

Recession Thoughts: 44 Strategies

I'm routinely asked to provide the "secret," or the "clever strategies" for surviving and thriving in a great recession, as if I could reach into some magic bag and come up with some phenomenally sophisticated and intellectually-based set of ideas. And you know I try to sound intelligent, brilliant, sophisticated. But the reality is, there's something going through my head and it's pretty basic. And so I want to share my 44 strategies, or whatever you want to call it, for dealing with this great recession.

You come to work earlier.

You leave work later.

You work harder.

You may well work for less; and so you adapt, if you must, to the untoward circumstances with a smile—even if it kills you inside.

You volunteer to do more.

You dig deep, and always bring a good attitude to work.

You fake it if your attitude flags.

You literally practice your “game face” in the mirror in the morning. And if that flags, you go to the bathroom and practice it in the middle of the morning.

You give new meaning to the idea and intensive practice of “visible management.”

You take better than usual care of yourself, and encourage other people to do the same—physical well-being determines mental well-being in response to stress to a significant degree.

You shrug off the shit that flows downhill in your direction—buy a shovel, or a “pre-worn” raincoat on eBay.

You try to forget about the “good old days”—nostalgia is self-destructive.

You buck yourself up with the thought that “this too shall pass” —but then you remind yourself that it might not pass anytime soon and so you rededicate yourself to making the absolute best of what you've got now.

You work the phones, and then work the phones, and then work the phones some more; you stay in touch with absolutely everybody.

You frequently invent breaks from routine, including “strange” breaks—“changeups” of one sort or another prevent wallowing and bring a fresh perspective.

You get rid of all forms, and remove all forms of personal excess in your life.

You simplify.

You sweat the details as never before.

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You raise to the sky and maintain at all costs the Standards of Excellence by which you unflinchingly evaluate your own performance.

You are maniacal when it comes to responding to even the slightest of screwups.

You find ways to be around young people, and to keep young people around—they are far less likely to be members of the “sky is falling” school.

You learn new tricks of your trade.

You remind yourself that this is not just something to be “gotten through;” it is the Final Exam of character.

You network like a demon.

You network inside the company and get to know more of the people who do the real work a couple of levels down.

You network like crazy outside the company, getting to know more of the people who do the real work in the customer and the vendor operations.

You thank others by the truckload if good things happen and you take the heat yourself when stuff goes wrong.

You behave kindly, but you don’t sugar coat, and you don’t hide the truth—human beings are startlingly resilient and besides, rumors are the real killers.

You treat small successes as if they were Super Bowl victories—and celebrate and commend accordingly.

You shrug off the losses (ignoring what’s going on in your stomach) and get back on the horse. And immediately try and then try again.

You avoid negative people to the extent that you can—pollution kills.

You eventually read the gloom sprayers the Riot Act.

You give new meaning to the word “thoughtful.”

You don’t put limits on the flowers budget—“bright and colorful” works marvels.

You re-double, then you re-triple your efforts to "walk in your customer’s shoes" (especially if those shoes smell as they often do these days).

You mind your manners, but you accept others' lack of manners in the face of their strain.

You are kind to all mankind.

You keep your shoes shined.

You leave the blame game at the office door.

You call out the congenital politicians in absolutely no uncertain terms.

You become a paragon of personal accountability.

And then you pray.