



Sailing the Big Bad Economy Seas

What do you do when economic storm waves break over your business? Well, like everyone else, you ride it out and hope to be floating and upright when the storm passes. No kidding, you're thinking. Yes, we're masters of the obvious. How do you ride it out successfully? Create a strategic plan to prepare for the big and small waves and, eventually, calm waters. Here are six tips to help you sail the stormy seas...

Tip #1: Accept that you are in a big blow

How does this work, you ask? Take the analogy of a small ship in rough seas. There are certain things to mitigate the effects of the storm on your small vessel (business). The first thing to accept is the fact you are in a big blow and it's going to get rough. Drop any pretense that you can continue on the course you set when seas were calm and business conditions were normal.

Tip #2: Protect your "sales" from being damaged

Work hard to stay afloat and try not to become too badly damaged. We said "too badly" because the reality is your business will likely sustain some scrapes and dents. Since there will probably be a sales retraction, you must do everything you can to protect the remaining sales from further decline. You do this by taking very, very good care of your customers, giving them no opportunity to tear loose and fly away.

Tip #3: Tighten controls on expenses and lower overhead

Batten down the hatches. That is, tighten controls on expenses and lower overhead. Decide what has to be thrown overboard to lighten or make the craft more seaworthy.

Tip #4: Communicate to the crew

Let your crew know that you WILL survive this storm, but it will take all hands on deck to make that happen. Tell them what you must do to survive and get their input and ideas. Focus employees on cost savings or doing what they normally do more efficiently.

Tip #5: Stay at the wheel

The captain of a ship must be full time at the helm during a gale. Likewise, your direct oversight and supervision is absolutely critical to the survival of your business during rough times. You must steer the business, be fully aware of all the forces at work, and decide on what forces need a response or a strategic decision

Tip #6: This too shall pass

Nothing lasts forever and this storm will blow over. Look at this as opportunity to sharpen and focus your business and correct the excesses and bad habits that built up when things were going swimmingly.