

Motivating Ourselves and Others During Uncertain Times

by Paul Vitale

WITH THE BEGINNING OF EACH new day comes an abundance of great opportunity. At least that is one way a person might think as he or she awakens to the ebb and flow of owning or operating a business—an environment that is ripe with adventure and rewards yet also provides a true test of the spirit, particularly in today's uncertain economy.

There is no denying that the economy currently is creating trying times. From the mortgage meltdown, credit crisis and job layoffs to the stock market roller coaster, we are experiencing stress on many levels. As professionals, we know the importance of maintaining a good attitude, however, as optimistic as we may be, it is hard to escape the negative forecast that's all around.

How can we motivate and encourage not only ourselves but also others during these uncertain times? The following concepts focus on coping and moving forward in the most positive way. As you contemplate the following four ideas, consider each aspect of your approach to your business environment and how a simple adjustment could produce positive change.

>> Choose an unwavering belief

It is necessary to stay knowledgeable about the existing state of the economy, however, it doesn't need to be the focal point of every waking moment. Limit how much time you spend listening to the media. Do your best not to allow the negative statistics and facts to overwhelm you. It's OK to turn off the television when analysts begin talking about how dismal the outlook is. The simple truth remains



that no one can predict the future.

How each of us decides to deal with current economic events is a conscious choice. When speaking with coworkers, family or friends, acknowledge present difficulties but do your best not to dwell on them. If you're caught in the middle of a conversation about finances and become overwhelmed, it's acceptable to excuse yourself and move on to more pleasant subjects.

Continually focusing on bad news, struggles and challenges can bring us down and also break our spirits. When placed in this situation, the resolve of those who are tempted to give up and get out is tested. Now more than ever, a sturdy belief is critical—a belief not only in your product or service but also, more importantly, in yourself.

If you need it, take some time to reassess and recharge, remembering the reasons why you chose your profession in the first place. Instead of focusing on what went wrong, take a long look at what went right and rejoice in your successes. In uncertain times, an unwavering belief is crucial

to catapulting a business from marginal to memorable.

>> Commit to being flexible

Create a plan and work it but also be prepared to adapt. There has never been a time in which flexibility is more important. Making adjustments due to a weak economy is uncomfortable; nonetheless, resolve to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes. Being flexible and resilient is the state of mind for those who ultimately attain both their short- and long-term goals. Those who are willing to implement new and innovative ideas to solve problems often are able to accomplish remarkable things.

>> Grasp wholeheartedly the opportunity to continue growing and developing

Never allow your appetite for learning to dim. Be nimble and stay current on trends and issues that affect your industry. Evaluate new markets, search for ways to integrate change and get excited about the challenges that lie ahead.

The reality is this: No matter what the economic climate is, you have the opportunity to enjoy what you do, provide a quality product or service and influence people through the legacy you leave.

>> Elect to be a lightning rod

It's tempting to surrender during stressful times but stay motivated. Staying motivated is critical for producing favorable results. Many people are hurting right now and suffering from a lack of encouragement, and the hour has come to reach out to them. You have the capacity to carry the torch that ignites the flame in others.

Despite having to work long hours, handle stressful situations or endure the results of the bottom line, it behooves you to take positive action every chance you get. Taking affirmative steps to motivate yourself and those around you promotes positive growth and fans the sparks.

Remaining consistent is key. Steady actions during times of uncertainty promote strength and stability. Good habits exercised consistently such as punctuality, following through on your word and treating both internal and external customers with the utmost respect are recipes for success. In both your verbal and nonverbal actions, stay steady.

Remember, very few ever achieve their greatest potential without the support of others. By uniting those around us, respecting diversity and encouraging by example, we can build toward the future. Accepting responsibility to ignite others is an essential step in perpetuating business during uncertain times. Resolve to be that lightning rod.

Today's economic landscape holds more than a handful of risks, however, finding the opportunity to respond in a positive manner is truly up to you. Sure, there will be those days when there are more questions than answers or when the bend in the road seems more like a U-turn. Be inspired by the paths and determination of visionaries such as Walt Disney, Amelia Earhart, Michael Bloomberg and others who stayed focused on the fulfillment of their own unique ideas.

Paul Vitale, a professional speaker and author based in Little Rock, Arkansas, was a popular speaker at the 2008 NTA Convention in Pittsburgh. Vitale presents keynote presentations and seminars across North America. For additional information, visit www.PaulVitale.com or call 501.663.1454 or 501.868.8195.



Creating an Effective Plan for Your Sustainability Efforts

by Brian Mullis

LAST MONTH I FOCUSED ON the basics for developing a sustainability framework for measuring your environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts, and tracking your progress. This month I'm going to focus on how to create an effective plan for implementing your sustainability framework.

A good sustainability plan will enable you to coordinate your efforts, track progress and focus on priorities. It also will provide guidance, lay a solid foundation for your efforts and increase the likelihood that they will take hold within your company. The more thoughtful, coherent and concise the plan, the more useful and successful it will be. Just be sure that it includes these five basic components:

>> Rationale. Your sustainability plan should link to your strategic plan. If not, there is probably little rationale for pursuing it. If both your employees and top management understand the reasons for pursuing sustainability, its importance will be elevated, and you can justify committing the necessary resources.

>> Vision. A clear compelling vision gets people excited. To paint a picture of a sustainable version of your company, identify what specifically you want to be doing and what you'll contribute using a distant timeline (e.g., five to 10 years). Be sure to get commitment from top management and to be careful not to set your sights prematurely low.

>> Sustainability framework. The direction your efforts take will be determined by the way you define sustainability. Using a sustainability framework will provide a shared vision and common language, so

include your vision and goals, as well as performance measures for achieving them.

>> Key Impacts. Begin with an informal analysis of your impacts (e.g., carbon emissions in tons, waste in cubic yards, electricity in kWh, philanthropy in dollars, etc.) then set priorities before fleshing out your strategy for addressing each one.

>> Participatory Planning. To educate and engage employees from key departments as well as top management, I recommend a participative process as you develop your plan. Although this approach requires more time and energy upfront, the result will be more useful and widely supported.

Once the plan has been created, one person or your equivalent of a green committee should take responsibility for monitoring progress, reporting results as well as trouble shooting and removing any obstacles to success.

If you are interested in reviewing an example of a sustainability plan, or if you have any questions, please contact Penny Whitman, *Courier* editor in chief, at penny.whitman@imgworld.com.

Brian Mullis is the president of Strategic Travel International, an NTA strategic partner. NTA's Board of Directors officially endorsed STI's Sustainable Tourism Eco-certification Program (STEP), which is the world's first comprehensive, global sustainable tourism eco-certification program offered by a non-profit organization. It is designed to aid tourism businesses of all sizes ensure the preservation of destinations and cultures. Visit STI on the web at www.sustainabletravel.com.