



15 Ways to Beat A Recession **by Ann Andrews CSP**

I'd like to say up front, that I don't actually believe in recession. Everything in life has a cycle and business is no exception. I personally LOVE a bit of downtime every now and again. It allows me to breathe – to think – to re-energise myself, and to take time out.

I also like to use this time to re-evaluate what I am offering my clients and to ask some questions:

Q: Is this product/service still working as well as it did 3 years ago – if not how can I refresh it, repackage it, or has it served its purpose and do I discard it?

Q: How can I use this time to my best FUTURE advantage, so that when I get busy again, I have my next lot of products/services ready to go.

Q: What are those jobs I have been putting off because I was so busy, that I can now spend some time doing so that my office runs smoothly and efficiently.

Q: What great ideas have I had over the past couple of years that I could now get off the ground given that I have all this wonderful time?

And so I thought of 15 ways ANY business can use their downtime to great advantage:

1. Freeze recruiting. This is something most organizations do during a down period anyway, but sadly they just cease recruiting whilst expecting everyone to pick up the slack. What organizations don't tend to do, is to use the opportunity to find out what they are currently doing in 4 steps that they could be doing in three, or two or even one. And better still, to use the time to explore what tasks/processes we could eliminate altogether.
2. Use this time to get people to clear up desks; filing cabinets; offices; storage areas etc. There is a wonderful Maverick (Ricardo Semlar) story. His secretary asked him for permission to go and buy more filing cabinets for the secretaries because

the existing cabinets were full to overflowing. His reaction was to get everyone to come in to work on the Friday wearing old clothes and to go through every cabinet to get rid of everything and anything they hadn't needed in the past 12 months. He added, that if they still needed new cabinets at the end of this exercise, then they could have them, but of course after this exercise, not only did they NOT need new filing cabinets, they were able to have a fire sale of the hundreds of existing cabinets they no longer needed because they were now pretty much empty. Smart man Ricardo.

3. Have weekly 45 minute brainstorming sessions in each department – and facilitated preferably by peers, not team leaders or managers;

Week 1	Ideas for cost cutting
Week 2	Ideas for improving profitability
Week 3	Ideas for new products or services
Week 4	Everyone to call 5 clients to get feedback on the organization and to bring that to week 5
Week 5	Ideas for improving customer service

Every week offer a significant prize for the best idea, say dinner for two at a great restaurant; 2 movie/theatre tickets..... if these sessions don't significantly improve morale; energy; passion and motivation, which in turn will improve bottom line results, then I'll eat my hat

4. Find creative (FREE) ways to market your products or services. Get your staff involved in ideas for bringing in more business – once again, these people are already on your payroll – use their brain power. Invite customers into the organisation for a tour of your premises and a demonstration of ALL your products and services (preferably followed by a nice morning tea). My guess is that for most of us, our clients probably haven't got a clue as to our total range of offerings.
5. Let your staff go and visit key clients (not just sales people). This is a huge morale boost for staff who are normally never seen – it may not bring direct revenue, but it will increase employee involvement in the business – and who knows where that could lead?
6. Use this time to take your entire product range apart – what products are obsolete and need to be ditched? What products are doing well and how can they do even better? **DON'T ASK YOUR SALES PEOPLE OR MANAGEMENT TEAM.** Ask other departments and your clients. You need fresh eyes.
7. Ask your clients how you can help THEM during the recession? You may be surprised how many ideas they will give you
8. How can I use all these great GREEN tips I have been seeing in everything I read, to save money on fuel bills, stationery bills etc.
9. Look at Hot Desking – have only as many desks or work stations that people actually use during the day. Keep a couple for sales people to use when they are in the building, and get rid of the rest. It will save on rent too!

10. Save even more office space by considering letting some of your staff work from home. Scary I know, but if you have good performance measures in place it will work.

And then there are the old, yet still relevant, chestnuts:

11. Clean out customer debt, even if it means offering a healthy discount for immediate payment
12. Sell off old stock. Use different avenues - trademe or ebay. Clear the shelves of dust and debris
13. Creative bundling of products (your own). What products or services could you package and offer in a new and creative way.
14. Creative bundling of products (another supplier). Whose products or services compliment yours – how can you package and market these offerings? This will get you in front of another suppliers database (and vice versa of course).
15. Build a great relationship with your bank so that they will support you through the peaks and troughs of your business. And if your current bank doesn't support you, CHANGE BANKS.

About the Author

Ann Andrews CSP is a team facilitator and the author of four books - Shift Your But, Finding the Square Root of a Banana, Did I Really Employ You? and My Dear Franchisees.

She is also a contributor to - You don't Make a Big Leap Without a Gulp, The Power of More Than One and Mum's the Word.

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