

Resistance Training: Enriching Values and Trust in Tough Times



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Call it a recession, tough times, financial crisis, or a flat business environment; it is the *perfect* time to shift your organization's perspective. It is the perfect time to motivate toward the future, and enrich values and trust to impact your business's economic factors. Wise leadership will use the current slow economy as the "resistance" and begin to reorganize their organization toward a stronger culture of values, trust, strategy, and success. It is the perfect time for your business to engage around Resistance Training!

After a hip replacement, a physical therapist told me that the best reconditioning of muscle mass in the human body was to use the body's own weight resistance to create healthier muscle. Work from within; delay fancy add-on machines until later! As an Executive and Business coach, it struck me that this was an excellent analogy for how we might use this current economy to create a healthier business environment within our own organizations in order to enrich them with value, value-adds for our customers, and a culture of trust in order to impact the bottom line of the business.

Most leadership follows an intuitive response to use tighter controls, demands signing off on all key decisions, requires their physical presence at all meetings, changes the business strategy to a more narrow focus and generally begins to micro-manage. It is exactly the wrong thing to do. If you need to rebuild your business "muscle" or your place in the market, you do not suddenly drive your employees hard. Instead, try the following strategies:

Resistance Training Program

1. Meet

The "collective wisdom" of your managers and teams is critically important. By listening to knowledge exchange in these meetings, you invest in learning but also begin to deepen the trust culture in the organization. It has been my experience that energy begins to build in these properly administered meetings, and spontaneous, exciting suggestions develop a strategy fitness for the entire organization. Toyota, for example, values the input of every person employed. A line worker suggested a certain swing chair that revolutionized the installation of a part along the assembly line; it saved the company huge resources and got the job done! In difficult times, it is not business as usual and

every employee knows that. Push against the economic changes with collective wisdom; it strengthens the corporate muscle.

2. Leap

All leaders and management need to ask powerful questions. Lots of questions. Ask challenge questions that test the current methods, test the traditional organizational boundaries and rules, and ask questions that possibly help predict events that lie ahead. As James Mapes would say, “Use quantum leap thinking.”¹ Skillful use of open-ended questions will provide leadership with possible new targets, product spin-offs, solutions to customer retention, and opportunities in new business territories. Clearly define the values on which your business operates. Push against the attitude that calls for hiding the business in a bunker until the war is over; get the corporate muscle prepared for successful months ahead.

3. Coach

Leaders and managers must find a way to translate strategies, goals, objectives, and action plans throughout every unit of business, every customer contact, every shareholder meeting, and every public exposure of the organization. Qualified professional coaches, trainers, and facilitators can assist even the finest CEO or business owner in these challenges to communicate effectively. Once goals, objectives, and plans are aligned throughout the organization, an atmosphere of trust and understanding develops. Stephen M.R. Covey clearly builds a case for the economic results of such an atmosphere. If you have not read Covey’s The Speed of Trust,² it is time to do so. Push against the poor, slow decision making systems based on fear; communicate past, present, and future success to enrich the cardio fitness of your group.

4. Quantify

Without counting reps, without stepping on the scales, without watching a pulse monitor, total fitness is only a guess. Once measured the goal of being totally fit can be acknowledged and sustained. You know what it takes. Organizations have learned that they must apply the same principle in order to make transitions, meet the challenges of change, improve their quality, and make the bottom line healthy. For example, many organizations who have prepared for the Baldrige Award’s quality improvement processes have found that the measuring of quality goals leads to enriched lives for employees, customers, clients, patients, and students, and it leads to an enriched profitability for their company. You simply cannot manage what you do not measure. The evidence of “how we are doing” when presented in clear, quantitative terms overcomes resistance to change. Measure your quality efforts. Push against the doomsday predictions of the New Year; use measured quality within your business to produce strength to accomplish greater productivity and even greater success.

Ask any Ironman why he or she engages in resistance training! They know that on competition day times may be tough – winds may kick up, rain may fall, and the water may be choppy-but they have prepared for years for that day. That preparation results in their being one of the world’s finest athletes. Is your organization- your business-an Ironman? Are you ready for this race day that has thrown some surprises your way? Have you completed resistance training?

When times get rough in the marketplace, we can complain and work in an atmosphere of doubt and fear; or we can choose to work in trust while always looking for the best possible results of our decisions, the best possible strategies for dealing with the competition, and most of all stepping out in even the global marketplace with quality and integrity. It never fails; you and your teams will

remain personally and professionally enriched and successful.

¹. Mapes, James J., Quantum Leap Thinking, Sourcebooks, Inc., Naperville, Illinois, 2003.

² Covey, Stephen M.R., The Speed of Trust, Free Press, New York, 2006