

## Managing During a Crisis

Executing your organization's mission must continue despite today's chaotic and uncertain fiscal times.

You must move forward with critical projects that are underway. Other projects, planned perhaps for years in advance, must occur.

New priorities may have emerged because of the difficult economy, and these may require your organization to begin a new initiative or perform a series of actions – all within the context of regular business.

How should you respond?

If you are an executive who oversees a portfolio, you should organize around the three categories addressed below and execute rapidly where required. If you are a project manager who works strategically, and who plans to succeed in spite of tough times, then encourage and support these actions as fully as you can.



#1: Strategy and Mission	#2: People and Organization	#3: Projects and Actions
Review or write a strategic action plan.	Communicate!	Assess portfolio and project health; adjust resources and tasks accordingly
Address areas within your existing strategic plan that are more critical or that are no longer relevant.	Temporarily re-organize; remove responsibilities from teams with limited resources.	Review and set priorities for existing projects, re-evaluate risk, and confirm alignment with the organization's mission.
Deploy action teams across the organization.	Optimize the organization: assess its structure and alignment with the strategy. Adjust for the future.	Plan new initiatives and review existing projects carefully and thoroughly.

### Focus on Strategy and Mission

- › **Review or write an action plan** – Take stock of your strategic direction and define actions to focus the organization in the right direction. Make the plan simple: define the tasks and the expected outcomes or deliverables. Define the level of effort or resources. Indicate the primary person assigned and the planned completion date.
- › **Adjust smartly** – Form an action team of high performers and have them identify and assess options for new strategic directions and/or changes to the organization. Define the impacts on the organization's structure, personnel, core business processes, technology and relevant regulations.

- › **Deploy stakeholder and action teams** – Charter and release teams of stakeholders across the organization to listen and learn about possible changes to strategy or operations. Action team members should structure, facilitate and document these sessions.

If you can engage all employees in a response to the crisis, you will increase their sense of connection and shared success.

### Focus on the People and the Organization

- › **Communicate to the organization** – This step is most critical when a crisis emerges. In the absence of real and accurate information, people will create their own. Convey a rational and thorough response to the situation that recognizes peoples' concerns. The tone and delivery of the message is just as important as its content.
- › **Temporarily reorganize**– Act swiftly and decisively in response to the current environment and its impact on your organization. Consider combining business units. Consider eliminating functions of lower value, such as non-essential reports or meetings — this step can garner goodwill among your teams.
- › **Optimize the organization**– Organizations in crisis may be forced to reassess how they execute their mission. Outcomes could include elimination of a product or service, or a reduction in response or delivery times. **You may now have an opportunity to design and implement new, more efficient ways of doing business.**

### Focus on Projects and Actions

- › **Assess the portfolio** – A first step during any crisis is to assess the overall project and portfolio health and act immediately and definitively to adjust people and financial resources. Reprioritize projects that have inadequate resources; choose to **stop, start, defer, or extend** these projects.
- › **Review existing projects** – A key outcome of project review is to determine the impacts and the necessary adjustments to projects, such as deliverables and resources.
- › **Perform thorough planning** – Discipline is difficult to muster in uncertain times. For projects that must move forward, now is the time to be sure that disciplined project management practices are employed.

Failure to make decisions now could be disastrous, while good decisions made now will leave your organization stronger as the crisis passes.

Learn, adjust and engage key stakeholders. Maintain the same rational approach that you have used to succeed in the past. Follow the steps above and you will find yourself on the path toward good decisions.

Watch for additional guidance in a future issue of *Community Post*.



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