

Staying Motivated In A Struggling Economy

Fear is a very powerful emotion. When we live in fear, even of the unknown, there is a tendency to isolate, exert control and be on the defensive. It drains our energy and creates exhaustion.

The majority of coaching conversations I am having these days are about this fear generated by a struggling economy. Worry over business progress, finding a job, salary and bonus eliminations, increased job performance expectations have taken over people's mindsets thus decreasing motivation and focus for themselves and their business.



While no one has a crystal ball to know exactly what will happen with the economy, you do have the keys to move through this time by the actions you take to minimize the fear and maximize your choices. Following are three key tips on how to refocus and regain motivation during a challenging time:

Tip #1 Go Back To The Basics

What are the critical items you need to do to maintain positive movement forward in your career and in your life? What can you take charge of?

Continued on page two – Staying Motivated

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ◆ *Staying Motivated in a Struggling Economy*
- ◆ *I often find myself Over-Committed. What can I do Differently?*
- ◆ *One Minute Ideas* ◆ *Life Success Idea*
- ◆ *Failing Employees* ◆ *Mitchell's Moments*
- ◆ *Ten Questions for your next Staff Meeting*

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Ask the Coach

I often find myself Over-Committed. What can I do Differently?

'Overcommitted' is an interesting term I hear often. Use of the term and your underlying assumptions may be a problem. The verb "commit" means "to obligate or pledge oneself", so you may have pledged your time and energy too broadly. You are likely involved in a number of activities and roles at work, at school, in the community, and at home. You probably struggle "finding the time" and energy to keep your obligations. But are you really committed?



Reconsider the concept of commitment. Are you over-committed or are you under-committed? Over-commitment is an oxymoron. Too many "obligations" creates a watering-down effect, so none of them receive your true commitment. How might your problem look differently if you considered that you may really be under-committed to your real priorities? What new solutions does this shift in thinking generate?

If you find it difficult to say "no" or have ever used the phrase "I didn't have time" you may be under-committing; worse, you may be blaming the clock or your other roles.

- ✓ *What is important to you?*
- ✓ *What opportunities do you have that relate closely to your core goals and purpose?*
- ✓ *Have you prioritized your opportunities before obligating yourself?*

'Over-committed' people prioritize their schedules. The person of integrity schedules his or her priorities. Consider this critical distinction before you make promises in the future.

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ONE MINUTE IDEAS

Back Up Important Data

What would you do if your computer suddenly and completely failed, all the contents of your hard drive lost? Do you have a backup of the important information on your computer? It's a good idea to keep regular backups, including some offsite in case of fire or flood.

Web Site of the Month

This website is a one-stop national resource to learn about the crime of identity theft. It provides detailed information to help you deter, detect, and defend against identity theft.

On this site, Businesses can learn how to help their customers deal with identity theft, as well as how to prevent problems in the first place. Consumers can learn how to avoid identity theft – and learn what to do if their identity is stolen.

Check it out at

<http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>



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Continued from page one – Staying Motivated

There are critical items that you need to focus on day in and day out in whatever your work effort is about. If you are unemployed, there are critical items. If you run a business, there are critical items. What are they? Identify, simplify and take action.

Key: Think of this also in your personal life. What critical items do you need to have happen in order to maintain joy and relieve stress? Is it time with family? Time to golf? What critical items do you need that may have been ignored due to your focus on fear?

Key Tip #2 Define And Honor Your Genius Work

In Ernest Oriente and Judy Feld's book *Smart Match Alliances*, they describe genius work as "*Genius work is the highest and best use of your time. When you do your genius work – the activities that produce the greatest results in the shortest period of time for you – the struggle ends...fast.*"



What is your genius work? What is the work you do that suspends time and delivers the greatest results? Define it, honor it and spend the majority of your day doing it.

Key: To define your genius work, answer the following question:

What are three areas of focus and corresponding activities that would constitute the best and most valuable use of my time today?

Key Tip #3 This Too Shall Pass

Because there is no crystal ball, we cannot predict when this economy will take a positive, sustained turn. However, history proves that it will turn. It has always done so; there is no reason to think it will not do so again.

Key: History also shows that YOU have been through challenging times in the past and moved through those times as well. Perhaps it has not been the economy but other life events. Identify for yourself what life challenges you have faced in the past and how you have navigated the uncertainty. That should give you clues as to your ability to face this current challenge AND specific things you could do to make the process less painful.

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The reward for work well done is the opportunity to do more.

