

MANAGING IN THE RECESSION



Business journals are full of advice about marketing and sales strategies during the recession. As consumers and businesses cut back, knowing your customers and tailoring your strategies to their needs is essential for all of us. And what of our people? Strategy without tactics will fail - people are the cornerstone of businesses success. A recent UK survey showed that 27% of those polled were worried about losing their job and with many organisations managing redundancy and/or restructuring programmes it is little wonder that staff are worried. As stress and demotivation are quickly reflected in reduced performance, what can we do as leaders to maintain and raise individual and company performance just at a time we need it most?

Here are the top tips from Hunter Roberts based on our client and consultant experiences:

1. MANAGING PERFORMANCE

An obvious point, but in a recession priorities and strategic goals change. Aligning staff objectives quickly and efficiently to what's new and supporting the underlying behavioural competencies needed for success are critical activities. Businesses have been reinforcing their performance management processes as the means of giving staff real clarity, a motivational understanding of team goals and assisting engagement with the company's direction and plans. Helping managers understand what is needed and then working with them to cascade the approach down the organisation with 'a meeting in a box' approach is a fast and cost effective method that works successfully and one that we've provided to a number of organisations.

2. MANAGING CHANGE

When we are managing the complexities of restructuring and redundancies we tend to focus primarily on those who are leaving the organisation. Those left behind often struggle with the guilt (and relief) of surviving the cuts, a sense of loss and worry and sometimes demotivation about the future. Senior Consultant and Coach, (previously Director, Organisation Effectiveness for Kellogg Europe), Kate Howsley states: 'We are currently working with a leading telecommunications business to design and deliver programmes to help all their leaders understand what is needed to navigate their teams through turbulent change. Whilst at Kellogg Company, we relocated the European HQ from the UK to Dublin and ran change workshops for managers and staff to support the psychological and physical transition. These were so successful that some people asked that their spouses and partners might attend too. Of course, in our focus on building commitment and motivation in our people we welcomed family members. It worked well.'

3. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

'What Good Looks Like.' Continuous service is an ongoing challenge for clients, particularly for customer facing organisations, when customers are expecting much more for less today and businesses need staff to achieve both stretching performance standards as well as provide that special customer experience for each individual customer. Hunter Roberts is currently working with a major airport to deliver an engaging 'Krypton Factor' style programme for all its security teams to enable them to achieve just that! What's more, staff report that the experience builds their teams and is great fun and motivational too!

4. FIRST 100 DAYS COACHING

Whilst businesses are shedding staff, many are continuing to recruit top talent selectively. Getting talent onboard quickly is the name of the game and recruitment processes are being managed in a pacy way to achieve it. It's essential your new joiner is effective quickly, not an easy task in the ambiguous and changing environment of today's market. So smart businesses are providing executive coaches for the first 100 days or thereabouts to support the new manager make a striking impact, get up the learning curve rapidly and build his/her internal and external network contacts. Hunter Roberts' experienced and accredited coaches are working with a range of organisations at executive team and management level and, recognising everyone is cutting back in the recession, are providing real value for money too.

5. TALENT MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Organisations in both the public and private sector are building their processes and tools for managing talent identification and development internally alongside their selective external talent hiring. Career development frameworks including career maps, published technical skills and competency profiles for each role, self assessment and manager assessment tools and development guides encompassing self-help and more formal learning options have been priority approaches in several clients with plans for rigorous succession management close behind. In addition, Development Centres, designed to challenge participants in scenarios and exercises that are as close to real life as possible, enable confirmation of high potentials. Development Centres provide a structured approach to participants' ongoing development by identifying key strengths and possible derailers through a series of observed challenges and exercises.

6. COACHING CULTURE

Developing our people and building long term organisational capability and performance whilst

Susy Roberts on

COACHING THE COACH



Recently there has been a substantial rise in the number of consultancies offering coaching services to individual executives. Some classify themselves as 'life coaches', aiming to help people work through personal issues that are holding them back from enjoying a harmonious domestic and work life. This can include guiding people through traumatic personal experiences such as family loss or illness. By comparison Hunter Roberts concentrate on business coaching, specifically to improve bottom line performance, although naturally they will help clients gain perspective on any personal issues that are affecting their business performance.

Although this is an important element of our consultancy work, most people think that business coaching is the domain of the external consultant. Yet managers can have a powerful influence on their teams and the organisation as a whole, when they adopt their own internal coaching style. Many years ago, large organisations often had a command and control structure with hierarchical systems - staff were just expected to do as they were told. However, today's complex business environment means companies are often spread across the globe or work remotely without a traditional office base, so that an involved, empowered workforce is more likely. Without such clear reporting lines and the lack of one-to-one time with individuals, successful leaders have to be able to personally develop and inspire direct reports and staff. This attention to, and interest in, their professional growth is perhaps one of the most significant factors in the loyalty and commitment of personnel to their company.

As a leader with a coaching management style, this means collaborating instead of controlling, delegating more responsibility, asking more questions to get staff to think things through for themselves rather than simply giving orders and imparting specific developmental feedback instead of making judgements. Some people think this is just a case of 'being nicer', but it isn't. Delegated responsibility brings pressure to perform, and coaching managers maintains a rigorous focus on goals and results.

So which is better, an internal or external coach?



