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## managing your team IN TODAY'S ECONOMIC CLIMATE

UNFORTUNATELY THE BUSINESS events sector has not been spared during this current economic malaise although we have been receiving mixed reports from our clients regarding the impact it is having on workplace dynamics and staffing levels.

Some companies have unfortunately had to let go of permanent staff, while others have retained existing teams but put a hold on hiring new recruits or have cut working hours or frozen salary increases.

But then there have been others who continue to thrive despite the economic conditions. For example: the event agency which has a solid event calendar in place over the next two years and are continuing to grow its workforce as a result; the organisation having its busiest year since 2007 and currently looking for two new staff members; and the Sydney-based venue that is almost fully booked for the next six months and has just hired a new employee to handle the increased workload.

Whether organisations are feeling the pressure of a sliding economy or are relatively untouched, it is crucial to focus on maintaining your team's motivation and engagement. With all the daily "doom and gloom" reporting in the media employees are feeling concerned about the stability of their current role, whether this is justified or not. I am aware of some individuals who are seeking alternative employment just in case their role is made redundant or their hours are reduced. They do not have any real evidence that their workplace is struggling financially, nor have they had discussions with their employer. However, having heard the horror stories of increasing numbers of staff being made redundant they are feeling insecure and vulnerable.

In this time of uncertainty, being honest and transparent is the best approach. Communicate with your team and ensure that they are given the respect and assurance they deserve. Create opportunities

to allow employees to express their concerns about the changes that are occurring in your organisation, the industry as a whole and the broader economy. If you keep your employees in the dark they will only assume the worst.

If business is quiet and you are finding it a struggle to retain your team you should be getting your employees involved and promoting open communication. It will be obvious to all those around you that things aren't travelling well if they are sitting idle in the office with nothing to do! Organise problem-solving and brain-storming sessions on ways and means to increase business. Set short-term goals or offer incentives to keep them inspired and engaged because involving them in the process will contribute to increasing their levels of motivation and morale. Giving your employees a sense of control over their work will also go a long way to reducing stress, which is all good for productivity and work performance.

At the same time, if business is relatively stable let your staff know. If you can reassure them that their position is "safe" you will foster a sense of security that will reduce stress within the team and which will engender greater team morale, loyalty and commitment. It will also reduce the risk of your top employees seeking alternative employment when future opportunities do arise.

When the economy recovers and you have your key staff intact, they will very likely be more loyal and productive when you need it most.

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