

## TOUGH TIMES TACTICS

By Sam W Stearman

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### ASK FOR HELP

When times are tough, we are often too involved in the day to day problems to be objective. Don't be afraid to seek counsel. Here's where to look:

#### INSIDE -

- **Your employees are your most valuable assets** - They are the first to learn about problems with customers, missed opportunities and morale. They are the first to see how improvements can be made to your operations to improve production and to lower scrap and to simplify operations. They are the eyes and ears of the organization. True, lower level employee may know only a small portion of the total business, but they each know more about their areas than you could ever know. If you take the time to involve them in the decision making process, from your Vice Presidents down to the janitor, you will be pleasantly surprised at what they can contribute, you will find that necessary changes -including employee cutbacks - are accepted more readily and that your workforce will pull together to pull you through.
- **Education is key** - Problem solving, decision making and time management are invaluable skills that can be learned. Systematic approaches in each of these areas can improve your effectiveness and that of your employees. A small investment in these and other areas can pay big dividends, particularly in these troubled times. Look at areas of weakness and strive to improve your skills – and what better time when business is slow to invest in training to make your people more effective.

#### OUTSIDE -

When you're sailing in troubled waters, you need a roadmap. Here are some sources of valuable insight to help chart you through the icebergs ahead.

- **Use consultants** - A business consultant experienced in these areas can be a valuable associate in troubled times. With a broad-based background, a consultant can help you to step back and put things in focus and to identify action plans to strengthen your organization. He or she can provide valuable insight, suggest alternatives that have worked in other situations, suggest needed changes and improvements and even guide you through their implementation. Used properly, an outside consultant can earn his or her fee ten times over.



- **Upgrade staff** - If your "problem definition" reveals that your current staff is weak in one or more key areas, bringing in an experienced manager in that area may pay big dividends in the long range. However, don't look for short-term solutions. Any new hire must first learn about your business, your organization and your business personality before he or she can make a real and lasting contribution. Don't be afraid to upgrade, even with other layoffs. Downtimes offer great opportunities to fill those special needs.

Next issue will be: **Team Up With Others**

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