

SPB CONTACT

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The Economic Crisis: Staying in the Game and Coming Back Stronger than Ever!

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In recent months, the media has analyzed, scrutinized and dissected every aspect of the current economic crisis. The crisis has even become a way to connect with people. Although it isn't the happiest topic, it is something almost everyone has to deal with.

For many businesses, the damages, fears and challenges brought on by this crisis are significant and require attention. At SPB Organizational Psychology, we believe that all businesses, even those with limited resources, can control their destiny. In fact, it is often during these tough times that the best companies manage to find a way to stand out.

In this special issue, we discuss a number of solutions to help get you through the crisis, including:

- 8 key strategies for effectively managing a business in uncertain times from **SPB's President, Pierre Gauthier**;
- Advice on how to develop talent during an economic crisis from **SPB's Leadership and Talent Development Partner, Louise Beaudoin**;
- Information on one of the new development approaches we offer in partnership with **CoachingOurselves**, which provides an effective and profitable way to stimulate individual learning in a management context;
- Options for optimizing selection practices in precarious times from **SPB's Selection Solutions and e-Solutions Partner, Marie-Hélène Daigle**, and
- Insights on the strategic role that human resources management plays in uncertain times, from **Normand Vachon, Vice-President of Human Resources at Videotron**.

Enjoy!

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Steering the Ship in Rough Waters...

Interview with Pierre Gauthier, President of SPB Organizational Psychology.

Anyone can steer the ship when the sea is calm - Publius Syrus (85-43 B.C.). But when the storm hits, the captain must keep the ship afloat and guide the crew. In the same way, organizational leaders must steer their own ship in times of crisis and adversity.

"Be creative and turn obstacles and challenges into change and development opportunities."

Pierre Gauthier, President of SPB Organizational Psychology, suggests 8 key strategies that leaders can adopt to manage effectively during periods of uncertainty. The subtext is, of course, keeping employee morale up and planning for the future.

1-Show openness and honesty

Trust that your employees are mature enough to know and handle the truth, and be honest about where they stand. Communicate the facts and new developments as they arise.

2-Show humility

Be realistic; do not try to conceal your fears. Share your concerns with your employees and invite them to express their own feelings.

3-Increase communication

Do not leave your employees in the dark. The more you communicate with them, the less stressed they will feel.

4-Stay connected

Keep an "open door" and try to be more visible. Regularly survey your employees to assess their state of mind and the overall work climate.

5-Think outside the box

"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." - Winston Churchill (1874-1965). Be creative and turn obstacles and challenges into change and development opportunities.

6-Stay focused

Concentrate on key priorities and activities that will help the company make it through the crisis.

7-Encourage increased commitment

Find creative ways of recognizing and engaging your employees to keep them productive.

8-Stay in the game

Focus on tight resource management and be sure to retain and engage your most talented employees.

Finally, despite the problems that may arise in periods of crisis, it is important to tackle adversity head on. Remember that the greatest feats are often achieved during the hardest of times.

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Developing Talent in a Time of Crisis

Interview with Louise Beaudoin

SPB's Leadership and Talent Development Partner.

Can companies continue to develop their talent in the midst an economic crisis? Not only does Louise Beaudoin, SPB's Leadership and Talent Development Partner, believe they can, **she also believes that a crisis actually offers an opportunity for learning and innovation.** In her opinion, tough economic conditions open the door for organizations to manage the development of their resources so they can re-enter the game in a leadership position once business takes off again. Louise offers some invaluable insights below.

Clearly Pursue Your Objectives

When your budgets are limited, it is that much more important to make decisions that will help you **achieve your business objectives.** Now is the time to set the objective of developing talented people to ensure you compete at a higher level both now and in the future. Look at your other business strategies and think about ways you can **leverage** them to set you up for success.

Recognize that a Context Shift Requires Change at All Levels

When context changes and times grow uncertain, employees are not the only ones who have to change how they do things; managers do too. Managers must contend with challenging new situations and it is important to support them because they will directly affect the **engagement and productivity of your employees.**

Consider New Approaches

In challenging times, it is also important to update your development approaches. Studies show that all effective strategies have one thing in common: they involve action learning. That is why SPB is constantly developing innovative **new action learning support solutions which require less time and money, yet make all the difference.** We help our clients and our internal resources design and implement innovative development strategies and solutions. We even offer remote development solutions that facilitate communication, limit travel expenses and save time.

