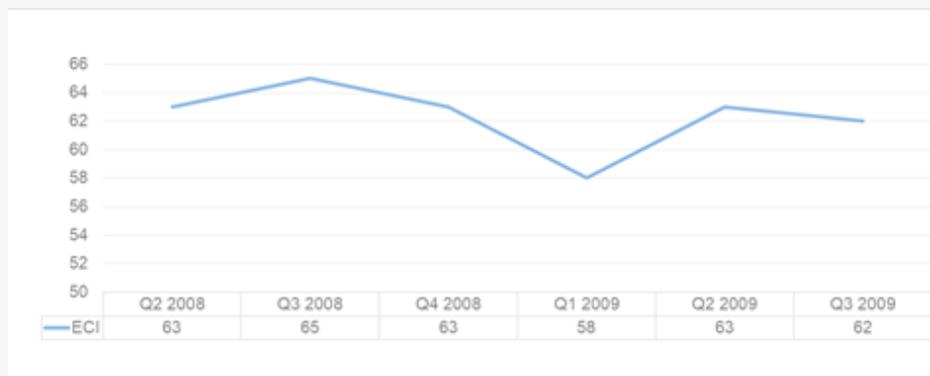


OrgVitality

Tips for Managing People through COVID-19

Actions you take now will make a difference.

Throughout the housing bubble burst of 2007/2009, and the resulting economic tailspin and recession, data was collected from 15,000 employees quarterly, from the twelve largest economies in the world at the time. The bottom of that event from our measurements was 1Q2009.



We asked a series of questions related to the level of confidence that employees had in their organization and in their own personal situation. We took that data and compared it to a number of factors of employee behavior and organizational performance. The results were pretty astounding. **Employee levels of confidence were a very good indicator of whether organizations were doing the right thing to survive during that trying time.** And if organizations were doing the right things, employee confidence levels were higher. **We found that employee confidence was a leading indicator of performance,** for who better to know how the organization is performing than the people who are working inside of it day-to-day, if you ask them the right questions.

Based on this research, we have put together the following tips to help organizations deal with the current crisis. These are rough times, and the more we can help one another, the more we will not just survive, but thrive.

Want to learn more about this data? [Contact us](#) today.



Tips for Maintaining Employee Confidence

1

Understand what makes employees confident

"There are four factors critical to measuring confidence for organizations during an economic crisis and for creating confidence in the employee population," explains Jeffrey Saltzman, CEO of OrgVitality. They include:

- The organization must be perceived as being effectively managed.
- The organization must be competitively positioned with attractive products for the current circumstances.
- Employees need to believe they have a promising future with their organization, (job security)
- Employees need to believe they are retaining or learning the skills that are attractive to other employers (career security).

Follow the rest of these tips to boost or maintain employee confidence.

2

Retain critical focus, but with more precision

"First, you need to work on the internal functioning of the organization," advises Saltzman. "During a crisis it is critical that management is effective, business processes are streamlined, and financial discipline is adhered to."

What were the key issues keeping top leadership awake at night before news of COVID-19 took over? It's important to not forget about these challenges—they'll still be there when this is over, only likely more pronounced.

"Instead of forgetting about the key issues, we are advising clients to consider whatever was on top of their critical list with respect to the current crisis," says Dr. Scott Brooks, Partner and Vice President at OrgVitality. "For example, if trust in leadership was an issue, then I'd suggest looking at 'Trust in leadership during this current crisis.'" A crisis magnifies any existing weakness, so now is not the time to lose focus on the areas of your organization that needs improvement.

*"When the tide goes out, you can see who's been swimming naked."
-Warren Buffet, discussing leadership during a recession*

