

# **A Seven Step 'Resiliency Strategy For Difficult Economic Times' Can Keep Employees Motivated & Engaged In Jobs**

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**PURCHASE, NY – September 3, 2008** – Employees who are anxious about their futures – especially during a challenging economy such as now – can adversely affect a company's profitability by delivering poor customer service, being less intellectually engaged in their jobs, and making plans to leave, according to research by **Sirota Survey Intelligence**, specialists in attitude research.

"The potential loss of a job, increased workload, a less positive future within the organization (even if not laid off), loss of colleagues and friends, and management practices that often devalue employees, can all have a significant negative impact on employees' performance," said **Douglas Klein, President of Sirota Survey Intelligence ([www.sirota.com](http://www.sirota.com))**. "Certain research has shown that job insecurity follows directly after death, marital unrest, jail, and personal injury as a stressor – in fact, people report job insecurity as more troubling than sexual difficulties."

"While, in general, employees' attitudes will decline in uncertain economic times, there are major exceptions, depending on how management treats workers," said Klein. "Businesses need to manage through this uncertainty and these business cycles – rather than from within them. They need to adopt strategies – *before* negative business events occur – that will mitigate the impact of uncertainty on employees. Employers need to avoid managing people as expense items in the budget so they can retain workers when times are good – and employees have more career options available to them."

**According to Sirota's research, companies should take the following steps to formulate a Resiliency Strategy for Difficult Economic Times:**

- 1. Do build a "partnership culture."** According to Sirota's research, companies with a "partnership culture" consistently outperform their competitors during both boom times and downturns. A partnership culture is characterized by 12 hallmarks, including basic trust, a long-term perspective, joint decision-making, open communications, financial sharing, and equitable day-to-day treatment. "These values need to be followed on a daily basis, particularly during challenging times, in order for a partnership culture to work," said Klein.

- 2. Do create, communicate, and then exhaust “rings of defense” before downsizing.** “An employer that treats its employees as true partners makes every effort to avoid layoffs,” Klein said. “Believe it or not, you will even find people willing to participate in arrangements for their own ‘funerals.’ The key is employees having trust in management – that they feel management is being absolutely open and honest, and is doing everything it can to cushion the blow. When it does become necessary to reduce costs, many steps can be taken as an alternative to involuntary layoffs. These are known as ‘rings of defense.’”
- 3. Do focus on the local behavior of immediate supervisors and managers.** “Simple management behaviors such as giving timely recognition to employees, supporting their continued development, and providing coaching and guidance, mean a lot to employees – especially when they are anxious,” Klein said. “During these times, it is even more important to be consistent between words and actions, and to create an environment where everyone is respected. These leaders and managers should receive guidance in how to understand their own – and their subordinates’ – reactions to stress, and how to develop coping strategies.”
- 4. Do pay more attention to high-potential employees, who are most likely to leave during difficult times.** “Even in a tough economy, high-potential employees have other opportunities,” Klein said. “Consider developing a retention strategy for high-potentials that includes a strong focus on career development. Give them special projects to meet their achievement needs, and make sure they are taking advantage of training and development opportunities.”
- 5. Do create ways for all employees to contribute to the company’s efficiency and effectiveness goals.** “One excellent mechanism is gain-sharing efforts,” Klein said. “As the name says, it is a method for sharing gains with employees – the gains that employees themselves achieve for the organization. These programs are very motivating and truly exemplify a partnership culture.”
- 6. Don’t exclude employees from assisting with possible solutions.** “Management often keeps plans and information very close-to-the-vest during difficult times,” Klein said. “Communicating openly and asking for help in developing actions to be taken helps minimize feelings of powerlessness.”
- 7. Don’t stop performing periodic employee assessments.** “Companies need to assess how anxious their employees and leaders are feeling about internal and external issues, and how well their culture and management practices are buffering,” said Klein. “Monitor workers’ stress levels, their perceptions of their workloads, and be on the lookout for burnout,” added Klein.

### **About Sirota Survey Intelligence**

Founded in 1972, Sirota Survey Intelligence ([www.sirota.com](http://www.sirota.com)) specializes in attitude research. Headquartered in Purchase, NY, Sirota has conducted thousands of attitude surveys around the world that have helped organizations build strong, productive relationships with their employees, customers, communities, opinion leaders, investors, shareholders, suppliers, and other publics. The major results of their surveys have been summarized in ***The Enthusiastic Employee: How Companies Profit by Giving Workers What They Want*** (Wharton School Publishing [www.enthusiasticemployee.com](http://www.enthusiasticemployee.com)).