Always Think of the Big Picture

Reorganization often leads to lay-offs, a situation that inevitably puts a lot of pressure on those fortunate enough to keep their jobs. However in times like these, leaders must not lose sight of professional development or succession planning opportunities. No matter what the obstacle is, when it comes to talent management, the challenge is turning the current situation into a true opportunity for learning and innovation. The result will be the creation of a strategic advantage that will increase the organization's current and future performance.

"Managers must contend with challenging new situations and it is important to support them because they will directly affect the engagement and productivity of your employees."

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SPB and CoachingOurselves Form Strategic Alliance to Offer New Management Development Approach

Internationally renowned speaker and author **Henry Mintzberg**, Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies at McGill University in Canada, and **Phil LeNir**, the former senior manager of an international high tech firm have developed an extremely powerful way of stimulating individual learning for managers and executives. This self-directed peer-learning process is a highly effective competency development method that is used all over the world. "In my opinion, CoachingOurselves is exactly the way management and organizational development have to go - engaging managers in learning and driving change in their own workplace," said Henry Mintzberg, Founder of CoachingOurselves.

"We are very pleased to announce this partnership. I believe client organizations will benefit significantly through the combination of SPB's expertise and the unique approach of CoachingOurselves," added Phil LeNir.

The effectiveness of any team and organization is directly correlated with the skills and attitudes of their manager. At SPB we are convinced that the CoachingOurselves methodology forms a meaningful addition to any development activities our clients have implemented for their managers and leaders. Its philosophy of forming a learning community within the organization permits internal knowledge transfer while using the inspirations created by the thought leaders of our times. The contributing authors include, amongst others:

Henry Mintzberg, Professor of Management, McGill University, Canada

Quy Nguyen Huy, Professor of Strategy at INSEAD, France

Joseph Lampel, Professor at Cass Business School, City University, London, UK

Jonathan Gosling, Professor and Director of the Centre for Leadership Studies, School of Business and Economics, University of Exeter, UK

Karl Moore, Associate Professor, Depts. Of Strategy & Organization and Neurology & Neurosurgery, McGill University, Montreal Canada

Marshall Goldsmith, Professor at the Marshall Goldsmith School of Management, Alliant University International, Fresno, USA

So, what is this methodology and how does it work?

CoachingOurselves is a methodology supporting the implementation of a self-directed, group learning format.

Participants meet in small groups on a regular basis and discuss their business issues using a variety of modules as a backdrop, or a filter, to improve their performance. They tackle real business issues and have the opportunity to try the variety of approaches presented in the materials.

The sessions take place preferably bi-weekly and are 75 to 90 minutes in duration. Each session permits the sharing of experiences, discussion and reflection on the materials provided and even joint exercises or active experimentations.

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SPB and CoachingOurselves Form Strategic Alliance to Offer New Management Development Approach (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

Because of the continuity of the conversations and the relevance of topics, the learning is meaningful and the impact is sustained.

We foresee tremendous benefits from using CoachingOurselves. To name a few ...

Participating managers gain a better understanding of managerial concepts, improve management competencies, benefit from an increased visibility amongst colleagues and gain new insights and broaden perspectives on issues

The group has a chance to enhance the quality of communication, create bonds of trust and reduce conflict, ultimately promoting a learning culture in a supportive environment

On a macro-level, the participating organization benefits from a great mechanism to transfer knowledge within the organization, implement a methodology that appeals to generations X and Y, gets practical solutions tailored to the unique organizational context and implements a management development program that follows managers over a period of time. In addition, CoachingOurselves allows, in the current economic climate, to continue investing in people development for a fraction of what it would normally cost to access a learning approach of this kind.

At SPB we see ourselves as the custodians of the process.

- We will help identify developmental needs, through pure consultation with the stakeholders, focus groups, 360 assessments or any other way that is appropriate.
- We will help select participants and create learning groups.
- We can certify a group of internal resources as facilitators.
- We will help facilitate the first three to five sessions per group – just until the groups feel comfortable to continue their learning without additional support.
- We will help measure the results and impact of the learning.
- We will provide support in addressing any needs that arise from the CoachingOurselves activities.

“We are very excited about partnering with CoachingOurselves,” said Pierre Gauthier, President of SPB. “For the past 30 years, SPB has shown that developing managers is essential to improving organizational performance, particularly in tough economic times. We at SPB believe that it is critical to stay on top of the latest innovations in the field. Allowing our customers to take advantage of these innovations is obviously a key aspect of our mission.”