– Jonas Salk

Failing Employees

*Are your employees failing? Want to save time, money, and a lot of energy for you and your organization? Set employees up to **succeed** not fail. Make sure your employees know:*

- **What the job is.** Make sure you explain to each person specific directions and/or goals about the job or task.
- **Explain how to do the job.** Be available to answer questions or give directions on how to do the job or task.
- **Make sure a person or situation doesn't interfere** with employees' ability to do the job.

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Ten Questions for Your Next Staff Meeting

Below are 10 questions for discussion at your next staff meeting. Alternatively, you could have 10 staff meetings and have a discussion of one question per meeting. Before you begin reading the questions, I ask that you read the last paragraph first. Here's to a great staff meeting.

1. Why are we in this business?

Although every business must make a profit to stay in business, going into business just to make a profit is probably a bad strategy. Employees should know the company's story. They should know the history of the company and company's real mission. They should know what drew the founder to the particular type of business. Did the founder(s) believe that there was a niche in the industry for a new company, or was the company a brand new way of doing things for customers?

2. What are our core competencies and unique skill sets?

In other words, what do we do best? Perhaps the company has superior technology or professionals who have a special set of skills. I know of one business owner who spins off new companies based solely on the skills of his current employees. He had one employee, for example, who had a very special set of skills and who had to move to another city for personal reasons. He started a subsidiary company in that city so he would not lose her special competency.

3. What type of business do we want to develop?

While the history of any company is special and should be known by its employees, it is becoming more uncommon than not to find a company that is still in the business that it started in. Technology and society prevent opportunities for companies to expand into new businesses.

4. How do we want to be viewed by our customers?

The message that is sent is never the message that is received. Many managers and employees have lamented, "If only our customers knew us like we do then they would appreciate us more." Companies these days pay a lot of attention to branding their companies so that their customers will have an automatic image of the company. Those efforts are a waste of money if a customer who is told that the company puts customers first encounters an employee who puts customers last. Successful companies that I have known put a lot of emphasis on point of contact with the customer, whether it is a face-to-face contact, telephone contact or online contact.

5. How do we involve all employees in this vision?

This is one of management's greatest challenges. Managers tend to have a big picture view of their industry and their company, forgetting that frontline employees do not have the same view. One of the best ways to involve employees in the vision of the company is constant, meaningful training.

6. Where do we want to be in three, five and seven years?

Employees want to know what the future holds. They even want to feel that they can have some input and be part of getting to the future. If employees get the feeling that the future is bleak with the company, then they will look for a company that articulates a better future.

7. How do we develop goals and who should be held accountable for the outcome?

Ask this question and then seriously reflect on the responses. If no one is responsible and accountable for achievement of goals, then they probably will not be achieved. When I facilitate goal-setting sessions for companies and organizations, I ask participants to sign their names beside the goals that they will be personally responsible for achieving. It is sometimes an awkward moment, but sometimes it is an exciting one when participants want to be part of goal achievement.

8. How do we monitor our progress?

If it cannot be measured, then it cannot be managed, according to just about every management principle. Progress is more than an increase in sales or profits.

9. How do we reward performance?

Employees should have personal targets and company targets. They should know that if the company has a successful year, then they will receive something.

10. How do we attract the right personnel to meet our vision and goals?

As business book author Jim Collins would say, "How do we get the right people on the bus?"

Continued from page three – **Ten Questions**

So, there you have it. Your challenge is to ask the questions and just listen to your employees. The key idea here is that you merely listen. It will be very tempting to try to explain when an employee responds to your question with, “So, what is our policy on that?” But, the fact that the employee asked that question is an indicator that you now have some excellent opportunities for training and communication

Reprint permission granted by Phil Hardwick. Mr. Hardwick is Coordinator of Capacity Development at the John C. Stennis Institute of Government. This article was published in the February 23 Mississippi Business Journal. Mr. Hardwick can be contacted at phil@philhardwick.com.

A Life Success Idea “Skill with People”

All of us want greater health, wealth, and happiness in some way, and attaining these things requires mastering the art of creating and expanding relationships with people. Using the following four success ideas will absolutely help you enhance your existing and new relationships in ways that can expand your life success.

Success Idea #1 – To become an expert relationship builder, talk to people about themselves, and get them talking about themselves.

A careful study of people and human nature reveals a great truth – People are much more interested in themselves than they are in you. Our interests are primarily governed by self thought and self interest so strongly that the dominant thought in charity is the satisfaction the giver feels from giving – then secondarily, the good the gift will do.

Success Idea #2 – Ask questions about them, and become a better listener.

The next important trait to know about humankind is the desire to feel important, the desire to be recognized. There is no greater way to make people feel important than asking them a question about themselves, and **listening fully to the answer**. Interrupting or refusing to listen is just about the surest way of making people feel unimportant.

