

Engaging People During Tough Times – Business Insight from Karen Schmidt

Award Winning Business Speaker from Platinum Speakers and Entertainers

In case you hadn't heard we are now officially in tough economic times. Many organisations are directing managers to cut back, focus on the important stuff and forget non-essential activities. They believe that this is not the time to spend money or outlay effort on activities that are nice to have. We all need to get back to basics to ride out the storm.

I agree but I also want to issue a word of caution.

Just because we are experiencing an economic meltdown doesn't mean we also need to have a morale meltdown. If you are a manager or business owner and you believe that employee engagement is one of those nice to have's that you will be putting on the shelf for now, then you are on the wrong track. You need to avoid going into crisis mode because it will take you longer to recover . . . and we will recover.

Market recovery is all about confidence and so is ensuring your team stays engaged. In these times engaged staff are even more important because they are a direct link to the life blood of your business, your customers. When customers are more cautious about spending money they are also more careful about who they spend it with so the type of service that might have been acceptable during the boom will not see you through the bust.

In fact I believe that now is the time to ramp up your efforts to keep people engaged. An engaged workforce is a long term, sustainable competitive advantage that requires investment in good times and in bad. Just like market analysts are suggesting now is the time to buy shares rather than sell them, I am suggesting that now is the time to do everything you can to attract and retain good people rather than simply focus on reducing payroll costs.

So what should you do? Here are my tips for keeping people engaged in tough times:

Focus I believe that one of the most crucial factors in the health of your business will be avoiding a survival mode mentality because it will flow onto your staff, customers and suppliers. You need to get your team to focus on what they can do rather than what they can't do and to stay in action mode.

Communicate Now is the time to be talking to your people - there is the importance of discussing major events with your staff. Our current situation is what I would describe as a major event, one that is impacting on the personal and professional lives of employees at all levels of organizations. Rather than leave it up to employees to guess what is likely to happen in your organization, sit down and update them because nothing destroys engagement quicker than the rumour mill!

Analyse Put a microscope on your business. Examine everything starting with policies, procedures and practices, before moving onto customers, suppliers and staff. It is time to stop doing the things that don't work and start doing more of the things that do. Find out where you are wasting time, money and effort . . . then fix it. Yes, this may mean getting rid of the wrong people, whether they are internal or external to your business, but now is not the time to carry people who don't perform.

Involve Get your staff to help you come up with innovative ways to do business during difficult times. Whether it is suggesting cost savings, efficiency gains or new products and services more tailored to current conditions, your staff can be an excellent source of good ideas. Not only do you get input on business practices, you also help to create attachment to the organisation because people who are committed to implementing a great new idea are less likely to leave when things get tough.

Karen Schmidt is a leader in her field, an award winning speaker, workshop leader and author. So far she has managed to cram in 5 different careers. Starting out as a secretary she quickly proved herself in Recruitment and Human Resource Consulting before moving on to Corporate Training and now Professional Speaking. More information on Karen can be found at www.platinumspeakers.com.au/speaker23-Karen-Schmidt

For further information and assistance with your next event contact Platinum on 03 9673 7400, or theteam@platinumspeakers.com.au we can be

found at www.platinumspeakers.com.au

Contacts

Jason Kidger

03 9673 7400

mailto: jason@platinumspeakers.com.au