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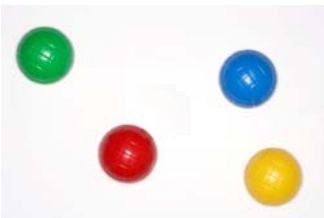


Rethinking Your Selection Process with Flexibility and Vigilance

In challenging times, many organizations tend to put a freeze on hiring or spend less on their selection process. For some, lay-offs and job cuts in competitor organizations are an opportunity to help replenish their high-potential candidate bank and make better hiring choices. For others, who are dealing with retirement departures or a qualified labour shortage, the number of positions to fill is greater than the number of interesting candidates. While some organizations see the crisis as an opportunity to rethink their hiring process, others have no choice but to do so.

In this economy, it is more important than ever to ask: **what do we have to do to get the best people in order to meet our short and long-term challenges?** It is important to stay focused and to find people who will be able to meet your current and future challenges. With this in mind, we suggest that you combine vigilance and flexibility when rethinking your recruitment process.

Vigilance will help you to reassess the status quo and to see what aspects of your process could be improved. In uncertain times, cost-effectiveness is especially important, which leads to thinking about how to optimize how you do things. Vigilance is critical if you want your selection process and tools to deliver the desired return on investment. Of course, vigilance in and of itself will not be enough to position your firm as an employer of choice. You will also have to show **flexibility** in order to be creative and original. A crisis is the perfect time to do things differently and to think outside the box. It is the time to be innovative and flexible while reassessing your current practices.



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The following strategies are sure to help you assess and optimize your selection practices:

Flexibility

Vigilance

Stand out to attract the best candidates

1

Define your personality as an employer of choice so you can attract talented people who will choose you for the right reasons. Pinpoint the image you are projecting and who are you attracting and make changes if necessary. Use a creative approach and be visible. Get candidates to convey what they expect of you through such means as self-evaluations. Get them to consider for themselves if they are right for you and if they share your values. Use concrete approaches and tools that will help you attract more talented people, adapt to new generations, foster employee well-being and create commitment from the selection process onward.

Make sure that your organization's personality is being expressed accurately. Do your employees believe in your corporate culture and values? Promoting an image that does not live up to reality could have a counter-productive effect and negatively impact your ability to both retain and attract employees. Promote the same image internally and externally, and make sure that what is being said about the organization is accurate. This will help you attract the people you want.

Identify talent profiles that will contribute to your organization's growth

2

Are the abilities you are seeking, are the ones that would really enable new hires to succeed at their jobs and help your organization stand out? Do you use effective methods to determine the profiles of candidates who would be instrumental to your success? Do you look beyond the job requirements to optimize each person's value by fostering his/her optimal career path, in the context of your organization's business objectives?

Incorrectly assessing required competencies creates unnecessary cost and negatively impacts on your teams and your organization. Make sure that the talent profiles being sought are those that will help you reach your goals and are consistent with your business objectives. Get professional support to determine the right talent profiles. Establishing the right target will save time and money.

Optimize and measure the effectiveness of your selection process

3

Have you looked at your selection process with a critical eye? You can get professional support to review and measure its efficiency. Some organizations also view crises as an opportunity for their managers and human resources professionals to develop their ability to better recognize top talent in a context of cultural and generational diversity.

In times of uncertainty, financial cutbacks can serve as a good opportunity to rethink your processes. With the right tools in place, you can opt to remain autonomous and manage in-house certain steps of your assessment process. Do you measure your return on investment? It is essential to have a scorecard that paints an accurate picture of your hiring process and that measures the value each tool provides and the effectiveness of each step of the process.

Rethink your structure and programs to bring out your most talented people

4

Are the talents of your employees being used to their full potential? Think "promotion" and "versatility" and bring out your formal and informal leaders. Could you change certain programs? What about your structure? To maximize every skill at your disposal, you must open the lines of communication, tear down walls, redefine responsibilities and create new development opportunities.

Speed up the development process and get the best from everyone. In a change context, everyone must understand their role and their responsibilities. Are you rigorous about evaluating internal candidates? Make sure to consider every application seriously to avoid making the wrong decision, as this could lead a great employee to lose his/her motivation, under-perform and hinder your organization's business goals.

Integration: seal the deal after hiring

5

Do you have an integration program? Is it optimal? An integration phase enables managers to become better known to new hires and enables new hires to become more comfortable in their work environment, making them more likely to use their talents. Measure the development of your new hires and foster a better integration process. This will enable them to contribute more, weather the learning curve more quickly and consolidate their engagement. This also holds true for internal candidates who are often left out of the integration phase.

