

Marketing in Turbulent Times

Linda Popky's 10 Tips for Keeping Employees Motivated

Your budget's been trimmed, your hiring slowed or postponed, your promotion pool slashed. Here are 10 tips on how to keep your marketing employees motivated and productive in a tough environment.

1. **Empathize and Engage.** Marketing professionals are by nature creative and innovative. Be sensitive to their concerns, empathize with their issues, then harness this creativity to produce solutions.
2. **Be Flexible:** Stay up-to-date on events that may impact your business. Be ready to look at new approaches or change direction quickly and assertively.
3. **Turn Challenge into Opportunity:** Give your star employees a juicy assignment to dig into. They'll be more productive and more engaged as they help the group meet its goals.
4. **Lighten The Load:** Re-assess priorities. Drop projects that are no longer critical or time-sensitive. Focus on what's important for the business in this new reality.
5. **It's Skill Building Time:** Economic slowdowns are a great time for employees to develop or improve skills they'll need to move forward—by taking a training course, self-paced learning, or finding a mentor.
6. **Ask and Ye Shall Learn:** Solicit input from employees on how to meet goals and deliver results. Create an environment where brainstorming and new ideas are welcomed and rewarded.
7. **Tell it Like It Is.** Communicate early and often. Keep your team, informed on what's happening as soon as you can. Don't sugarcoat, but be sensitive to the way change may be perceived in this environment.
8. **Do Your Part:** Share the burden. Make sure any cutbacks include managers and not just rank-and-file employees. Be part of the team.
9. **Build in Rewards:** When raises and promotions are in short supply, find other rewards, like recognition, time off, or even small prizes to acknowledge performance and raise morale.
10. **Go Where No Man's Gone Before:** Use this as an opportunity to try new and creative marketing techniques. Explore social media. Create an online community. Try an off-the-wall promotional idea. Why not?

Bonus#11: Have Fun: Yes, times are tough, but that's why it's even more important to create an environment where employees feel appreciated and part of a vibrant marketing community. Your team will thank you for it.