

TOUGH TIMES: TOUGHER TEAMS

THIS IS NOT ABOUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED.
THIS IS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

FROM STAN SLAP
Chief Executive Officer, SLAP
New York Times best-selling author

YOU MUST. YOU CAN.





In 2008: A Sudden Shift

SLAP (my company) helped a lot of other companies survive the global financial crisis of 2008. Organizations had never experienced such sudden tough times. It was easy for them to believe that what they most urgently needed to control was most out of their control.

Driving our solutions back then was an empathetic but firm message: Who cares why things suck? What's important is what you do about it; it is the job of management to bring good answers to bad circumstances. Those solutions were delivered with some tough love: “Whining” is not a strategy. “Victim” is not a job description. “Everyone else is in trouble, too” is not management information. Now, let's fix this.

Of course, back then people only had to worry about someone touching their investment portfolio.

IN 2020: THE SHIFT HITS THE FAN

The crisis we are facing today is a whole different thing, with a wholly different gravitas and scale. Comprising a more profound threat to lives as well as livelihoods. Heartbreakingly eliminating many small, hand-built companies and dangerously threatening large companies and their many employees. Without a current or historic timetable for recovery. With unexpected changes to business models, practices, and supply chains that will redefine the relationships between companies, their employees, and their customers for a long time—in some ways, likely for all time.

What is the surest and fastest way through the fog of this crisis? Where do you start? What is the right direction? What is the wrong direction? How can you tell when you're headed toward safety? How do you stay standing up when everything around you seems to be falling down? Whose guidance do you trust?

What follows here is a fog cutter for your company. This is not basic business advice—yes, you should avoid excessive debt and unnecessary expenses, leverage the latest technology, and show empathy to your people; those were really good ideas before this trouble, too. Here are new strategies to counter extraordinary new circumstances, backed with the tactical steps to implement them and to measure the metrics of success. I say this as reassurance, not promotion: In more than 24 years, in 44 countries, SLAP has achieved several billion dollars of performance improvement for many of the world's most successful companies. This is all stuff. No fluff.

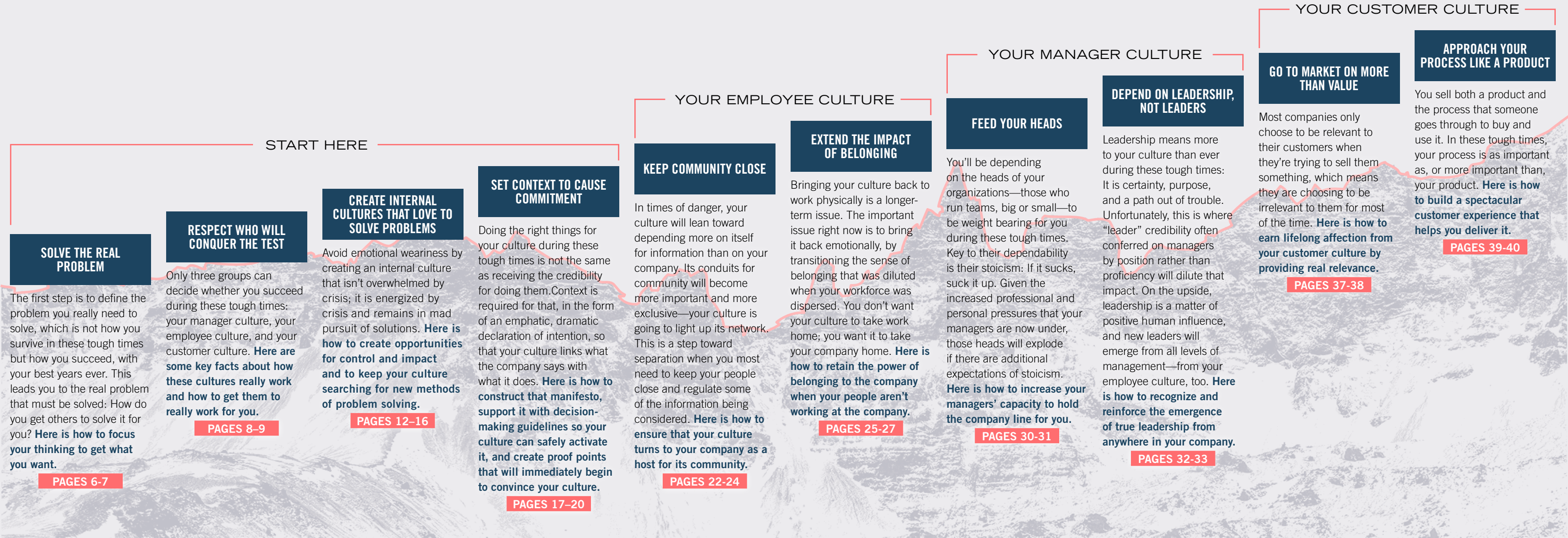
I'm bringing back some important actions from our 2008 recommendations too, since they proved so effective. Also making a return: It is the job of management to bring good answers to bad circumstances. Plus: Now, let's fix this.

Summary: Strategies. Steps.

On your behalf, I did some initial wrestling about the pages that follow. You were already busy before being entangled in these tough times. Now you have less time to consider anything and more urgency to do something. Are you best served by a couple of pages with headlines and bullet points or by a fuller explanation of the reasons behind the strategies, backed with more details about execution steps?

The importance of your success weighed against the scale of your challenges pinned any doubts to the mat. These are serious circumstances, and they require serious solutions. I've tried to make the writing compelling for you, but I didn't try to give you less of it than you need to enact the actions. Having said that, here's also a summary of the following pages. You can use it as a table of contents or a reason to allocate time for the deeper dive. Or as foreshadowing if these issues aren't addressed....

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Solve the Real Problem.

The best way to really solve a problem is to identify the real problem to be solved: What is it that must be figured out to get you what you need? The answer belongs on the right side of the equals sign in your problem-solving equation—if you crack this one thing, then you’ve resolved it. On the left side of the equals sign is the math that gets you to the right side: What has to be added, subtracted, multiplied, and divided becomes a finite series of clear-cut tasks and allocation of resources to complete the equation. Spend all

of your time on the left side without accurately defining the right side, and you’ll be busy, but that’s all you’ll be.

The ultimate problem to be solved is often not what it first seems and can be hard to conceive of if you’re under pressure and so unwilling to chance a counterintuitive move. Given that we’ve got a crisis to navigate, let’s skip the suspense: The problem that your company must solve starts here:

What is the test that we need to pass?

The right test during these tough times is not how you survive but how you succeed. How to have your best years ever amidst this crisis, stay strong, and emerge stronger and faster. Not as a predator, but with principles and purpose intact.

Survival vs. success marks a critical difference in thinking. If your goal is to survive, you're going to hunker down, stay in your lane, flinch when you should punch, and despair about where you're starting from, causing you to make decisions that will keep you there. If your goal is to succeed, you're going to try new things, inspire necessary confidence in others, and focus on where you want to end up, causing you to make decisions designed to lead you there.

Is this lunacy when facing such a trembly business environment and an uncertain future? Not if you plan to stick around: Concentrate only on your survival, and you threaten it.* The most effective strategists are steely eyed pragmatists who are also able to suspend reality as needed to reach a breakthrough plan. This is the mindset required for you to pivot to the real problem that your company must solve in order to succeed:

How do we get others to pass the test for us?

