
WHAT'S IMPORTANT | Volume IV, Issue 3 | December 17, 2008

"What's Important" is a universal concern. The phrase resonates with an infinite number of meanings. What's important is both a question and an answer, depending on the situation.

In good times, we expect charismatic, visionary leaders to champion a company's success, spark innovation and rally the team to exceed perceived limits. But what about when times are tough? What do good leaders do then?

From the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage industry to the fall of major Wall Street institutions and now the teetering of the Big 3, corporate fiascoes are sending shock waves through the economy, spreading waves of fear to employees nationwide about what the future might hold.

Of course, strong leaders try to avert crisis. But, truly great leaders, in the midst of turmoil don't hide under a mountain of spreadsheets. They never lose sight of the people – not just the company – they lead. And, they refuse to let negativity gain the upper hand.

In trying times, we naturally look to leaders who can help us overcome our own fear. That means many people may be looking to you for comfort, support and encouragement now that the going has gotten tough.

Strong leaders are not immune to fear, they just tend not to get mired in it. They strive for an environment in which fear does not become the quicksand that suffocates personal well-being or productivity.

Strong leaders have the courage to shoot straight with those they lead. Sugar-coating a rotten situation is not a solution. It erodes trust. But, inspiring others to connect with their own strength, to become part of the calm in the center of the storm, can help them more gracefully ride the waves of the unknown.

Reed Markham makes this distinction regarding leadership. "A good leader inspires other men and women with confidence. A great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves."

Our economy and many of our corporations are experiencing tough times. It affects us all. No bailout, regardless of the size, can sustain a company that is not willing to help itself. That's left to the employees, and to leaders like you.

What's important during turmoil is to be the calm center of the storm, leading with the integrity, optimism and compassionate strength to rally those around us when they need us most.

Email me at chuck@durakis.com to share your thoughts.

Thanks,

Chuck