

OUCH! IT'S ANOTHER DOWNTURN AND MY STAFF HAVE NO WORK



By Sherry Knight, President and CEO, Dimension 11 Ltd.

It's 2016, and we are in a recession. To make matters worse, Regina is known as the second-best place in the country, after Guelph, to get employment. Apparently Saskatoon did not even make the top 10. That's good for employers in Saskatoon; there will be more people staying in the jobs they have as opposed to looking for a new place to work. It's not so good for employers in Regina where employees may look elsewhere for work!

The difficult scenario is how to keep these people enthused and working when there are no projects to send them out to work on. Consider the following:

- Tell your people the situation as it is unfolding in your organization – remember, trust is built with honesty. Recently we outplaced individuals from an organization where only the week before the executive level had gathered everyone to tell them their jobs were secure – whew! I am sure you could have heard the sigh of relief that went through the room. Then the next week people were let go; this destroyed any trust that may have been built earlier.
- Depending on the severity of the downturn to your business, consider having your staff provide ideas on

how the organization can assist in keeping everyone working. This might be a meeting where you don't talk – you have charts with felt-tipped pens set up around a room and allow people to go to these places and write/discuss ideas building on others thoughts – and at the end gather the concepts and put them into groups to prioritize and bring these ideas forward, being honest as to why you feel one concept works better or worse than the others.

- Consider sharing the work that is available; no one is laid off, everyone works less hours, takes home less money, yet still they have an income. Another concept is to allow those who are able to take a longer holiday without salary.
- Review safety meetings, focusing on the areas where individuals had the greatest difficulty addressing their personal safety.
- Send people off for training to enhance their skills and knowledge.
- Do internal training. Find out who your “Go To” people are for the competencies you need and then have them teach others about that one competency. Remember, many of your staff do not see themselves as teachers, so if you want them to teach, keep it quick – they should

be able to teach one competency in less than 30 minutes – and provide them training in how to train so they are more comfortable.

It may be that some staff is going to look outside the construction field for a permanent position. This has nothing to do with you; it is their fear of the future. Understand that they must look after themselves, their partners and their children either at the same time or before they look after your business.

The few ideas listed above can help you. Possibly the two most significant to your success in keeping people with you and moving forward during a downturn are the first and the last bullet points. When people know you have their back because you are honest in regards to the situation and that you will help them learn more, the chances of employees wanting to stay is significant.

Please feel free to call me if you would like to implement any of these scenarios and are a little fuzzy on how to do it. At no cost to you, I am pleased to provide you with a 30-minute free consultation. You can connect with me at (306) 586-2315 or sherry@dimension11.com. 📞

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