* For those who may be reading this having just lost your company or your job, I ache for you. You have had something ripped from your grasp that you could not protect, no matter how closely you clutched it. Listen here: What cannot be taken from you is your vision, your will, and your skills. You have these still, and they are your path back, to a new platform. The counsel in these pages will help you keep that new platform secure.

Respect Who Will Conquer the Test.

You can't pass this success test just because you've decided to. Three groups will decide it for you: your manager culture, your employee culture, and your customer culture. We're not just talking about a bunch of managers, employees, and customers. When these groups of people formed relationships with your company, they became cultures. And became far more resistant to standard methods of corporate influence.

Your company's response to these tough times may be to pursue a strategy of innovation, renovation, or exfoliation, but a successful strategy isn't planned well; it is implemented well. Anyone who considers culture to be soft stuff is clinically insane; it is the stuff of hard-core business results. If your three cultures want something to happen for your company, it's going to happen; if they don't, it won't. Their power to save you and serve you is stunning, including in tough times—especially in tough times. For

this to happen, they need to be transformed into protective evangelists for you. There has never been a more important time to understand how a culture really works and how to get yours to really work for you.

“Culture” is the most overused, yet often least understood, concept in business,* so let's start with an accurate definition. A culture is created whenever a group of people share the same living circumstances and so band together to share beliefs about the rules of survival and emotional prosperity. In the enterprise, those common living circumstances translate to, “How do we survive, working in this company, on this team, for this manager? And then, knowing that we're going to be okay, how do we get rewarded emotionally and avoid punishment?”

What a culture believes about “the way things are around here” is just the currency of your culture. A culture is a self-protective organism that obsessively collects that information, validates it, and shares it privately amongst itself. It is the construct for caring and sharing by those united through common circumstances or cause.

Their power to save you and serve you is stunning, including in tough times—especially in tough times.

* *Culture* was Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year in 2014. This means that according to the most popular dictionary in the entire English language, culture was the most newly searched-for word in the entire English language. If *banana* had made Word of the Year instead, by now companies would understand what a *banana* is and recognize that it's not going to peel itself just to feed them.

It is not the responsibility of your culture to understand the business logic. It is the responsibility of your business to understand the culture's logic.

Because it exists to protect itself, an employee culture places a premium on the known and is made anxious by the unknown. Your culture's antennae are working constantly, seeking information. Its credibility detector is nearly infallible; its perceptions are alarmingly accurate; and its memory is elephantine. A culture can't be bluffed, bribed, or bullied into sustainably believing or doing anything. You can't tell your employee culture what to believe, nor stop it from existing.

Your manager culture operates the same way for the same self-protective purpose, but since many of the rules of survival and emotional prosperity, and the sources of information, are different for managers, it's distinct from your general employee culture.

Your customers also have a common dependent relationship with your company, and this has formed them into a culture. Here too, your customer culture is an independent organism, operating in the same way as your employee and manager cultures, for the same reason, and with the same extraordinary power to help you or choose not to.

Oh, and there's this: Your customers are generally employees somewhere themselves, and they'll decide to protect or reject your company based in part on how they perceive you treat people just like them. This will be based on the legitimate enthusiasm your culture shows for your products, pricing, and policies.

As employees themselves, your customer culture knows that it would never show that type of enthusiasm unless it was treated with deep respect.

YOUR CULTURES ARE

MEASURABLE

The definition of a great culture is a committed culture. The commitment of your three cultures can be measured with any metric you use to manage performance of your business. **What to do:** Consider improving the commitment of your cultures as neither subordinate nor irrelevant to your performance during these tough times. Their commitment is the key to your performance.

HESITANT

What you want your cultures to do, how you want it done, and why you want it done are never as important as why not. Given the corporate logic and urgency of your internal strategy for emerging successfully from these tough times, or the material benefit to your customer culture, why would they not give their full commitment? If your cultures are hesitating, they believe that it is not safe to give it. **What to do:** Assume any lack of enthusiasm for management plans likely has nothing to do with whether your culture understands the plan. Respect that it may not understand why it should fully commit to making it happen and focus on resolving this first. Earn trust a little bit at a time with short-term promises to build momentum.

HEREDITARY

Because a culture exists to protect itself, it has to believe something is real—to put a stake in the ground to say to itself, “this is the way things are in this relationship.” Your cultures didn’t try to get it wrong when they put that stake in the ground, but they could have; they only had the data they could find and their ability to interpret it. But as soon as that stake went in the ground, your cultures looked for data to confirm their conclusions, not to contradict them. Even if they were looking based on innocently inaccurate conclusions about their relationship with you, they found what they consider to be proof points.

The problem is, you don’t know when your culture put that stake in the ground. It could have been years ago, continuing to be passed down from one cultural generation to the next. **What to do:** Consider that you are dealing with a legacy belief system that may need to be recalibrated before you can move forward. Recognize that your culture is initiative weary and wary; anything that looks or sounds like a campaign will be at best ignored and at worst resented.

NEUROTIC

A culture is obsessed with confirming the rules of survival and emotional prosperity in an environment or relationship it cannot reliably predict or control. Of course it’s neurotic, and it’s prone to drama and cynicism. Cynical doesn’t mean your cultures don’t care—apathy would mean they don’t care. Cynical means it hurts to care. **What to do:** When you’re introducing your culture to what is changing, take the time to introduce what isn’t changing.

RATIONAL

Your cultures deal in the real, and so they remain objective, agnostic, and open to any new information they consider credible. A culture is not naturally anti-company, anti-strategy, or anti-management, but it is definitely anti-unsafe. **What to do:** Recognize that it is not the responsibility of your cultures to understand your business logic. It is the responsibility of your business to understand your cultures’ logic. Remember this above all else, and you will have the use of the ultimate power tools to build success.

THE DIFFERENCE

The difference between a successful executive team and a great one is legacy impact. Yes, you need the protective evangelism of your cultures today, but when this crisis passes you’re going to need it again someday too. You can’t bank it when you need it; you have to put it away ahead of time. Understanding how to achieve the maximum commitment of your manager, employee, and customer cultures is not only about achieving performance; it is about achieving performance insurance.

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**Your cultures
will give you
whatever you
want. You just
have to give
them what they
want first.**

Create Internal Cultures that Love to Solve Problems.

As of this writing we're still in what medical and financial forecasts estimate as the first phase of the pandemic, and its rolling impact on companies and economies. But now is the time to get ahead of the biggest looming threat to the commitment of your internal cultures. When the newness of this crisis wears away, it will be replaced by deep emotional weariness, a numbness in your manager and employee cultures caused by instability that has become chronic, human connection that has become electronic, and uncontrollable circumstances that are writing a new story of lives and careers.

It is difficult for the human brain to sustain opposing emotions. Likewise, the human organism that is a culture can't maintain a regular state of both exhaustion and exuberance, paralysis and productivity, or helplessness and hope. The antidote to your internal culture's weariness is energy. In the face of continuing difficulties, a key source of that energy comes from taking on problems as a perk, not as a

punishment, in the belief that the pursuit of solutions confirms its ingenuity, unity, tenacity and exclusivity. This is the only way to achieve escape velocity for your culture, allowing it to move past the relentless pull of fatigue.

