



September 2009 Newsletter

Helping the Team Get Its Groove Back

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Economists tell us that the recession is behind us, and media reports are increasingly optimistic about the recovery. But for project teams that have spent the last 12 – 18 months enduring quarterly layoffs, increased workloads, project delays, and dwindling resources, this good news may barely register. The stress of watching longstanding colleagues depart and constant worry about when their turn would come to get the axe has left plenty of people shell-shocked. It's fairly common to hear of organizations that let go up to 75 percent of their workforce. While those who remain could consider themselves lucky, they also have four times the work to do – leaving them exhausted, overwhelmed, and struggling to keep going.

So how can you, as the leader of your organization, restore productivity and help your project teams get their groove back?

1. **Communicate.** Gather the entire team and give them an honest appraisal of what they can expect to happen with the project now that things are picking up again. Invite them to air whatever concerns or questions they have. Listen and empathize with their concerns. Be completely candid when responding to their questions. Exude optimism, minimize criticism, and acknowledge that things have been tough. But emphasize that you're all in this together that you have their back. Re-establishing trust is essential to help them pull out of the funk and back toward optimal productivity.
2. **Track and Celebrate Progress.** Set clear and attainable goals for short term wins and celebrate every box your team ticks on that list. Giving everyone the opportunity to pause and get a well deserved pat on the back more frequently helps keep everyone focused and motivated.
3. **Develop Informal Support and Training Networks.** With reassigned responsibilities and increased workloads, some team members may be struggling to punch above their weight. If additional training is needed but no budget really exists, make every effort to tap into the collective skills of the entire team. Establish in-services, lunch and learns, or even mentor-mentee arrangements so that team members who need a skills upgrade can learn from those in the organization who already possess that expertise.



While none of the above suggestions are going to serve as a panacea for the myriad challenges businesses are facing today, we hope that these small steps will make the road to recovery a bit easier.

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