

## **Sustaining Motivation, Commitment and Productivity in Tough Times**

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Times are tough. Many people are working hard to keep their businesses moving forward in the face of some very difficult conditions. Perhaps growth has stalled, your rate of hiring has slowed or your organization may even be facing downsizing or reorganization. It seems a good time then to take a fresh look at how PI can be valuable especially in these difficult times.

When companies face things like redeployment, downsizing, hiring freezes, and rapidly-shifting market forces, it helps to get back to basics: we still need the work done, we still need people to be energized to do that work, in fact, we may need them to work even harder. We need to drive sales, and we still need to keep our eye on the strategic initiatives that may need re-thinking in the current and predicted future environments.

Let's take a look at how PI can help with these market-driven challenges

### **Sustaining Morale and Motivation**

It's no mystery that good, targeted communication is a key element in maintaining high morale. With all the bad press that surrounds businesses today, it is increasingly important to enhance internal communication in an effort to improve morale and motivation at your company. The challenge is that one size does not fit all. It is important that your managers are communicating in a manner that is meaningful, energizing and reassuring to their employees. This is where your knowledge of PI can really pay off in terms of maintaining and solidifying the productivity, commitment, and energy of your people. Here are some common employee needs that arise during difficult business times and effective ideas on how the Predictive Index can help.

During uncertain times, employees need to:

- Maintain confidence in the leaders
- Know what's happening and where they stand
- Muster confidence to move forward, building on past successes
- Understand how the inevitable changes and potential disruption will impact them

### **How PI Worldwide can help.**

From your knowledge of PI you know that some people are energized by the opportunity to confront big, uncertain, scary challenges, while others would be reluctant to face such prospects. This is a perfect time to take a hard look at your organization through the unique lens of PI. PI provides useful information that will allow you to tailor communication to specific individuals within your organization, keeping in mind their unique motivating needs. If you are communicating with teams of employees, tailoring the communication based on the preponderance of drives in the various groups can help maximize the motivational impact of the communication. For example:

Remind and reassure the High C and High D individuals about the remaining strengths and security in the organization. Minimize surprises as conditions necessitate change.

Focus the High A's on the current challenges, create opportunities for them to drive winning strategies in the face of difficulties. Remember they are energized by competitive challenge, so are likely energized to face the "scary beast."

Enlist the natural talent of your High B's to help keep the tone positive, the environment upbeat, and to influence and communicate through frequent, positive interactions. Also, your High B's have strong "radar" in terms of picking up the very human signals about how people are doing and how they're feeling. Good intelligence to have in these times.

In general, reach out and communicate frequently about what's going well, apparent challenges, speaking in a frank and calm manner and express confidence based on past success.

## **Redeployment**

Given the changed business environment that surrounds the company, you may face changes in strategy, and perhaps a slow-down in hiring. Maybe it is time to re-think how the talent is deployed throughout the organization. In some cases, this may mean tightening controls by giving the Higher D's more authority and opportunity to do what they do best in centralizing control and squeezing efficiencies out of the systems. In other cases, it may mean giving the competitive drives in the Higher A / Lower D's more room to run; focus them on the toughest challenges and apply commensurate incentive-based rewards.

Often conditions like those we are experiencing today mean that you need people to take on more responsibility due to attrition or downsizing. This is where many companies run into trouble. When times are good, they often take a disciplined approach to carefully matching people's competencies to the job. In times like this, those good principles are often overlooked or sacrificed to expediency. Big mistake! Just when they need to eek out greater efficiencies, they shoot themselves in the foot by assigning responsibilities in ways that not only don't promote productivity, but actually impede it.

Reassigning jobs or parts of jobs is, in essence, no different than "hiring" someone to do that work. The disciplines and tools of PI are efficient, fast and accurate, so they can easily be put to use in fast-moving "triage" situations. So, before reassigning responsibilities, take some time to consider the behavioral job demands and how well they align with the PI patterns of the people. Even if, due to current conditions, you don't have the luxury of choice, looking at the PI relative to those demands can help you anticipate areas in which the individual may need assistance, coaching or training to get up and running at a highly productive level. In addition, managers trained in PI are better

able to adapt leadership, coaching and communication to support each employee to attain high levels of motivation and skill application.

### **Driving sales performance**

What better time than now to develop and leverage the sales talent in the organization? When times are tough smart companies continue to invest in the sales organization. Not only can this help stem the tide of a slow down, it can also position the company to capitalize on the inevitable upswing and accelerate the rebound.

Assuring that each sales person is maximizing his or her potential is important to success at any time, and absolutely critical in lean times. Managers often assess sales skills in an “up or down” fashion, that is, the individual performs and hits targets or doesn’t. Ratcheting up performance across the board, however, requires a more data-driven and focused approach to sales skills assessment. Further, knowing specifically where the sales organization stands in terms of strengths and weaknesses allows for a highly targeted, precise intervention to upgrade performance. Having targeted information also means that the investments can be better aimed at improving the areas you know are weak, driving the improvement directly to the bottom-line.

Hand in hand with PI, the data provided by the Sales Skills Assessment Tool (SSAT), and the targeted training of Customer-Focused Selling (CFS) can help you analyze the capabilities of your sales force, see distinctions in skill levels across different groups within the sales force, train with emphasis in the areas that meet the unique needs of your organization, and combined with PI, help your managers motivate the team for sustained action.

### **Lastly, a Reminder**

Unfortunately, tough times often necessitate closer scrutiny of individual performance and tough decisions about what to do about those who are not performing up to required expectations.

PI measures factors and drives that influence how a person will behave in a variety of work settings and those work behaviors have a considerable impact on performance, as you likely know from your experience with PI. However, it is important to remember that PI does not measure the actual work output. For example, let’s consider the proverbial Widget Maker. PI can measure how an individual Widget Maker will approach the tasks of widget making: how he or she makes decisions, pace of activity, attention to detail, social interaction, risk taking, etc. PI also provides information about the conditions in which the individual will work best: how many specific guidelines to provide, how much autonomy of action to allow, how stable or varied the work process, how much quiet time versus interactive communication, etc. So, it measures things that we all know have significant value in predicting the probabilities of success in virtually any job in any organization.

As powerful as it is, PI does not measure the actual work output. That is, PI does not measure exactly how many widgets the individual will actually make or the exact qualities of those widgets. The manager of the widget makers must measure that output by observation or other accountings of the actual work output.

In making decisions related to the termination of an employee for non-performance, only actual work performance and/or outputs should be considered.