When a culture is allowed to blame external circumstances for internal performance, aggressive and innovative responses depart, and a culture marked by victimization, apathy, and detachment takes its place. This infestation is insidious and once entrenched is hard to exorcise—it will haunt company performance long after this crisis has passed. What you need instead is a culture that willingly holds itself equally responsible for its vulnerabilities as it does for its victories: Yes, this crisis happened to us. What happens now is up to us.

To create this kind of cultural belief system, your company has to first adopt a solution bias, constantly modeled and reinforced, including right from the top. This is in the form of an

equation of accountability, where the single acceptable explanation for good or poor business performance is: This is what we did or didn't do = this is what happened. Look at the pandemic and its economic impact like you would any serious competitor to your success. If you want to be them, focus on their strengths. If you want to beat them, focus on your own. Your culture's embrace of this accountability is your own strength.

So, no more vesting Acts of God, forces of nature, or world events with the power to dictate what happens to your company. If you want to steer away from an undesirable fate, your culture has to refuse to believe such a fate is inevitable.

Creating a culture that welcomes the opportunity to solve problems isn't about feeding it with the incentive to achieve success in the midst of difficulties; it's about your culture feeding itself. Your culture's hunger for a positive identity in a negative environment—"We're at our best when things are at their worst"—will help cause it to transmogrify danger into determination, complexity into challenge, and silos into solidarity. Crunch, chomp, slurp.

Of course, your culture won't always be able to resolve the nutso problems brought on by present-day conditions. But it doesn't need to in order to consider problem solving to be a perk and so continue to pursue success. Great problem-solving cultures are stoked by taking on difficulties for the high that comes from the solution attempt—they get knocked back by obstacles and get right back up, grinning like loons in the face of the latest enemy to achievement: "You'll get us once, but not twice. Okay, twice, but not three times. Okay, 37 times, but not 38. *We don't bow down to problems; we don't pass them off; we don't make excuses.*"

We must scrunch or be scrunched. — Charles Dickens

THE UPSIDE OF THE DOWNSIDE

As if your culture's ferocious takedown of obstacles isn't enough of a win, you also get these free gifts with purchase!

- **YOU'LL BECOME MORE ENTREPRENEURIAL.** When my company's clients insist that they want their cultures to be more entrepreneurial, we assume they don't mean the unnerving tolerance for risk part; they mean the responsibility for results part. Entrepreneurs find problems to solve, and they own the solutions. Those same behaviors will come to you from a culture that takes its sense of self from the ability to do that.
- **YOU'LL BECOME LESS INTELLIGENT.** Companies understandably like to brag about being smart and covet being even smarter. Yet, anyone who has worked in such a company knows that a lot of smart people can get themselves into a lot of trouble and that the intelligence that develops ideas is not always the same that's applied to executing them.

Much more valuable to your company than intelligence is wisdom. Wisdom is intelligence plus experience. The advantage of today's unprecedented hardships is that they present your culture with a shared, acute pressure experience. Applying intelligence to triumphing amidst these circumstances will rapidly form an especially wise culture that could otherwise take you decades to achieve.

Create Internal Cultures that Love to Solve Problems.

STEPS

1 PROVIDE CONSTANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTROL AND IMPACT

In these crisis circumstances, a stability-obsessed culture can't easily confirm predictability, on or off the job. As a result, control and impact mean even more than they usually do. Your culture craves the ability to control *anything* and to impact *something* to validate that it's possible to influence its situation. Now is the time to give your culture some surety that it retains power to influence outcome. If it can move something, that means something.

Assign new tasks, projects, and responsibilities—big stuff and little stuff—and challenge your people to do the same for themselves, as individuals and work teams, in all positions, levels, and business units. Get it busy and keep it busy cleaning up chronic problems, forming new ideas to increase or protect revenue or margin, and instituting and streamlining processes and policies—or finally trashing the dumb ones.

Encourage the pursuit of obvious or odd things that your people can learn to make them more fulfilled while making the company more resilient. Look for what your culture can do to help those less fortunate outside of the company.

Key is that these projects should be able to be completed within thirty to ninety days, so the results fuel your culture faster. They shouldn't require multiple layers of approval or supervision to complete: What gets done is important, but the act of getting it done is more important. This is about fast-done-celebrate-next. Small projects with measurable victories will extend the runway of resiliency for your culture, which is critical given that more anxiety is surely going to be landing on it.



Create Internal Cultures that Love to Solve Problems.

STEPS

2 LOOK AROUND, LOOK UP, AND LOOK DOWN

An accountability-focused culture gains energy from the pursuit of solutions and isn't particular about where the clues to those solutions come from. That's good for you because there are organizations that have successfully responded to today's issues, but they may not be in your industry, of your size, or in your geography. They may not even be companies.

Direct your culture to look to your own industry community for ideas, but don't stop there: Jump the fence to members' own neighborhood communities. If you're a big company, don't dismiss a tiny company's moves—what have they radically managed to do without your resources and reputation? If you're a smaller company, don't let a bigger company's successful moves intimidate you—there is plenty to adapt that you may be able to do quickly and with more personality. Technology companies should look at analog; lo-fi should look at high-tech. Every company should consider examples from other countries.

Turn your culture loose to go sniffing for these examples, wherever the trail leads. And when your bloodhounds bring something back, don't have them drop it at the company doorstep like the slobbery gift of a gnawed pigeon. Have your culture unpack it looking for application potential.

Your company has an interesting idea? Great. Something from way over there is an interesting idea? Great. Have your culture smack 'em together and see what could be. Encouragement of outside perspectives is critical to your culture solving problems for you. Two centuries ago, Vilfredo Pareto called it *combinazione* (“There are no new ideas; there are only new combinations of existing ideas”). Since then, Anthony Storr has insisted that “different psychological constellations can ignite creative approaches,” and Arthur Koestler called it “bisociation” (or, more memorably, “the sudden collision of two association trains”).



You can learn as much from what others are doing right as from what they're doing wrong. Here's an example of each.

DONE RIGHT:

Sweet Farms in Northern California is a small nonprofit organization that rehabs farm animals who have been abandoned or abused, including cows, goats, sheep, and, for some reason, llamas. They earn a bit of income from agricultural-based teaching programs and a bit by renting out the farm area for, and I quote them here, "happy hours."

Learning to grow organic tomatoes or getting wasted with a bunch of llamas may have some appeal to different demographics, but this was hardly a business considered essential by California when it first shut down most of the state. Sweet Farms and all who depended on it were in mortal jeopardy. At least until they introduced Goat-2-Meeting. For a fee of \$100 for 10 minutes, Sweet Farm will now put one of their animals on camera and dial them into your company's video conference. As of this writing, they're ahead of revenue projections for the year, have kept all of their employees and are adding more, have partnered with other animal sanctuaries for more resources, and have protected their noble purpose.

Fun story, but this means to you what? This is a company that rethought and repositioned its offerings to leverage a market that didn't even exist before this crisis. That's what. Consider: What is available as a revenue source in your own company, for a market that didn't exist before these tough times?



DONE THE OPPOSITE OF RIGHT:

Any parent knows how exhausting it can be to get someone who's not exhausted to go to bed. Thank Hypnos (god of sleep) for the Disney Bedtime Hotline, a free phone service that allows parents to choose their child's favorite Disney character, then hold the phone close for their little one to hear said mouse, duck, or princess urging them to enter dreamland. This is even more important now as kids pick up new tensions at home, so especially need their rest to cope.

