

When the going gets tough, TEAMS get going

There are five variables essential for companies trying to navigate through uncertain times, says **PETER ONG**

EVERY economy and every company will experience uncertain times. Just as night follows day; bad times, fraught with anxiety and uncertainty, often follow good ones, when "accidental growth" for economies and businesses is almost a given.

When uncertain times occur, companies need not be helpless victims. Here are five variables, or TEAMS, essential for navigating them smoothly:

- ◆ Trust-based culture
- ◆ Energised workforce
- ◆ Authentic leaders
- ◆ Motivated teams
- ◆ Shared vision

Trust-based culture

Like the level of octane in petrol, the level of trust in an organisation enables the organisation to go much further, for much longer, and with greater power.

A trust-based culture is critical especially when times are tough, when we require every leader, manager and employee to go the extra mile, beyond what we normally expect them to, such that the company continues to thrive, survive and achieve.

Building a trust-based culture is a difficult, long-term process, requiring leaders at the top and managers in the middle to constantly keep their commitments and "walk the talk".

As trust is reciprocal, when leaders and managers "walk the talk", so will their employees.

When bad times turn good, promises made and commitments given (like "I will restore our pay levels when times are good") must be kept. Doing so will make the trust-based culture stronger and the company even more resilient for the future.

Energised workforce

When times are uncertain, people become anxious and their energy levels fall. For a company to navigate smoothly through tough times, one of the most important variables is the energy level of its workforce.



Energised: If the leaders and managers of a company are enthusiastic, engaged and energised, they are more likely to engender a similar response in their employees, and vice versa. PHOTO: STOCK.XCHNG

A company with an energised workforce is more likely to sustain itself through tough and uncertain times.

If the leaders and managers of a company are enthusiastic, engaged and energised, they are more likely to engender a similar response in their employees, and vice versa.

An energised workforce is not easy to nurture and build.

Doing so involves anything from selecting people naturally passionate and enthusiastic about their lives, their careers and their work, to nurturing leaders and managers who can get the best (not the most) out of every employee in almost every situation.

Leaders and managers who nurture and build an enthusiastic, engaged, and energised workforce are likely to be inspiring, able to articulate clearly the talent, aspirations and passions of their employees, and open to creating work situations and project assignments such that their employees can put in their very best

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every single day, allowing them to achieve, attain and flourish, be it in certain or uncertain times.

Authentic leaders

Whether times are good or bad, authentic leaders are vital. Leaders who are authentic are predictable and consistent – who they are in life are exactly who they are as leaders and at work.

Authentic leaders provide their employees with a definite level of consistency and certainty in their values, behaviour, and actions.

Consistency and certainty of how their leaders will think, behave and act (a hallmark of authentic leaders) is very important for employees in tough, uncertain times as it facilitates their own ability to plan for, predict, and in some way, control their own futures.

Motivated teams

A trust-based culture, an energised workforce, and authentic leaders are central ingredients for building teams which are naturally motivated.

Motivated teams do more, give more, and achieve more; and they are absolutely essential for uncertain times, to help the company ride out tough spells.

In uncertain times, if all a company has to rely on are disinterested, unmotivated teams, then we can almost

certainly predict the eventual demise of that company.

Just imagine disinterested, unmotivated teachers teaching. Will their students do well?

Or visualise your children taking on subjects they are neither interested in nor motivated by. Will they excel in such subjects?

Shared vision

The final "S" in the word TEAMS stands for shared vision.

A shared vision has two important elements – envisioning and enlisting. Simply envisioning the future is insufficient.

To navigate their company smoothly through uncertain times, leaders and managers need to not only proactively and intentionally share (that is, disseminate and communicate) their vision; they must also ensure that this vision is shared (that is, communally accepted and embraced by all their employees).

Like the North Star, a shared vision is a powerful motivator, compass and guide.

A shared vision warrants everyone in the company to march jointly in step, strongly towards the destination ahead.

Uncertain times are a certainty, and companies can and should prepare proactively for them.

As business and product cycles get shorter, and global economies get more integrated, uncertain times will be more readily triggered, by a greater slate of events.

Companies will do well to prepare for uncertain times by underscoring and growing TEAMS, namely, trust-based culture, energised workforce, authentic leaders, motivated teams and shared vision.

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