

# Talent Management Perspectives

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## Practical Steps to Help Organizations Survive and Thrive In the Face of the Recession

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There's a growing theory that in the not-too-distant future, the economy will return to normal - as will our organizations, our roles as managers, even our professional lives. Sorry to burst this bubble, but it's pure myth.

Yes, the economy will turn north and jobs will once again become secure, but the chaos created by constant innovation, continually shifting strategies and rapidly changing roles is here to stay. The corporate world likely will resemble *Groundhog Day* more than *It's a Wonderful Life*.

As grim as that sounds, there's no need to panic. The key to success is to be an early adapter, embrace this new world head on, and emerge ahead of the pack with sanity intact.

Here are a few rules for talent managers - and their organizations- who want to survive and thrive when the sunshine finally returns.

- 1. Never stop executing, even for a day.** Much has been written about the importance of having the right strategy and business model during troubled times, which is of critical importance. But for most managers struggling in the organizational trenches, the No. 1 goal should be execution - making sure trains are running on time, delivering the business results their organizations need.
- 2. Constantly innovate and adapt.** Those who don't likely will find their brand - or organization- will disappear. Effective execution doesn't mean clinging to the tried and true. Now more than ever, managers need to be flexible, constantly seeking small innovations that will reduce costs and increase productivity, and quickly adapt.
- 3. Change with the role.** Employees may notice their roles changing. Though the title, job description and pay is likely the same, the scope of the job - what the employee is responsible for - probably has grown. With the continued organizational leveling that's taking place and the disassembling of long-standing silos, employees are likely doing less commanding and controlling, and a lot more influencing and collaborating. They shouldn't expect to see those walls rebuilt.
- 4. Stay out of the weeds and out of the clouds.** Look around. Many leaders are hunkered down in their departmental bunkers, knee-deep in a muddy river of details and tactics. Yes, it's necessary to stay close to the action and occasionally lead by example. But those who are always in the weeds will miss the turn in the road. That said, this is not the time for 50,000-foot blue-sky strategizing. Sustainance and growth during this time depend in large part on small but important changes - incremental innovation.
- 5. Focus.** Good talent leaders are looking 30 to 90 days out. They are focusing on the short- to mid-range issues - strategic and tactical - that will get them through the current crisis and prepare them to face the next curve in the road. Given the pace, the problems they face, and the constant assault of electronic chatter they're subject to via Blackberry, they are susceptible to low-grade attention deficit disorder. Avoid it like the plague - it's dangerous - even if it means locking oneself in an empty room for 20 minutes a day just to think.
- 6. Create clarity.** The individuals being led need focus, but it's hard when they don't know what to focus on. That's why it's more important than ever for talent managers to create clarity. The key: Avoid the grand, sweeping vision, which probably will be passé by next quarter. Instead, focus people on what they, as individuals, need to do in the short term. Doing so eliminates distracting background noise. Make sure their roles are clearly understood and doable, and empathize with their discomfort and stress.
- 7. It's all about results.** But there are no results without people. Forget the hyperbole about people coming first. Today it's all about results. Without it, there will be no need for people. On the other hand, results cannot be attained without an energized, engaged workforce. No matter how bad it gets, it is necessary to maintain an environment or climate in which people have the clarity, flexibility, coaching and team commitment they need to be effective, which means using every resource, including a full range of leadership styles.



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