What is Disney selling with this service? Nothing; it's free to anyone, without limit. Let's try that again: What is Disney selling with this service? Every great thing that is Disney: The multigenerational relationship between the company and its consumers; the intimacy, trust, and delight that children find in their favorite characters; the global appeal; and the generosity of purpose that often seems to transcend their commercial interests.

Except.

Disney introduced this service on April 14 of this year. It was a promotion to sell the Disney Store's Bedtime Adventure Box, which is a monthly paid subscription for a bunch of merchandise. It was only available in the U.S., and it was shut down on April 30—promo over—right as the pandemic ride was speeding up.

Odd strategy, but this means to you what? Disney is a company that was able to confirm decades of earned good will with this service, at a time when their major revenue divisions had ceased producing. They were giving without taking, which is a good way for a company to make sure that customers keep them around long enough to repay the favor. And yet they stopped summoning a proprietary source of their power when they most needed to leverage it. Wake up, Mickey! That's what. Consider: How can you newly confirm the best aspects of the relationships with your own customers? What can you give them as an act of grace and generosity?



Set Context to Cause Commitment.

You may well be doing a lot of good things for your culture during this crisis, but there's a big difference between doing them and getting cultural credibility for doing them. The difference is context, given to your culture as an unwavering declaration of intention that serves as the foundation for company actions and reactions: This is what we're doing, and you know why we're doing it.

Do those same things without setting context, and here's what's going to happen: Your culture may agree that your pandemic reactions directed its way have been generous and humane. Because a culture deals in the real, it assumes that the company wants something in return. Your culture will drag those management decisions to its own cave, weigh them and check the exchange rates, then return with an explanation of what they've bought you in improved commitment. Want more commitment? Then give us more.

You will have inadvertently created a transactional culture rather than a protective one. Doing those very same good things but prefacing

it with context means that the material value of your actions is eclipsed by the far more important reliability the actions imply. When your culture perceives a firm underpinning for management decisions, it gains linkage between what the company says and what it does. Management actions become proof points of the dependability of its environment—it is a more predictable, and so a safer, place. Your culture will protect a safer place by making the company successful.

To achieve this, your declaration of intention must be emphatic and dramatic. What's needed here is not a typical lame, tame mission statement—it's a fiery manifesto that unequivocally states what you stand for. Since you can't credibly stand for something without also standing against something, state that too. And go below the neck, with an emotional assertion, not just a rational one. When you're talking to a culture, the opposite of emotional is not rational; the opposite of emotional is detached.



Your culture has to believe that you believe it. This will only happen if your intention is born from the personal beliefs of those who declare it: your strongest feelings about what is right with the world that must be protected and wrong with the world that must be corrected. Translate this to a provocative and unapologetic statement about the need to have a certain impact on people inside and outside of the company, beyond the company's economic value proposition. If it stems from your intense personal conviction, you will never stop talking about its importance; your decisions as the senior-most team will be consistent, rapid, and intuitive; and you'll react immediately if the perimeter is being breached.

So, go ahead and put some teeth into it, by explaining:

- This is our wild dream of the impact we can have on people inside and outside of our company. We are stunned dizzy by the implications.
- Dreams don't come true by themselves, so here's who we're going to have to be to make this happen.
- We're not ever going to back down from what we believe in. Attention, infidels: Don't lean on us, man; you can't afford the ticket.
- Saddle up and join us. There are few things we can't do together, because this is who we are.

Your culture needs to believe that the more successful the company is during these tough times, the better it is for the world. If this is the case, the culture's safeguarding of the company's character and purpose says something mighty about the culture itself. The more success, the more its sense of self is confirmed.

Set Context to Cause Commitment.

STEPS

1 PROVIDE RULES FOR LIVING

Protection of your manifesto is more important than promotion of it; this isn't something you want to declare then default on. You aren't just asking for trust here, which a culture hesitates to give anyway as that could make it vulnerable. You are asking for the deepest level of trust possible: You are asking for faith. Faith is "I believe but I don't know," and so puts your culture in a perceived position of greatest risk. To give unfounded trust is therefore your culture's greatest gift.

No matter how compelling your intention may be, it won't be embraced unless your culture can use it as a guide to safely make decisions. Translate the statements in your declaration to a few (no more than five) Rules for Living. "Make the decisions you need to make," you are saying. "Just be sure to always follow these Rules for

Living when you do." For each major statement, provide a couple of bullet points that explain always do this and never do this. This allows the members of your culture who find themselves in situations requiring judgment calls to act without wondering what the safe move is. Their decisions don't have to link to every Rule for Living, but they can't violate any of them.

Fair is fair: Your promise has to be that if people follow the Rules for Living, you'll support them, even if they make the wrong decision, since you'll know they were trying to make it the right way. Should they choose to violate these few essential guidelines, though, you're going to hold them unconditionally responsible.

Set Context to Cause Commitment.

STEPS

2 SUPPORT YOUR ANNOUNCEMENT WITH ACTION

The good news? You will have gotten your culture's attention. The bad news? You will have gotten your culture's attention. As soon as you declare your intention, your culture will look to see if you follow it with action. Don't make it wait too long—have something ready to deliver as a proof point when you announce it or within weeks after. Your initial action has to be significant and provocative to send an undeniable message.

- Cut chronic red tape that your culture perceives would prohibit its support.
- Change or create policies and procedures to support your declaration of intention.
- Make a major decision consistent with your declaration of intention.
- Commit resources to advancing your declaration of intention.
- Refuse to compromise your declaration of intention under stress or temptation.
- Respond with uncontained enthusiasm when the principles are protected.
- Respond with poorly contained unhappiness when the principles are violated.
- Protect members of the culture who make a wrong decision but do it per the Rules for Living.



YOUR EMPLOYEE CULTURE

You can't sell it
outside if you can't
sell it inside.



Keep Community Close.

Long before lockdown, humans developed as herd animals: The pack protected the pack when we were neither the fiercest nor fastest animal on the planet. Today's model human is still hardwired at the factory to be affiliative for safety's sake.

The unprecedented irony of this pandemic is that to be safe we have to distance ourselves from others. But that doesn't mean feral instincts are easily dismissed; community will find a way to

form, especially in times of common danger. You can see this in the world as people have begun to create new communities spanning across boundaries that they used to maintain. Now states are helping states, now neighbors are helping neighbors, now young are helping old, and now strangers are helping strangers. These are humans waking up. Will some go back to sleep when this crisis has finally been averted? Sure. But some never will. They'll like being woke.

Your culture is an information-gathering organism designed to assure its own protection—it is always awake, always gathering information and crunching it to extract any reliable data it can use to update its survival and emotional prosperity. In this rapidly shifting world, it needs to give itself constant briefs, and so the concept of community is an even greater priority. Its own community is the delivery vehicle for culture-to-culture breaking news, while other communities can be valuable sources of confirmation.

Of special importance to your culture is that a community is a vessel that holds its own history, including celebrations and mourning; resilience and vulnerability; heroes and villains; milestones and setbacks; what was built and what was sacrificed to build it. Your culture is going to consult its own and other communities for historic lessons that it can apply to current concerns.

