



The 15 most common management mistakes made in an uncertain economy

Managing a team is never easy, but in today's economy it poses a particular challenge. Most companies are feeling increased pressure to do more with less and, in many cases, it's a lot less. How can you keep your employees motivated and inspired to do their best work when you have fewer rewards to offer? Moreover, how can you get ready for the inevitable upturn? When the economic pendulum swings, will you have your top talent in place?

To help you retain top performers and keep your organisation running smoothly in times of change, Robert Half has identified the most common management mistakes that can be made in an uncertain economy, along with tips for avoiding them.

Morale and retention

- **Feeling people are lucky just to have a job.**
True, many people feel fortunate to have a stable position in this economy, but your most talented employees always have options. Good people are marketable in any economy, and you want your best people to stay with you for the long-term.
- **Assuming employees are mind readers.**
You've spent your week implementing cost-cutting measures – and now your Accounts Assistant has requested a salary increase. Bad timing, but unless you communicate openly and often, your team will not know the business realities of the company.
- **Ignoring rumours.**
The rumour mill exists in every organisation especially when there are shut doors, cancelled meetings and people speaking in hushed tones. If your staff don't hear the news from you, they will hear it from someone else, and it may not be entirely accurate.
- **Lack of showing recognition.**
Many senior managers would be the first to admit they could offer a bit more positive reinforcement to their teams. There is no such thing as too much praise, as long as it's specific, genuine and timely.
- **Saving the praise for last.**
It's nice to thank people for a job well done, but keep in mind that encouragement along the way works wonders too, in building motivation and productivity.
- **Not standing by your employees.**
Managers who do not support their workers lose their trust. Stand up for your team members, particularly if they are unfairly criticised. If you are there for them, they will be there for you.

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Productivity

- **Failing to give star treatment.**
Many managers make the mistake of spending too much time and resources trying to improve the performance of average employees while ignoring their strongest talent. While skills building is important, it is the top talent that are often responsible for your company's greatest successes.
- **Cutting back on training.**
Think twice before cutting staff development budgets, since enhancing your employees' skills can pay off in both the short and the long-term.
- **Equating busy with productive.**
Don't base employee recognition on who's working the longest hours. Instead, reward people based on the results they generate towards company objectives.
- **Making work 'mission impossible'.**
Lay offs and budget cuts may mean one person will have to do the jobs of two or more people. Decide which projects are mission critical and delegate remaining tasks. Bring in temporary workers to assist your staff.
- **Waiting for an economic turnaround.**
If you have a good idea, don't wait for a recovery to implement it. You'll get a head start on the competition by making your move now.

Building business

- **Sacrificing quality.**
When people are busy, mistakes are more likely to occur. But don't let service levels slide because your team is swamped. You'll create a standard that will be difficult to break once workloads return to normal.
- **Making the wrong cuts.**
Most companies have had to reduce spending, but be careful about slashing services to your clients. If they're used to receiving certain benefits, taking them away can be a mistake.
- **Shifting the focus from the front lines.**
Customer service counts all the more when times are tough. Are you doing everything possible to make sure those who are the first point of contact with your company send the right message? If these employees come across as indifferent, you could lose prospective and existing clients.
- **Tying your employees' hands.**
Empower your team to make decisions that will ensure positive customer and client experiences. Provide guidance on how to resolve dilemmas most successfully, and let them know what they did well and what could have been done better.

By reviewing these stumbling blocks and taking measures to avoid them, you can make your workplace more productive and, ultimately, pave the way for long-term success.

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