The answer is neither. If an internal coach builds long term relationships with their reportees, balances individual and team needs and has an in-depth knowledge of the organisation,

external coaching is opposite but complementary. Hunter Roberts coaches business leaders by giving a fresh perspective with a strong focus on the individual and by its necessity relies on effective short term interventions. In addition, we often get asked to 'coach the coach', not just to help the leader to develop their coaching management style but to help their managers too. This can be a very effective (and time-efficient) way of facilitating individual development, particularly experienced managers who want to refine their skills or deal with more complex people management challenges.

Hunter Roberts has a specific approach to coaching which aims to create an environment which allows

dealing with the short term necessities of the recession is critically important. Businesses are increasingly looking at developing coaching skills within their management teams as a means to achieving this. Experience has shown that training in coaching skills, whilst necessary, is not sufficient without accompanying interventions to make the changes stick. Interventions might include coaching the internal coaches, developing and supporting 'master coaches' across the organisation and team coaching of senior leaders so that they know how to support the changes actively.

7. CONTINUE TO INVEST STRATEGICALLY IN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

A German retailer recently decided it was over-investing in cleaning and under-investing in friendly, customer focused staff. It therefore cut the cleaning budget by 20% and used the money to pay for staff training and other programmes including a time-allocation system and new in-store standards. The result was a 20% increase in return on capital and a 5 point market share gain. Many organisations are preparing thorough learning and development strategies based on careful training needs analysis. It takes time and often some external help, but it's well worth the investment and ensures businesses come out of the recession with strong, high performing and engaged people.

FEATURED CLIENT

Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company. It collaborates with its clients to help them become high performance businesses and governments.



The business challenge for Accenture's Facilities and Services team was to improve the quality of services delivered while reducing costs and increasing productivity in the context of a fast moving high demand high challenge organisational culture.

Two Hunter Roberts consultant/coaches worked with the management team to specify the required outcomes and develop a comprehensive programme of interventions to deliver them. The programme had four key components:

Restructuring the way services are provided

- Centralising/consolidating activities
- Creating new job profiles and a role specific skills and competencies framework
- Increasing the productivity of individual staff
- Engaging and training individuals to succeed in the new roles

Internal client relationship building

- Working with managers and team leaders to develop their awareness of the importance of effective internal client relationships
- Introducing stakeholder mapping and management tools
- Developing relationship management skills
- Growing the teams confidence and capability through practice and role playing

Developing individual and team capability

- 1-to-1 coaching for managers
- Designing and delivering development centres to identify development needs and high potential individuals/ future stars
- Introducing a capability framework and tools to support career and succession management
- Designing a range of diagnostic and assessment tools to support managers in developing individuals and teams

Performance Management

- Developing objective setting processes with clear, specific and measurable targets and standards
- Developing a bespoke performance management process with associated training and documentation
- Providing support to managers and team leaders in managing performance issues
- Providing a career development framework and training to help managers and team leaders handle career development and performance discussions

Lorraine Green, Senior Consultant and Coach reported that the business outcomes delivered included a reduction in the cost of services provided, an increase in measured individual and team productivity, an increase in the confidence and capability of the management team and the team leader population and an increase in measured staff satisfaction.

HUNTER ROBERTS

Established in 2001 Hunter Roberts has grown quickly and amassed a strong UK and international client list. We have built a team that carefully blends the skills and experience required to deliver. We can dramatically improve commercial performance for our clients through developing their people.

organisations to continuously improve and remain competitive. Coaching in this way has the biggest impact on an organisation when it 'cascades' through the management ranks, with senior managers coaching reportees to be better coaches, who in turn coach their own 'juniors' (and sometimes vice-versa). At this point, coaching behaviour becomes the norm - people want to learn and achieve and it is part of "the way we do things round here".

One of Susy's coachees, International Finance Director of a major retailer said "Coaching as all know but rarely recognise is absolutely the golden key for firstly making sure you take a step back from day to day and secondly the key to unlocking many challenges and creating opportunities - this you are so good at helping with."

FEATURED CLIENT

Go Native

We have been working with a growing



entrepreneurial called Go Native for the last 18 months. They are a dynamic organisation that provide short term serviced and longer term leased accommodation (mainly apartments) for corporate occupiers, typically people who are working on projects away from home for periods from a week to a number of months. In line with trends in the sector they also provide housing for people from offshore who come to the UK to work on projects and for training/ familiarisation.

Go Native has grown quickly over a relatively short period. It is a highly entrepreneurial organisation with a charismatic Managing Director who was the original inspiration for -and still is the majority owner of - the business. As we started with them they faced a number of challenges associated with rapid growth. We have worked with them to facilitate the development of their three-year business strategy and to develop and implement a practical commercially focussed people strategy that aligns with the business strategies and goals.

We have helped them to deliver a significant reduction in headcount delivering bottom line savings, we have restructured roles and responsibilities across the organisation, redesigned incentive schemes, introduced a capability framework and implemented a new and dynamic performance management process throughout the organisation.

12 months on Go Native has achieved its first quarter targets across the board, customer satisfaction ratings have recorded an all time high at 95.4%, the new organisation is bedding in and the performance management process is being supported by a carefully designed training and development programme aimed at increasing the quality of people and performance management throughout the organisation.

Guy Nixon, Managing Director says.....

"Almost by definition, I'm not sure your typical entrepreneur is as strong on people management and development as he might be on business initiative and customer relationship management. My business had reached a size where structured people management was critical to its future success if not its survival. The last 18 months working with Hunter Roberts have been transformational - not just in terms of people performance but also in terms of our bottom line performance."

Hunter Roberts say.....

"It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to work with the Go Native team and we look forward to continuing our association with them."