Success Idea #3 – Praise, compliment and applaud people when they deserve it, and they’ll love you for it.

In today’s fast paced world there are so many factors that detract from people’s confidence, that if you boost their confidence you’ll be viewed as exceptional. When they deserve it – praise, compliment and applaud them.

Success Idea #4 – Practice the Art of being Agreeable.

The last idea is called the Art of being Agreeable. Remember that the intent here is to build new relationships and recreate the old ones in an enhanced way. This idea is based on the simple fact that people like those who agree with them, dislike those who disagree with them, and don’t like being disagreed with. If you can’t agree with people, and many times you can’t, just don’t disagree with them unless it’s absolutely necessary. It is wonderful to see how seldom this will be.

With a little practice you’ll be pleasantly surprised at how your relationships will transform into more treasured and valuable alliances that are Win/Win.

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Mitchell’s Moments

About four years ago our family made a trip to New York City. Everyone had their ideas of what they wanted to do while in New York. My only dream of being in New York was to go to the famed Yankee Stadium and attend a Yankee game. Although I am not a huge Yankee’s fan I have admired many of the famous Yankee players because of the stories that have followed them in their careers. One of the player’s makers I saw while at Yankee Stadium was that of Joe DiMaggio. Every time I hear that name I am reminded of the song that included the famous phrase, “Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?”

Joe DiMaggio passed away at age eighty-four on March 8, 1999. When he died sports journalist used words like “class” and “hero,” and words like “grace” and “dignity” in their columns and on the television in an attempt to describe what the Yankee Clipper had meant to them.

What will always be associated with Joltin’ Joe DiMaggio, however, even more than Marilyn Monroe, is “The Streak.” “The Streak” came in

1941 when Joe DiMaggio hit safely in fifty-six consecutive games. The record has stood for over six decades now, and though a handful of players have flirted distantly with it, many baseball fans wonder if it will ever be broken.

This isn't the first legendary baseball record to seem unbreakable, though:

- Lou Brock's 118 stolen bases? Stolen by Rickey Henderson.
- Babe Ruth's 714 runs? Blasted out of the park by Hank Aaron and Barry Bonds.
- Roger Maris' 61 homers in 1961? Topped by McGwire, then Sosa, then Bonds.
- Lou Gehrig's 2,130 consecutive games? Outlasted by Cal Ripken, Jr.
- Ty Cobb's 4,191 base hits? Slapped by Pete Rose.

What makes DiMaggio's record so "unbreakable" when all of the other unbreakable records have gone down? I think it has to do with "consistent excellence."

How do Christians attempt to pursue the concept of "consistent excellence?" The key may come from DiMaggio himself. Near the end of his career when asked why he played so hard day after day, he said, "Because every day there is apt to be some child in the stands who has never before seen me play."

Let that sink into your conscience. Every day there is apt to be someone who has never before met, Jesus Christ. And, their perception of Him just may come from my performance today. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

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"Being busy does not always mean real work. The object of all work is production or accomplishment and to these ends there must be forethought, system, planning, intelligence, and honest purpose, as well as perspiration. Seeming to do is not doing."

-- Thomas Alva Edison

Collaboration with Colleagues

A story of four co-workers: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody.

There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Somebody would do it. But Nobody asked Anybody. It ended up that the job wasn't done and Everybody blamed Everybody, when actually Nobody asked Anybody.

Unknown author

Books to Consider

The 29% Solution: 52 Weekly Networking Success Strategies by Ivan Misner. This guide by the founder and chairman of Business Network International is an invaluable roadmap for business people seeking to develop or fine-tune a necessary and often overlooked skill. The book comes from a study that spawned the six degrees of separation theory, which revealed that only 29% of the population is connected to this extent.

The Leader of Oz: Revealing the 101 Secrets of Marvelous Leadership for the 21st Century by Kevin D. Gazarra and Murtuza Ali Lakhani. This book focuses on gaining credibility and strength through clear planning and problem solving. It stresses the importance of mutual trust that aligns with the organization's core values, the ability to influence great transformations by demonstrating physical, intellectual, and emotional strength, and the ability to develop the capacity to bring all of the components of your brain, heart, and nerve together in synergy.

You Can Heal Your Life by Louise Hay. The timeless message of this book is that we are each responsible for our own reality and "dis-ease." Hay believes we make ourselves ill by having thoughts of self-hatred. She includes a directory of ailments and emotional causes for each with a corresponding affirmation to help overcome the illness. This book definitely illustrates the importance of affirmations.

Be open for today's opportunities.