

July 2008: The Uncertain Times Edition

## We just don't know what to think . . .

The housing market is clearly suffering but general business confidence remains high in many sectors. So this edition offers you positive ideas for managing in uncertain times.

### Emerge from a downturn stronger than before

Kent Trainers' directors and trainers come from a wide range of corporate backgrounds and, sadly, many of us remember the early 1990s all too well. One thing was clear from that experience. In many sectors, most or all strong businesses survived, but their relative market positions often shifted.

What happened was that those competitors who hunkered down and cut all investment took longer to capitalise on the upturn.

Others, who continued to invest carefully were able to compete more strongly as their markets sprang back to life.

*"The squirrel that works harder to bury more nuts in the dying days of autumn will be more active in the early days of spring."*

If you can, make a strategic decision to continue to invest in your future growth. Many of our clients report real business benefits from their training. Below are some of the business focused investment opportunities for September.

#### Save Money

Our September prices will affect any bookings made from 1 September. But any bookings you make before 1 September from our current programme (through to 31 May 2009), or in-house, will be at current prices.

Don't lose this opportunity to secure great training at the last year's prices.

### A Selection from our September Programme of Practical Courses

<a href="#">Management Essentials</a>	9 Sept
<a href="#">Management Programme</a>	11 Sept
... continues 10 Oct, 18 Nov	
<a href="#">Managing Underperformance</a>	17 Sept
<a href="#">Coaching Skills for Managers</a>	25 Sept
<a href="#">Developing High Performing Teams</a>	30 Sept
<a href="#">Appraising your Staff</a>	25 Sept
<a href="#">HR Essentials</a>	18-19 Sept
<a href="#">Training your Staff on the Job</a>	9 Sept
<a href="#">Train the Trainer</a>	25 Sept
<a href="#">Business Writing Skills</a>	9 Sept
<a href="#">Meetings - Making them Work</a>	10 Sept
<a href="#">Report Writing</a>	11 Sept
<a href="#">Dealing Effectively with Conflict</a>	16 Sept
<a href="#">Presenting with Impact</a>	18 Sept
<a href="#">Communicate with Confidence</a>	23 Sept
<a href="#">Time Management</a>	10 Sept
<a href="#">Customer Service &amp; Complaint Handling</a>	4 Sept
<a href="#">Sales - The Client Meeting</a>	10 Sept
<a href="#">Negotiating Skills</a>	17 Sept
<a href="#">Increase Sales through Effective Marketing</a>	19 Sept
<a href="#">Develop a High Performing Sales Team</a>	25 Sept
<a href="#">Outlook 2003</a>	9 Sept
<a href="#">Company Director - Understanding the role</a>	4 Sept
<a href="#">MS Project</a>	23 Sept

Click on these links for:

- [Word courses](#)
- [Excel Courses](#)
- [Access Courses](#)
- [PowerPoint Courses](#)

## Do what you need to do ... Do it fearlessly ... And do it honestly

If your business is suffering from the downturn, this is one of the toughest challenges you can face. We have to remember that many of today's successful business-people started their careers - or certainly their management careers - after the last substantial dip in the early 1990s.

For managers and directors in this situation, **honesty is not the best policy**. It is the **only** policy. Be honest with your staff and, above all, be honest with yourself.

Face up to problems early, and give people fair warning. Make your primary business focus your cash flow. Here's our three point plan.

1. Relentlessly review costs that do not contribute to a positive flow of cash into your business. **Avoid the temptation** to make cuts that will damage your hard-won reputation.
2. Consolidate strong relationships and continue to offer great value to your core customers. **Avoid the temptation** to "buy" sales with loss-making offers.
3. Manage cash rigorously. Issue invoices as soon as you can and pursue payment before the debt becomes aged. **Avoid the temptation** to go easy on cash collection.

**Learn More:** First rate financial management is an essential business skill. Commit to it in September with [Finance for Directors and Senior Managers](#) on 10 Sept, [Financial Planning and Budgeting](#) on 16 Sept, or [Finance Essentials for non-Financial Managers](#) on 30 Sept.

Kent Trainers will be offering new in-house programmes to help you fight the downturn. Ask about courses on tendering and bidding, and business reorganisation.

## Dealing with Staff Issues

If you do face the need to reduce staff levels, you will need to attend to three primary groups.

### *The people who will leave your business*

Deal with them openly, honestly and fairly. Trying to hide the truth and treating them as anything less than rational adults will backfire. Warn people when you have real concerns, keep them informed, and give them the news directly. Consider what support you can offer - anything practical you can do will underpin your reputation going forward.

Kent Trainers is developing a series of practical workshops for people dealing with redundancy. Call us to discuss them.

### *The people who will manage the process*

When you tell a colleague that they must lose their job, you will need to wear three hats: the cool effective boss; the compassionate colleague; and the compliant employer. Communicate clearly, honour the powerful emotions you might get, and get the legal HR details right.

**Learn More:** [HR Essentials](#) on 18/19 Sept or [Employment Law Essentials](#) on 7 Oct. [Basic Psychology for Business](#) is on 8/9 October, or call us to discuss our new in-house programme, "Handling a Difficult Situation".

### *The people left behind*

After job losses, the people who remain will feel a sense of loss, fear and demotivation. You need to help them to "grieve" and move on, to protect the integrity of your business. Then you need to re-build, re-focus and re-motivate your team.

[Dealing Effectively with Conflict](#) on 16 Sept and [Developing High Performing Teams](#) on 30 Sept can help. Or call us to discuss the new in-house programme we are developing: "Managing the impact of a downturn" on just this subject.

**Please Note.** This newsletter is not a substitute for advice from professionally qualified practitioners. The ideas it presents are general in nature and readers must consult professional advisors about the specifics of their own situation.