friend or pursuing a hobby.

Initiate a family project such as planning your next vacation, planting a backyard garden or volunteering your time with worthwhile community agency.

Fulfill a fantasy. For example, take tap dancing lessons, perform at an "open mic" club, or join a neighborhood chess club or baseball team.

Better Health: Take a walk. Use your lunch break to explore the neighborhood near your workplace or use your weekend to visit local parks and scenic areas on foot.

Vary your workout. Add new challenges by making your workout more interesting, not longer or harder. Consider alternate activities that complement each other such as swimming or bicycling or aerobic dance and strength training.

Explore new cuisine. Sample local ethnic restaurants. Take a cooking class and learn to make low fat alternatives of your favorite dishes.



Time to Talk to the EAP

EAPs help employees with personal problems that may affect job performance. But what if you don't have a personal problem and just want to talk confidentially about what's "going on" in the office—worries about workplace trends, internal politics, and related frustrations—or perhaps a work idea that you want to bounce off of a good listener? Is it appropriate to call the EAP? Can these discussions also be confidential? Answer: Yes.

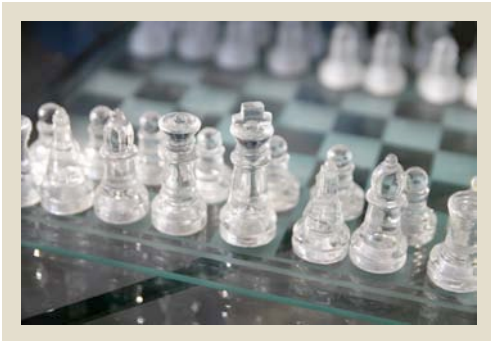


Tips to Manage Email

Everyone is being asked to do more, and in less time in today's tight economy. Email is an area that takes up a lot of time. The following are some tips on managing email to be more time-efficient. **Expand your access-** Use a Web-based tool to check messages from anywhere/anytime. **Prioritize your emails** by tagging them and creating hierarchy so that they are easy to find. **Assign a due date** to a given message Look for a tool that updates and manages these messages automatically. **Defragment** your computer by using clean up tools that are easy to download such as www.largesoftware.com. PC TuneUp. Speed is everything, so look for tools with an XML (AJAX) engine to improve speed and responsiveness.

Tips to Advance Your Career

In today's competitive workplace, there's no such thing as job security. To keep your job or find advancement opportunities, employees must present themselves as someone who goes above and beyond. The following are some tips: **Dress for Success:** Appearance is everything. How you're perceived at work depends heavily on your outward appearance. Good grooming and attire shows that you respect yourself and promotes a positive image for your company. You always want to be prepared to make a good first impression. **Take on more—**Don't be afraid of asking for additional for tasks and responsibility. **Submit your ideas—**Think about ways you can improve your workplace, streamline processes, and share them with management. **Managers appreciate employees willing to give ideas.** Be helpful not helpless—Even during tough uncertain times, you can still take control of your employment future. **Challenging yourself and pursuing goals will help you feel more energized and a more valuable employee and less likely to be laid off.**



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Money Matter\$

Being frugal doesn't mean getting the cheapest item possible. It's a matter of balancing the cost of the item, the quality of the item and the level needed for your use. So where can you look for savings?

Generic foods—Do you really care which brand of oatmeal you eat? The cheapest is often just as good as the brand name. **Utility bills**—It's silly to let light burn needlessly or heating to escape to the outside. The power company doesn't have an award for the best consumer, but even if they did you wouldn't want it! **Plain clothes**—For daily living you just want practical you don't need the latest styles or designers. Just look for good quality and the lowest price you can find. **Status items**—fancy watches, club memberships or having the latest toy really doesn't make much sense when you really think about it. Spending to get others to think more highly of you seems foolish.

In contrast there are some areas where you might want to spend a little more:

Tools—Those that are specific for a certain job. There's nothing worse than having an inferior tool break at a critical time. There's a good reason why some tools are cheaper than others. **Cars**— Spend a little more on a car that's more reliable and will need fewer repairs. ConsumerReports.org is a great resource for finding the best cars. **Education**—This is true in almost any form. Anything that helps you learn more about yourself, your work or the world around you will advance your life dramatically. **Memories**—Spending time to make a record or remind you of good times is well worth the extra effort. It's hard to put a price on a good memory. *Adapted from Gary Foreman's The Dollar Stretcher (www.stretcher.com)*

Your EAP is designed to help you deal with life stresses and a variety of personal challenges. For confidential services offered at no cost to all employees and their families, please call:

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