As with most of its knowledge, this will remain largely known only by your culture. You're not part of that culture; you are management, standing outside, trying to sell it something. When you and your employee culture worked

in the same physical spaces, though, you were at least somewhat part of the same community, experiencing some of the same happenings, and watching as some of your culture's more overt impressions were being formed.

In times of danger, your culture will lean toward depending more on itself for information than on your company. Given its physical separation, its conduits for community will become more important and more exclusive—your culture is going to light up the network. There will be new communities formed, from small cell clusters to temporary alliances with other cultures to share findings.

There is risk to your company if your employee culture carves these new channels for community without you. This is a step toward separation when you need to keep your people close and want to regulate some of the information being considered.

Keep Community Close.

STEPS

1 SANCTION, BUT DON'T SUPERVISE

Actively support your culture coming together amongst itself to share concerns, determination, and coping mechanisms about issues that are now affecting it—and allow the culture to use some company time and tools to do this. Set up internal websites; provide regular paid time for video conference calls; send, or provide reimbursement for, snacks.

As the company, you may want to be involved for some of these events, but restrain yourself from auditing, contributing, or responding. For the most part just offer to host your culture's private conversations and commiserations via your resources. Even if you weren't invited to the party, you still get credit if you let it be at your house.

2 IMPLEMENT THE COLLEGE OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

One way a culture's detachment is manifested is in hesitation to bring its full self to work. In this time of physical separation, it's important to reinforce that the company is a safe place to seat personal passions and personalities. You want to offer proof that an intimate community exists amongst all levels, joined by its humanity. Here's one way to do it:

Every member of your culture knows how to do something beyond the technical skills they bring to the job. Use this to create your company's College of Cultural Knowledge: an online container for individual talents and whatever they geek out about. This should be an internal website featuring short submitted videos or copy featuring members of your culture: how to make

their mother's favorite dessert recipe, how to play the power chords to their favorite song, the first pages of their unfinished novel, their favorite playlists and lines from movies and TV shows, how to change the carburetor on an old Toyota truck, how to make origami, how to build a Star Wars action figure collection, a list of their favorite concerts—whatever they know or want others to know.

Considering current circumstances, add categories for how to keep kids and families mentally and physically fit at home. Make sure your manager culture, including executives, contributes too. When there are enough entries, it's time for a talent contest—and time to extend the offer to contribute to your customer culture.

Extend the Impact of Belonging.

Will people return to working at their companies when it's safe to do so? In many cases, yes. It's hard to be a sous-chef, carpet installer, or air-traffic controller from your spare bedroom. Besides, even if some jobs can be done remotely, it doesn't mean that they're best done that way. Exciting and evolving as it is, technology is not a substitute for in-person connection; nor a healthy countermeasure to isolation; nor a tool for sustained collaboration, inspiration, and the supervision of human beings.

Some companies will make the permanent transition to WFH in whole or in part, but many will want their people back, including those who use extravagant on-site perks to recruit and retain top talent. And many people will want to come back, for the camaraderie, for the structure, and because the grass looked a lot greener until they could see from their home office that it needed mowing.

Bringing your culture back physically is a longer-term issue. The important issue right now is

to bring it back emotionally, by transitioning the sense of belonging that was diluted when your workforce was dispersed. This isn't about ensuring everyone has laptops and Wi-Fi. You don't want your culture to take work home; you want it to bring your company home.

Companies are used to having buildings, badges, and busyness carry a lot of the weight of belonging for them—"you're in *our* house, the *big* house, part of *this* family." Today, your people are in their real houses, which may be smaller, but it means they're with their real families—the long shadow of the enterprise won't extend that far unless you lengthen it. In the absence of corporate trappings, what has to be translated is what belonging gives a culture: a positive sense of self gained by being a special part of a great team, doing work that matters to the world, not just to the company; common purpose; collaboration; and being on the inside of the mighty enterprise when others are not.

Extend the Impact of Belonging.

STEPS

1 MAKE THE HOME OFFICE THEIR FAVORITE PLACE IN THE HOUSE

You now have people working from home who had never planned on everyone else seeing them doing it. On video conferences, some of the views into home office spaces are impressive—nice furniture and art, great view out the window—while some are charmingly funky or evidence of a wonderfully messy and friendly family home. But some...ye gods! What *is* that on the wall behind you, Bob? A 2013 calendar? Blood splatter? Your cat?

Whether your culture is meeting with itself or with your customers on video, the home office environment is an area for you to extend a sense of belonging to company impact and standards. If you have created that dramatic declaration of intention, turn it into a poster for them. If you can afford it, give them some hip desk accessories, including noise-reduction headphones, specially curated by your company.

If someone is seriously in need of a key piece of professional furniture, help make that happen: Spending the day presenting your company's solutions to clients from a wobbly dining room chair doesn't promote confidence or lower-back endurance. Reinforcement of jobs well done should now come with commemorative plaques or framed certificates, and every employee should get a framed statement that is an expression of gratitude for representing the company under pressure. If someone is doing a superstar job, celebrate that accordingly: There are online photo galleries offering incredible black-and-white shots of rock and sports stars and leadership legends—let them pick one to make the point that they're a star too. Or have their favorite inspirational quote made into a wall hanging.

Make the mix between personal and professional environments one they're proud to show to others, and one that shows your gratitude for their dedication and contribution.



Extend the Impact of Belonging.

STEPS

2 HELP THEM DEFEND THE TIME SPENT AT WORK

Some of the people whom your people never anticipated witnessing them work are their children. Having to decode how they spend their time all day to kids who don't bluff easily can range from inspiring ("wow, that's awesome, Mom!") to humiliating ("but what are you doing right now, Dad?"). Give your culture support here by preparing—for several age ranges—a compelling explanation of what Mom or Dad does, why it's so important, what special skills are required, and how valued they are by your company. And give them "disturb/do not disturb" signage that speaks to how important family is (disturb) and to when Mom or Dad is helping other people and needs privacy (don't disturb).

Your company has moved right into their house uninvited; a show of appreciation to the family is appropriate. Sponsor a movie night at home with a gift of a new-release rental and a mailed box of snacks. Help your culture avoid the

scope creep of work intruding on family time by setting certain hours and days where sending or responding to email is forbidden and calls are never scheduled. Now that every day is Bring Your Kids to the Office Day, help them show impressionable young ones who are seeing "work" up close that your company is a caring one and that work can be interesting and fun too. Integrate fitness time, fascinating learning that has nothing to do with the job and can be shared at dinnertime, and entertaining goals and prizes that involve the whole family. Send the members of your culture recipes—from one another or from star chefs—and the ingredients that the whole family can help make. Members of your culture can taste their versions during the next video meeting.





YOUR MANAGER CULTURE

**You need emotional
commitment now,
more than ever**



Gain the Most When You Most Need It.

When your company says you want your managers to be leaders, what that really means is that you want their emotional commitment. A manager culture's emotional commitment translates into it taking on company success as a personal crusade. It is the ultimate trigger for your managers' discretionary efforts, worth more than their financial, intellectual, and physical commitment combined. Your manager culture's emotional commitment is what solves problems that are unsolvable, creates energy when all of the energy has been expended, and ignites

emotional commitment in others, including your employee culture. Any legendary organizational success is, at the root, the result of emotionally committed managers.

