



NOW WHAT?

By Harry LeBoeuf



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We all know too well what the recent world-wide economic conditions have done to our businesses. During this unprecedented economical downturn we have had to make some really tough decisions, like firing our valued employees, eliminating our marketing budgets, and slashing our overhead expenses to the point where they hardly exist anymore. We have cut all the fat, and even some of our muscle. Our natural instincts were to just hunker down and try to ride this crisis out and hopefully come out the other end intact. You have done all this, and thankfully you have so far survived. But now what? I'm sure you have asked yourself, what should you do next? What are you supposed to do now?

Thankfully, there are many economic and government indicators that the world is slowly coming out of recession, and hopes are high we will be able to regain some of our losses. While many companies have not, those companies who have managed to survive this slowdown may actually come out stronger! You are probably asking yourself, how is this possible? This really isn't very surprising if you look at some fundamental actions companies undertook, or should have done, in a slowdown. Any company who consolidated its market share, and focused on long-term goals and objectives during this slowdown, actually took steps moving forward rather than actually cutting back.

So what did these companies do to become stronger? What do you need to do so your business also recovers with the improving market conditions? Here are some things you should think about, and how we at The Ropella Group can help you with them:

- **Leadership and Team Building:** It is very important you keep your suppliers and vendors in business. You also want to keep your front-line leadership engaged, and you don't want your employees to lose motivation during these difficult times. You will need them if you want to gain momentum when your market turns around. How will you handle the culture shock between Gen X, Gen Y, Traditionalists, and now the Facebook generation?
- **Strategic Planning:** Do you know where your company is today, and where it needs to be tomorrow? If your organization is not moving forward, it will quickly begin falling behind. To take your organization to the next level requires a realistic assessment of where you are today, an understanding and knowledge of individual strengths and weaknesses, and a plan for the future. You need a review of your business functions, and analysis to fill holes created by your cost cutting efforts. This will include such things as SWOT Analysis, Balanced Scoreboard, and other analytical tools.
- **Project Management:** Project management focuses on carefully managing your processes to produce and distribute products and services. You need to know how your company manages and directs your physical and/or technical functions, particularly those relating to development, production, and manufacturing.
- **Customer Service:** You want to give your customers additional value, rather than always discounting the price, this will not only keep them motivated to be loyal, but also help in retaining your margins and increasing your goodwill. Only your customers can tell you if they are, and how much they are likely to use your product or service. Market conditions for you will improve only when your customers' confidence improves, so discuss these issues with them often.
- **Innovation:** Some amount of resources can be moved to research and innovation. For instance, you may not spend so much on sales and promotion and instead channel some of these resources to develop new capabilities or improve on existing ones.

- **Costs vs. Efficiency:** Most of the focus is obviously on cutting costs, but there is a real danger of losing your competitive edge if you stop or reduce activities your customers really want. Many companies stop marketing completely, and they are at risk of losing to their competition. Your focus should be on improving your marketing efficiency and not on cutting back across the board.

The bottom line is you need to build on the inherent strengths of each team member, grow the organization through proven leadership, and focus on the high-value returns if you want to be ready for the future. These things haven't changed over time and market situations. Instead these are time-tested values and will continue to carry you through to the next economic conditions. Will you be ready to succeed when the situation improves? Let us help you be prepared.

Ropella has a track record of improving productivity and alignment in firms around the world. We can help you take your organization to a higher level of achievement. Our individually tailored programs are the result of years of research into the best practices in Leadership Transformation, and have been proven successful in a wide range of organizations. We focus heavily on improving accountability, communication, and trust. We improve the core leadership skills inherent in your organization. This increases the creativity, productivity, and alignment of your people, which are the foundations of continued innovation and organizational improvement.

ROPELLA can help you improve productivity and the bottom line, as well as the morale and loyalty of your employees. We can give your organization a true "line-of-sight" communication from the boardroom to the front line. Give ROPELLA a call today and we will help you grow your great company!



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