

There are lots of ways to keep your business moving and make sure employees are headed in the right direction.

Optimizing Talent During Tough Economic Times

When workers seem down about losses or worried about their jobs, how do you keep employee morale high and encourage them to think and move forward? The first step, as always, is to refresh your perspective and stay positive.

Take a step back and evaluate.

This could be a great time to reevaluate and reorganize. What really drives your business? Are the best people in the right places and doing the right things? As you evaluate employees, ask about personal and professional interests at the same time. It's possible that workers' best talents aren't being maximized in their current positions. You may have untapped resources right in front of you.

Optimize talent through employee development.

The most useful employee is one who can be versatile and ready to handle any challenge. Cross-training and increased exposure to new tasks and functions is one of the best ways to maximize employee potential and productivity. Cross-training opportunities could also help retain great employees because they will feel that they are continuing to learn and develop their careers and skills at your organization.

If you have had layoffs, strive for balance.

Layoffs or anxiety about potential layoffs are a reality of a tough economy. This can decrease motivation and derail your company's momentum. In the end, productivity, imagination and innovation suffer. Counteract this by emphasizing current visions and goals and staying positive. Make sure that you continue to reward great work and communicate to your top talent that they are valued.

Work to be an excellent communicator.

Great communication is vital to any organization, and oftentimes communication is unclear or insufficient. This is always frustrating, but in difficult economies, mixed signals or misread messages can lead to bigger problems. Take extra steps to make sure your communication is always consistent, crystal clear, and positive.

Look around and see who might fill any gaps.

Recent layoffs mean that many skilled and qualified candidates are actively on the job market, and even people who are still employed are looking for new positions more than ever. This means anyone who is hiring can enjoy the buyer's market. If you have a talent gap in a particular area, now is a great time to explore eager new candidates.

Despite a down economy, it's still possible to motivate and continue to develop top talent. Remember that a negative attitude is contagious, but so is a positive attitude. Be constructive and encouraging—your outlook will bolster morale more than you might expect.