

## Is this economy giving you a headache? Part 2

### Dear Small Business Owner:

In last month's newsletter, I talked about 4 things you could be doing in your business in these difficult times. Here are the next 6 of the 10 suggestions to keep your business thriving.

#### 5. Clearly defined sales process.

Do you qualify prospects extensively before you spend any extended time with them? When you meet with prospects, are you clear about what the steps are to signing the deal? If you're rusty on your closing techniques, get some training. Realize that the tendency during tough times is to sell on low price. Resist that temptation. Sell your value and abilities and the benefits you bring to the client.



#### 6. Make cuts sooner rather than later.

It's human nature to hope things will get better so you won't have to let people go. But it's also a common mistake to keep people on longer than you have meaningful work for them and not cut your overhead costs when you really should. This is not easy to decide but make sure you are realistic about how much work you have relative to your staffing level. In lieu of laying off people, consider reducing hours doing a rolling lay-off or changing pay plans to a commission or job completion basis.

#### 7. Upgrade personnel.

With a more open employment situation, it may be the time to let a "C" player go and replace them with an "A" player. Employees who don't perform consistently or aren't in-line with the values of your company are dragging down the whole team they work with. If employees have refused to retool themselves or get more training to broaden their skills, they are not going to help drive your organization forward. It's time to move on.

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### 8. Tap into the brain-trust in your company.

Have you sat down with your employees and brainstormed with them about how to improve all areas in your company? Ask for suggestions about ways to reduce overhead, ways to make the customer experience better, expanded ways to market your services. Make sure you listen carefully and be willing to put good ideas into action. When employees see you acting on their suggestions, they will feel empowered and more committed to the company.



### 9. Call in favors.

Ask for help from friends, family, advertisers, and suppliers. Now is the time to enlarge the circle of whom you ask for assistance. What are related industries that are "feeders" into yours? Consider sharing mailing lists and putting out joint newsletters. Ask for their help in looking for referrals, having co-advertising campaigns or extending longer credit terms.

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### 10. Increased attention to customer satisfaction.

It's critical to keep the customers you already have happy with your work. Extra clear communication about expectations for a project costs nothing and will win your customers hearts. Make sure you have a 3rd party perform a customer satisfaction review at the appropriate time during a project.

If you'd like some help implementing any of these ideas, call Alpha Business Coaching.

Sincerely,

**Lynda Hess, Business Coach**  
**Alpha Business Coaching**

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