The key source of emotional commitment in any human being is the ability to live their deepest personal values in a relationship or environment. This is difficult to do for managers in the relationship with their company and the environment at work, when their own values must be regularly subordinated to what the company

wants done and how it wants it done. The job of a manager is to serve their company first.

As a result, most managers operate in an often-unrealized state of emotional detachment, with much of their energy regularly spent on balancing simultaneous concerns for their sanity and success. This is a threat to your company's performance in the best of times; in these most dangerous of times, the threat is exponentially greater. You need emotional commitment now, more than ever.

Gain the Most When You Most Need It.

STEPS

1 FEED YOUR HEADS.

You'll be depending on the heads of your organizations—those who run teams, big or small—to be weight bearing for you during these tough times. Key to their dependability is their stoicism, which is a requirement already embedded in every manager's job description: If it sucks, suck it up.

Your managers already had to hold the company line and maintain the focus and productivity of their organizational cultures. Now they may have to do more with less, communicate harsh truths, and operate firmly in uncertain circumstances. They'll also be dealing with new personal concerns of their own, accommodating new concerns of their people, and attempting to get work done in new ways to satisfy new company concerns. If you crank up expectations of stoicism now, some of those heads are going to explode.

The pressure on your managers needs to be released without their performance being decreased. With all your company may be coping with, it's going to be hard to provide your managers with the emotional succor they need to increase their capacity to cope, but you can direct them to where to find it: fulfillment of their personal values at work. Just as living these at work is the source of their emotional commitment, your managers' individual values are their very own source of safety, hope, and renewal.

This isn't a matter of announcing that your managers are henceforth required to live their personal values at work. Managers, being human, often won't be able to actually name their values, even if they're driven by them or driven crazy by not meeting them. Most should know what they've learned is important about living a fulfilled life, though, which is a good start. Strongly encourage your managers to consider

this: What matters most to them, and why? As managers, they may have been conditioned to believe that personal values are inappropriate or irrelevant to the workplace. Strongly discourage your managers from thinking like this. Instead have them consider what they've learned about the best way to live and apply it at work. This starts with involving their employee culture to help them do it.



A manager won't be able to live their values at work unless their employee culture finds its own benefit in them. Instruct your managers to first understand what their top few values provide and then to translate them into a promise of better working conditions for their culture. As an example, a manager might chose "Family," as a priority value because it gives them open, honest communication; unconditional support; tough love when they need it; and allows them to be surrounded by people who put one other's welfare ahead of their own. When that description is applied to improved working conditions for their employee culture—in contrast with any current lesser quality—the culture will be moved to help make the transition from bad to better happen. In doing so, it will help their manager realize the value.

Not to worry that the pursuit of their own priorities means your managers won't prioritize the company. There is no better way for company success to become a cause to your managers than by not insisting on it being the only cause. Your managers' ability to pursue deep fulfillment as a job benefit must also be a cause. When your managers can turn their jobs into a mechanism for fulfilling their deepest personal values, they'll work harder to protect that mechanism, by protecting the company and making it even more successful.

If there is tension between company priorities and your managers' value-driven perspectives, commit to respecting the importance of both and trying to work that out. It will happen far less than you may fear. This isn't licensing chaos; it is ensuring control.

Gain the Most When You Most Need It.

STEPS

2 DEPEND ON LEADERSHIP, NOT LEADERS.

A culture is never more united than when aroused, either by inspiration or attack. This crisis is perceived by your culture as an attack on the surety of its world, and so it is unusually eager for inspiration that leadership provides—the consistency of purpose of leadership and the optimism and validation that leaders instill in their followers.

Unfortunately, during these tough times we are seeing the folly of “leader” credibility having often been conferred by position, rather than proficiency. Real leaders do leadership things for leadership reasons. They are defined by their emotional commitment to a cause and their ability to inspire it at will in others. This is because they know their own values and want to live in a world where those values are fully realized. Since they can’t make that happen by

themselves, they translate their values into urgent benefit for others, by contrasting the bad place where people are now without those values with the better place they could be in by making those values happen.

True leadership is a purpose that requires a certain will, driven with a process that requires certain skills. In your company, some of those whom you turn to for leadership impact may have neither the will nor the skills. They won’t be able to unite and focus your culture. They won’t create the faith needed to sustain full commitment amidst uncertainty.

As disappointing as that may be, it doesn’t have to be the whole story if you allow what is possible. Leadership in a company is determined by positive influence on others. What can happen



in your company, and be a gorgeous thing to behold, is people becoming leaders by causing this influence, emerging not just from various manager levels but often not from your managers at all. Any employee who puts forth a compelling vision of a better place for their team, and displays confidence that people can handle the rough road to get there if they do it together, is a leader for you. They just may not have realized that they could or should show it before the acute need arose.

The corporate heroes of COVID-19 will not be decided by position alone, but by their courage and conviction that summons others—*“to me!”*—and presents them with a right and righteous cause: We will succeed, we will support one another. Be grateful for this, be impressed, but don’t be threatened by the dismissal of leadership as always determined by hierarchy. This is humanity in action within your company, and that’s always a great thing. Your company can accommodate multiple leaders, at multiple levels, all headed in the same good direction. No harm can come from this.

Given that many of these leaders will be new to the role, their fledgling efforts may need some fine-tuning. Any existing true leader should move quickly into a gentle mentor role with them; your company should loudly reinforce efforts even before getting results; and every manager in every position should take note and model their own leadership accordingly.

The corporate heroes of COVID-19 will not be decided by position alone, but by their courage and conviction that summons others.





YOUR CUSTOMER CULTURE

**Business-to-
business is still
human-to-human.**



SOLUTION

Give the Most When They Most Need It.

What customers most want to buy, if they could buy anything, is not what most companies sell. It wouldn't be your company's value, as defined by quality, innovation, and price. It would be satisfaction of your customers' own values and core human needs of safety, energy, and emotional fulfillment. If there was a store that directly sold those things, the line to get in would be miles long. When customers do get them, it's most often because they do the translation for themselves, be it real or imaginary: "If I buy this, I'll be hipper, more attractive, more intelligent, more popular."

The need for this emotional affirmation has intensified with the onset of tough times. Your customers have less patience now with doing the translation. If they have to use their own energy to do it they'll commoditize who they buy from, and look for the cheapest deal. On the other hand, they'll pay a lot more attention, with a lot more gratitude, to companies who make it easier for them to receive it as a straight shot.

This is as true for a B2B relationship: You're not selling to a company; you're selling to human beings representing that company. Business-to-business is still human-to-human, and customers look for emotional affirmation just as much from their enterprise purchase order. They look for emotional affiliation just as much from their relationships with your sales and support teams.

Let's take music concerts as an easily recognizable example of giving customers what they want most. As of this writing, the live entertainment industry is in an understandable panic as its business model has suddenly become untenable. This has forced both short- and long-term revenue losses, since tour schedules must be booked far in advance. The reverberations are horrible, for promoters to performers and all of the other skills and services that make this business happen.

The industry's initial response has been to attempt to retain the in-person concert experience. Innovations actually under consideration as of this writing include spraying concert goers with a protective coating on their way into the venue; filling multi-thousand- capacity auditoriums with a couple of hundred people to make sure those who long for a mosh pit can at least throw themselves on the floor; and having fans drive to the concert as usual, but instead of parking and then entering the arena, staying in their cars to watch the show through their windshields.

