



## Back to basics

*Disciplined mindset is an asset during downturn*

**B**ankruptcies, foreclosures, the Dow's plunge, the credit crisis, mounting debt, frozen lines of credit, an impending worldwide recession ... Each headline seems to deliver more bad news.

We have moved into uncharted territory, and none of us have a crystal ball to help navigate these stormy waters. As a leader, it's imperative that we leverage our resources – team members, customer relationships, strategic partners, brand share and systems – and strengthen our foundation.

It's time to get back to basics. Here are six steps to manage through these uncharted waters:

### Reassess your marketing plan

Marketing is the engine that drives a company – not engineering, operations, manufacturing or even sales. Marketing ignites customer interest and drives prospects to the point of purchase. Does your marketing department conduct research to create fact-based marketing campaigns? Do they craft innovative language and presentations so sales can stand out from the competition? Has your marketing department identified areas where your company can improve to gain competitive advantage?

### Assess your infrastructure

Your role as a leader is to communicate strategic direction and inspire others. Does your leadership team work collaboratively to strategize opportunities and resolve issues, or do they operate in silos? Do people waste time doing re-work because communication is poor? Is learning and innovative thinking valued, or can the prevailing mindset be described as, "This is the way we've always done it, and this is the way we'll always do it?"

### Clarify performance expectations

To create a high performance culture, employees must know what is expected

of them and how their performance will be measured. This information will help them define their priorities and give them a deeper sense of contribution about how they contribute to the organization's success.

### Establish accountability

Follow-up and accountability turn discussion points into actionable plans. If

### Take a personal time out

During rugged times, it's vital for you to have emotional and physical reserves. Your team draws upon your emotional stability and strength. Be sure to allocate time to recharge and rejuvenate yourself.

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there are no consequences, good or bad, what's the motivation? Follow up and assessment are vital if you want an action-oriented, self-managed culture.

### Evaluate the competency & capacity of your team

Do you have the right people in the right positions? Now is the time to reassess your workforce and infuse it with individuals who can help you grow your business. There will be many talented people who are looking for a better opportunity. Raise the standard on talent and hire for your future.

select strategic partners. Keep the lines of communication open with team members, especially those who work on the front line. Assess and re-assess market conditions constantly.

Don't react out of fear. Listen to your intuition and take action when you are inspired. By doing so, you will minimize the negative impact of the economy and will come through the storm with a stronger, more capable organization. ■

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