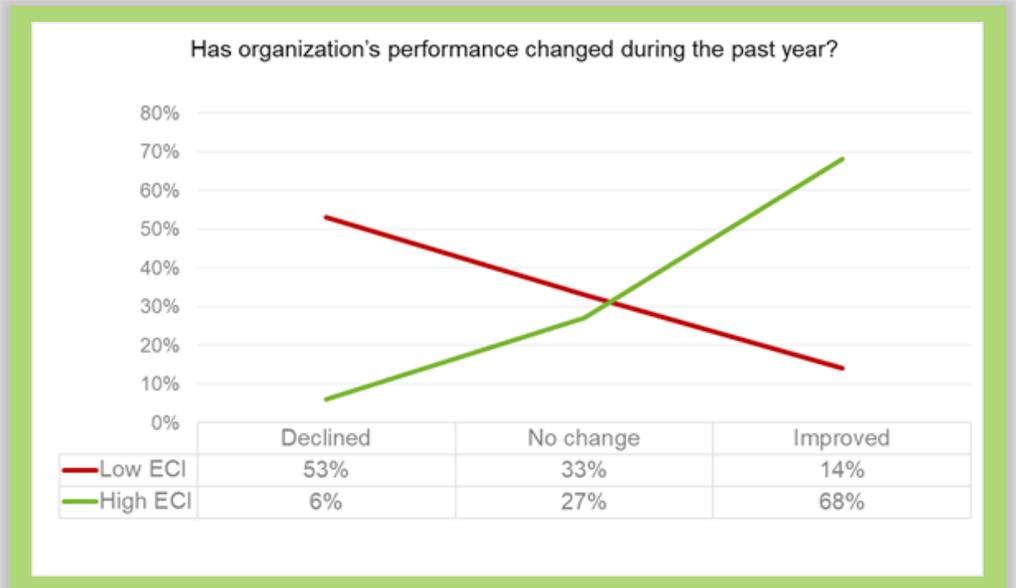


Tips for Maintaining Employee Confidence

3

Reexamine your main product offerings

"Can you offer a product or modify your existing products to better fit with the times?" asks Saltzman. In other words, what are potential customers currently looking for? "For instance, during the last recession, when people were hurting economically, organizations that offered smaller, less costly versions of their products sold more than those offering 'supersize' or more expensive versions," he explains. What else can you do to make your product more attractive in current circumstances?



4

Avoid layoffs as much as possible

Tough economic times can call for tight management of expenses, and staffing costs are a common target for cuts. But in general, organizations that found alternative cost-saving mechanisms besides layoffs outperformed over those that laid off staff in the long-term. If layoffs can't be avoided, do them all at once, rather than in drips and drabs. Prolonging the uncertainty simply extends the chaos and disengagement across the whole organization. Move ahead and "re-enlist" anxious or uncertain employees, providing honest assurances about their job situation. This is especially true for your top talent.

Tips for Maintaining Employee Confidence

5

Help employees grow or retain skillsets

Enabling employees to keep current in their skills provides them with career security, which, like job security, is also critical to provide. Research on Employee Confidence has shown that those employees most likely to quit a job are the most talented who feel like they are not in an organization where they can keep their skills sharp. Those most likely to stay? Those who feel like they are out-of-date with unmarketable skills. The second most likely to stay? Those who have talent and feel that they are able to stay at the forefront of their profession by staying where they are and are able to keep their skills sharp. "Who do you want at your side when the organization is dealing with a crisis?" asks Saltzman. "I know I want my most talented staff, and I want to keep them, and I'm sure you do, too."

6

Promote transparency and communication

Employees know what is going on within the organization. They may not know all of the details but they generally have a good sense of what's happening. Keeping things from them or not telling the truth simply leads to a lack of credibility when you need it, and when you need everyone working towards very specific goals. They also have very good imaginations, and in the face of a lack of information, they will fill in the blanks and in general they will fill in the blanks with a version of reality worse than the actual reality. Employees want to hear the truth, and they want to hear it from the top of the house.

*"In a crisis the only asset you have is your credibility."
-Paul Volcker, Chairman, Federal Reserve (1979-1987)*



Crafting Communications to Employees

By Jeffrey Saltzman

Our Message Performance Future© (MPF©) model, developed immediately after 9/11, was successfully used to describe changes that organizations needed to make to deal with a crisis and to work through the change, and can help now:

Message: Is there absolute clarity regarding what the organization is about, how it will operate and how each person contributes to delivering on these goals? Importantly, are the organizational communications delivering that Message consistently throughout all levels of the organization? Are policies and practices in-line with that Message? During times of change is it clear how the organization is changing, what the expected benefits of the change will be and what each person's role in the change effort is?

Performance: Are people generally getting what they need to be able to deliver on that Message – to get the job done? US Air Marshalls after 9/11 who could not blend in with the other passengers were handicapped in their ability to deliver on the Message, to provide increased security on flights. Performance should be thought of in the broadest sense, including such areas as teamwork, communications, decision making, training, equipment, resources, processes and procedures.

Future: Do people feel like they have a Future and a sense of belonging, of being valued by the organization? Is there a reason for them to stay long-term?

Organizations will have varying degrees of success with each of these key elements. If you are strong on Message and Future, but weak on Performance, you likely have inefficient processes and poor customer service. If you are strong on Performance but weak on Message you can have inconsistent performance. If you have Message and Performance but are weak on Future you can have talented individuals walking out the door. The organizations that are most successful at implementing needed change while also keeping their employees engaged during a crisis are those that are strong in all three areas.

Now, at a time when the future is uncertain, and your workers are likely doing their jobs remotely, it is critical to ensure you have all three aspects met. It is essential to communicate regularly and consistently about the change process, as well as about people's roles during and after the change; it is just as critical to provide people with what they need to Perform and give people a sense of Future after the change.

More information on the Message-Future-Performance model can be found in Chapter 8 of [Creating the Vital Organization](#) by Jeffrey Saltzman and Scott Brooks.