Why do people love to go to concerts? For the live music? They can get that on a live album. For the merchandise? They can buy that online. For the excitement of being in the same room as their

favorite artists? Unless you're in the first twenty rows, you might as well be in another state. It's more exciting to watch it on a screen at home, where you can have a front-row seat and wear your band T-shirt without any pants.

Concertgoers want the community—to be surrounded by hundreds or thousands of like-hearted people, all hearing music that is the language of their culture confirming shared experiences of love, longing, and awakening. They want the identity that comes from liking one band or genre of music, and not liking another. They want to hear someone send a message that's important to them, from a big stage to a big audience.

This is what customers want to buy most from the concert experience. With all respect to the fine hearts and minds in this industry, and the trauma they are hurriedly working to counter: The search for an inferior replication of a stalled business model will not help you. The search instead is for what really has the greatest importance to your customers and how to deliver that. Focus your flame on what is most flammable.

Whether or not your own business model is stalled, ask yourself what your customer culture wants most from its relationship with you that it isn't currently getting in these tough times. Something that has deep and urgent importance to them, that they may not even consider possible to obtain. Focus your thinking on how to deliver this, especially amidst heightened customer anxiety and distraction. After all, you're not selling something if customers are eager to buy it. You are providing it to a grateful customer culture.

Give the Most When They Most Need It.

STEPS

1 GO TO MARKET ON MORE THAN VALUE

Traditional business thinking has always been that the stronger a company's value proposition is, the more successful they'll be. The moss has been flayed off that old thinking as every product from anywhere has become available to customers and many conduits have opened for communication amongst customers to provide validation of enterprise claims. Going to market on value alone risks entering your company into a margin-shredding commodity battle.

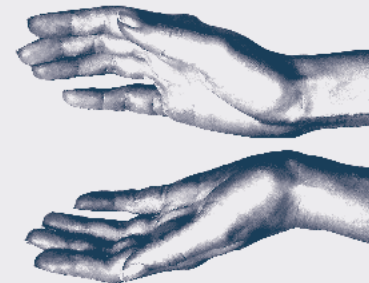
Those companies that will be most successful are the ones who go to market not just on value but also on relevance. Not relevance as another spin on value—true relevance. Most companies only attempt to be relevant to their customers when they're trying to sell them something. There's a lot going on in your customer's world and that means you're choosing to be mostly irrelevant to them. This is a dangerous business strategy at any time, but of even greater risk in tough times, when your

customers will often have shifted from buying what they want to only buying what they need.

It's easy to recognize what's most relevant today. If you're selling B2B, you have customers who are obsessed with the sudden shock to their revenue, supply chain issues, internal turmoil, and capacity to serve: How do we get out of this? If you're selling B2C, you have customers who are obsessed with threats posed by health, isolation, unemployment, and social justice: How do we survive this? This is what occupies their attention for the 99 percent of the time when they're not interacting with you.

Value is selling; relevance is giving. Giving is not an anti-revenue strategy. Helping your customers in tough times without using it to sell them something is the best way to earn their affection, which often translates into them buying something—from you rather than another

Value is selling;
relevance is giving.



company. Your customers' awareness of your relevant support—selfless, tolerant, intimate, and situational—is most acute when they need it, and they need it now. The current pressure that your customers are experiencing has acted like a low-relevancy high colonic. Their patience for an aloof relationship has been flushed away by the need for competent and compassionate support.

In the face of today's often extreme business conditions—*this is important, so lose that image from the last paragraph and focus here*—think of what you can address for your customers that's in line with what they're obsessing about for most of the time. Do it with empathy, sure, but turn that into action by marshalling the good minds in your company to think on behalf of your customers, like you think to solve problems and innovate solutions in your own company. Apply your resources—your ability to gather and interpret data, your experience in learning what works and what doesn't, and your connections to other experts and companies that may be of help to them.

Make this analysis available, and whenever possible go to see your customers where their business lives, to help them execute your recommendations. If you're a smaller company without the resources to fund an internal think tank, apply your intimate understanding of your customer's business and their market, curate and research ideas that can help them, and connect them to experts on their behalf.

Your customers' awareness of your relevant support is most acute when they need it, and they need it now.

Give the Most When They Most Need It.

STEPS

2

APPROACH YOUR PROCESS LIKE A PRODUCT

Like every company, your company sells two things: a product and a process—the experience that customers go through to buy and use your product. Any product is a souvenir of the process of buying it. To a customer culture, it is the quality of the process that does much, and in pressure circumstances sometimes most, to determine their decision to purchase, repurchase, and recommend to others. If you were to get an A on your product but an F on your process, you'd be a C player and unlikely to withstand the heat of today's harsh marketplace.

Nobody would give your company an F on your customer experience, but unless the quality of the process side of your business is viewed as a pursuit, with the same standards, innovation, attention to detail, and commitment of resources as the product side, nobody is going to be giving you an A either.

In these tough times, your customer culture needs a special relationship with your company, empathetic and supportive, that inspires their own confidence and diverts them from their anxiety. They can't get this from your product. It comes from your process, which needs to be:

- Spectacular. Not just polite, friendly, and ordinary, but blow them right out of their socks.
- Signature. Aspects of your customer experience that they can only get by being your customer. Even if a competitor knocks you off, everyone knows where it came from.
- Sustainable. No matter how spectacular and signature, your customer experience has to be manageable and affordable inside your company to be consistently delivered outside.

Any product is a souvenir of the experience of buying it.

Here are three things you can do right now:

1 Match the DNA. Whatever claims you make about your product—such as innovative, customer-centric, reliable, fun—have to be overtly represented in your process as well. Your customer culture may not understand everything that goes into building the product, but they will be able to recognize the attributes of the process. If there is a gap between product claims and process reality, you will cause doubts about your product claims too.

Consider the proprietary claims you make about your products, then hold your process to those same standards.

2 Focus on the field of awareness. Your customer culture is neither as knowledgeable about nor infatuated with your business as you are. What seems compelling and glorious to you may fail to even attract their attention. What your customers understand and care about is what they understand and care about. Focus on exceeding their expectations here, and they'll grant you the credibility that all that they don't understand is driven by the same ethic.

Look for what is common in the process of being your customer and what they would experience in buying from others, and make sure that you excel in proprietary ways.

3 Exaggerate the experience. The customer-experience innovations that have become legendary often started out as lunatic suggestions by someone inside of a company.

If you approach the radical improvement of your customer experience wondering how you'll ever be able to do it or afford it, innovation won't happen as you need it to. Instead, think about how to create a spectacular, signature experience without concern about how to fund it or operationalize it. You'll find that many of those ideas are actually doable without much additional time, talent, or dollars.

