

## Coaching Through Challenging Times



*"Great players don't win trophies, teams do."* Rene Carayol, Business Guru and Motivational speaker

*Are you overwhelmed by the negative prospects ahead, are under pressure to perform in these unsettling economic times and are faced with difficult people decisions whilst maintaining growing business results?*

*Deirdre Murray, Managing Consultant / Executive Coach with People Resources Consultancy, identifies 6 STEPS to maintain a positive focus through tough times.*

### **1. CLARITY:**

In times of crisis, do some of your employees seem to run around like 'headless chickens' looking for somewhere to roost? Do others sit glued to their screens, in the hope that the worst will never happen? The leader needs to be clear what the key priorities are, and to focus on the few rather than the many. Your coach will help you reach clarity on what you want to achieve and focus on what's really important. Leaders need to stay true to their vision and values which become tested in tough times.

### **2. BEHAVIOUR BREEDS BEHAVIOUR:**

How is the leader's behaviour impacting the team? During stressful times we can revert to dogmatic and insensitive behaviour when dealing with people, due to the constant demands being placed on us. Through self-awareness and self-assessment, the coach can enable the leader to focus on the impact that his/her behaviours are having on the rest of the team and the need to keep morale high and spirits motivated.

### **3. MAINTAINING A POSITIVE OUTLOOK:**

Ruminating about 'doom and gloom' will not help build team morale. Studies by Martin Seligman, author of 'Authentic Happiness', show that optimism and positive psychology lead to greater success in life. Goleman's research on EQ, tells us that the most successful leaders are those that maintain a sense of realistic optimism despite internal or external pressures

### **4. KEEP COMMUNICATION LINES OPEN:**

Focusing solely on working harder on the task is not always the answer in times of crisis. The leader needs to communicate, communicate, communicate, to reassure the team and help them cope with the difficulties they are facing. They need to be clear what the vision is and what the leader stands for. As Marcus Buckingham tells us, '*the greatest leaders inspire people to a better future.*' Karl Weber, former CEO of Lufthansa, is quoted as saying, '*sometimes I was the only person who believed we could work our way out of this crisis.*'

People need a strong belief that they will overcome the difficulties facing them and want to feel involved in helping to turn the company around.

#### **5. KISS-KEEP IT SIMPLE STUPID:**

Unfocused and ill-thought out, knee-jerk reactions may damage the company's competitive advantage for the future. Likewise delaying key decisions can deepen the company's prospects of a speedier recovery. John Kotter, Professor at Harvard would argue that in times of change, leaders try to change too much, rather than change too little. Leaders need to focus a small number of key priorities that people will remember and clearly identify with.

#### **6. MAINTAIN CONTROL:**

Feeling overwhelmed by the daunting decisions that lie ahead, can only heighten stress. The leader needs to focus on how he/she is managing their own priorities to maintain a sense of control even in the greatest crisis. Many positive opportunities can present themselves in the worst economic environments.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The clarity and focus that executive coaching brings can help leaders transition positively through tough times. With good clarity, planning and preparation, the coaching process can help leaders refocus on key priorities, gain perspective and act as a highly motivational tool in creating a high-performing organisation.

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