Have you identified the priority items that your new hires must work on from their first day on the job? A poor integration process could lead you to believe that you hired the wrong person when this was not necessarily the case. You could then lose good employees and waste a lot of money. The first 90 days on the job are critical, so it is important that you have a thorough integration process in place that fits both the needs of your organization and those of the people who must fit into it.

In times of crisis, what is most important is to question the status quo, have the right tools, and take a step back so you can take two steps forward. Organizations that rethink their processes in this way are far more likely to remain on the cutting edge. It is up to each organization to act strategically and meticulously, with **flexibility and vigilance**, if they want to be at the front of the express train when it finally gets rolling again!

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Human Resources Management: A Key Contributor to Business Success

In times of uncertainty, recession and fierce competition, it is essential for human resources management to do its part to help drive the company to organizational success. This starts with HR management **correctly identifying its mission**, and achieving it. In fact, not only does this mission drive HR management's business plan implementation process, it also drives the achievement of its strategic and operational challenges for the year in progress. Alongside of the business goals, **HR must promote organizational values**, those which must be demonstrated by each employee.

The credibility of the HR department and HR management is directly proportional to the extent to which the HR business plan is being implemented and the extent to which HR managers are able to show results and influence company leaders, officers, employees and union representatives. Consistency is at the heart of its contribution.

HR management must help increase corporate sales and profitability by favouring the implementation of individual and group performance management programs in each corporate sector. These programs promote the attraction and retention of top performers and the removal of underperformers, where applicable. Issues such as recruitment, the integration of new employees, personal engagement, compensation, and the periodic analysis of departures must be the priority concerns of HR management and must be adjusted as the internal and external environment changes.

HR management must also help reduce corporate costs by measuring turnover and absenteeism rates and costs. Then, depending on the results, it should set up concrete general and departmental measures to reduce such rates and costs. HR management must also strive to cut its own operating budget.

Among other responsibilities, HR management must **initiate and implement projects aimed at improving operational efficiency and cutting unnecessary costs**. It must show leadership by contributing to the success of its projects while actively supporting the teams charged with implementing such projects.

And finally, **HR management must measure its own performance, survey its internal clients, review its organizational structure, evaluate employees and its own purpose and, most importantly, dare to make the changes it deems appropriate**. For each action or project it undertakes, it must prioritize and intensify communications with company employees, leaders and officers and union representatives. **Knowing how to listen and how to present its point of view is critical in tough times**.

Normand Vachon

Vice-President, Human Resources, Videotron

Normand Vachon began his career in 1972 at Alcan, where he held various management positions until 1994. In 1995, he became Vice-President, Human Resources and Organizational Development of Nova Bus. Between 2001 and 2004, he served as an interim leader and management consultant for various firms. In January 2005, he joined Videotron as Vice-President of Human Resources. In the two years that followed, he played a major role in the Videotron/Videotron Telecom merger.

Mr. Vachon's current role at Videotron is that of a strategic partner who is actively involved in implementing the company's business plan. To this end, he performs market watches, attends to the needs of other departments and advises them. One of his priority goals is positioning Videotron as an employer of choice. Mr. Vachon is also actively involved in creating processes pertaining to union contract renewals, employee engagement and human resources management.



SPB's Training Corner

SPB offers a wide range of personalized **action learning** based training services. Everything is customized; we look at a variety of approaches to serve your needs. We offer complete training programs, group competency development sessions, workshop-conferences, private training, coaching and post-training follow-ups.

In this Edition, focus on...

REASSURING EMPLOYEES IN TIMES OF CHANGE

Did You Know that...

- Even under normal circumstances, changes usually take twice as long to implement and cost 1.5 times more than expected.
- Two-thirds of all changes imposed by management fail. Human factors represent a major cause of such failures.

4 Interesting things to note:

- When people sense a threat, be it real or imagined, they stop listening and therefore no longer understand what is being said as they are too focused on what they will say or do to counteract the change.
- In a context of change, you have to expect resistance and remember the 20-50-30 rule: 20% of employees are always unhappy, 50% adopt a wait and see attitude, and 30% will actively promote the change initiative.
- In general, people are not so much resistant as they are afraid: they fear a change of status or relationship, the unknown, being exposed as incompetent, a loss of autonomy, etc.
- If a change you implement does not go over well, ask yourself three questions: Is it a lack of know-how (skill, information), a lack of capacity (competencies, abilities) or a lack of will (motivation, interest)?

For more information on this session and other SPB sessions, please contact Pat Rothenberger, Training Coordinator, at (formation@spb.ca/450-646-1022) or visit our Website http://www.spb.ca/english/Solutions/sol_dev.asp

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