**SPECTACULAR. SIGNATURE.
SUSTAINABLE.**

SUMMARY: SOLUTIONS

SOLVE THE REAL PROBLEM	RESPECT WHO WILL CONQUER THE TEST	CREATE INTERNAL CULTURES THAT LOVE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.	SET CONTEXT TO CAUSE COMMITMENT	KEEP COMMUNITY CLOSE	EXTEND THE IMPACT OF BELONGING	FEED YOUR HEADS	DEPEND ON LEADERSHIP, NOT LEADERS	GO TO MARKET ON MORE THAN VALUE	APPROACH YOUR PROCESS LIKE A PRODUCT
Focus on how to succeed, not how to survive. The difference in thinking is critical and will allow you to consider new concepts, inspire confidence, and link actions to where you want to end up, not to where you're starting from.	Understand the logic of the three cultures who will decide your success—managers, employees, and customers. Consider why they may hesitate to commit fully to your strategies and goals. Make sure you've sold it inside to your managers and employees before you try to sell it outside to your customers.	Avoid an emotionally exhausted culture by building one that takes pride in being at its best in response to conditions being at their worst. Provide constant short-term opportunities for control and measurable impact. Direct your cultures to find examples of other companies creating success—regardless of industry, country, or size—and return to you with ideas about how those can translate to your own company.	Declare the purpose and standards of your company in an emphatic, dramatic manifesto—what your executive team believes is right with the world that must be protected and wrong with the world that must be corrected. Provide Rules for Living that allow your culture to safely make decisions based on that manifesto. Support your announcement with action, so there is clear linkage between what the company says and what it does.	Use company resources to host your employee culture coming together to discuss its beliefs and concerns. Implement a College of Cultural Knowledge as a platform for members of your culture to share the special passions and skills.	Help members of your employee culture make their home office space their favorite place in the house, including framed certificates of appreciation. Provide the methods to confirm to their children and partners the importance of what they do and how they are valued by your company.	Strongly encourage your managers to understand their own values and to bring those to work. This is a vital source of energy to offset the increased pressure they face to hold the line for you during these tough times.	Rather than depending on leadership by position, celebrate, nurture, and reinforce it wherever it happens in your company, regardless of manager level or whether someone is a manager at all.	Provide what your customers really want to buy most if they could buy anything from you. Be relevant to your customer culture even when you're not trying to sell them something. Address what your customers are concerned about during all the time that they are not buying from you.	Overtly display in your customer experience the same positive, proprietary claims you make about your product. Blow your customers away in the aspects that they care about, so they grant you credibility about all the areas they don't. Design a spectacular, signature customer experience without worrying about how you can possibly afford to do it, then see how much of it is actually affordable and doable.



YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS

Don't look forward.
Look backward.

The only accurate prediction that anyone can make at this crisis point is that anyone making a prediction stands a good chance of one day being seen as a complete moron.

Still, there are two things we do know for certain. The first is that these tough times won't last forever. The second is that the story of how you stood up to them will. You're going to be living with that story for a long time. It's time to start writing it so that it ends the way you want it to.

What can't be lost.
What must be found.

How does a human being justify the gift of life? You take care of those who depend on you; you give back for your success; you practice kindness and respect; you strive to make the world both a better place and not a worse one. Why should it be any different in justifying the life of an enterprise?

To be trusted to care about what matters most: Let this be the defining grace of your company. What matters most now is your humanity—your empathy, compassion, and unbiased unity—and how that drives decisions affecting those both inside and outside of your company. Amidst the unheard-of circumstances that grip us all, extend this to those whom you don't do business with as well. It is time to swap customer centricity for human centricity.

Successfully dealing with a seismic shift to your business often requires systemic changes but always requires unyielding adherence to your deepest purpose and principles. Some of this has to be calculated to be operationalized, but the catalyst should be to just do the right thing, for all of the right reasons. During this fierce storm, this is what you have, and this is what will save you. Your company can lose many things during these tough times, including its mind for a while, and still recover through the will of your own people and others. But you cannot lose your soul.

The only question,
and the only answer.

This crisis is an amplifier. Good people will show more good in these tough times: more empathy, more generosity, more accountability. Bad people will show more bad in these tough times: more narcissism, more irresponsibility, more greed.

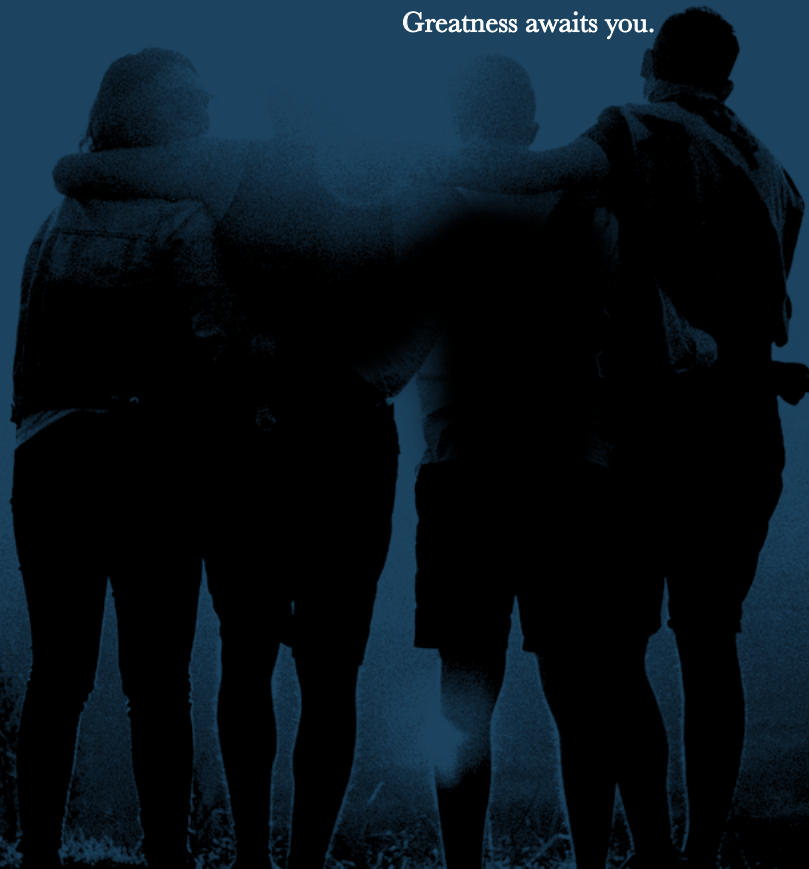
Good companies will show more good in these tough times: more protection of their employees to the utmost of their abilities; more service to their customers in novel ways; more use of their facilities for common and community benefit. Bad companies will show more bad in these tough times: more uncaring for the literal and emotional safety of their employee culture; more disregard for being relevant to their customers unless they are trying to sell them something; more refusal to use their resources to give and to give back.

Be human first. A manager second.

The only question that matters is whether there are more good people than bad people. The answer was decided long before this current crisis descended upon us. I believe, with all of my heart, that there are a lot more good people and that they populate organizations that are extraordinarily capable of doing good things in these tough times. Otherwise nothing will ever make sense in our world, even when this trouble passes.

What you do now will be remembered. Who you are now will be remembered longer. This means more than ever—to your company, to your culture, to your community, to your children, and to your conscience. You'll be answering to all of these until the end of your days. What did you do when everything, inside of you and around you, was tested?

Greatness awaits you.



SLAP's exclusive focus is on achieving maximum commitment from your manager, employee, and customer cultures. We have achieved legendary metrics impact for many of the world's most profitable companies. The kinds of companies that don't include Patience on their list of corporate values.

I am empirically confident that these recommendations will help you, and I look forward to hearing about the results as you apply them. If you would like information on how we can help you further, we would be honored to have that discussion.

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SLAP

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