

Managing your career during a downturn

BE VISIBLE

Demonstrate, visibly, the value of the work you are doing. This is more than just CCing people on mails, this is about spending time with the Chairman, the CEO, the board and other key people to ensure they are seeing your contribution and that of your team. How would people describe you in one sentence? If you're not sure, spend time finding out and look for ways to influence your image positively.

BE A 'DOWNTURN BUSTER'

Make sure your work is aligned with the new imperatives of the business. These new imperatives may not have explicitly been communicated, but in times of downturn greater emphasis is put on shorter term wins, cost savings and risk minimising. Make sure a healthy part of your work is directed in this area. Come up with five downturn busting projects for your company and take responsibility for implementing them.

BE A LEADER

Take a leadership role in 'seeing the company through' the difficult times. In times of downturn people often become negative, protective and inwardly facing. Be the opposite. Be positive, generous and open. Lead by example. The companies that come out of a downturn most successfully are often the ones who stay in touch with their long term objectives. Be the person to keep the strategic vision alive for your company.

BE WELL NETWORKED

Network more proactively into your industry. Go to the conferences you previously didn't have time to go to, spend time looking up old colleagues who have moved on. Keep your LinkedIn profile up to date. Don't bother asking people how long they think the downturn will last, their guess is as good as yours. Instead spend time understanding what strategies your comparable companies are taking. Be your company's 'ear to the ground'.

BE PREPARED

If you are concerned your job is at risk consider contacting headhunters and getting your CV up to date. Be aware of your employment contract (especially notice period). Check your current finances and savings (ideally you should have 3 – 6 month salary in savings).

But do remember, there will always be demand for good people. Even during the last major downturn of the early nineties and the dot.com bust a decade later, Harvey Nash / Alumni were very actively working for clients. Companies need leaders; and good ones are rare regardless of the economic environment.

Written by Rob Grimsey, Clive Sexton and Carol Rosati of Harvey Nash's Online Appointments Magazine. For more executive career management advice, including our podcast series please go to www.harveynash.com/oam.