

jan09newsletter

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In this issue, you'll find:

- \* Survival Tips for Professionals in the Current Recession
- \* Your Practical Tip for this issue
- \* In the News: Rypple
- \* Results from my survey of your opinion of women as leaders

Best regards,

Joyce

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### Survival Tips for Professionals in the Current Recession

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By Joyce Shelleman, PhD

What do you do when you're faced with an earthward economy?

Many of us face uncertain futures today as employers try to figure out how to cut costs in the deep recession underway. As I write this, just today 45,000 jobs were cut by major corporations. No doubt about it, the times are unsettling for anyone who's paying attention.

Don't let the news keep you from taking action in your own self interest. Now, more than ever, what you do can make a difference. Here are three survival tips.

Take stock. What strengths and weaknesses do you bring to your current situation? Perhaps you have valuable professional experience ( a strength) but can't persuade others to buy into your ideas (a weakness). Or you're trustworthy (a strength) but don't have a good rapport with your team (a weakness). You get the idea. Tough times call for a reassessment of your value to your clients and/or your firm. Ignorance is NOT bliss. In addition to self-reflection, if you can, get a trusted colleague to share their perspective on your strengths and weaknesses with you to get another point of view.

Build on strengths. Plan how to make yourself more indispensable. What are the ways that your strengths are currently valuable and how might they be even more valuable by addressing an unmet need? If you are experienced with certain client problems, can that experience, for example, be applied to other client groups, in training others, or in devising new product/service lines? How can your strengths increase productivity, cut costs, innovate, gain more clients, and so on? Think strategically.

Confront weaknesses. Despite your many strengths, you will still have those pesky weaknesses that you identified in number one. While it's likely that you're pretty good at the technical side of your work, introverts have the most difficulty with the human side. This is the time to consider how to cement good relations with clients, higher ups, colleagues and partners. What skills need polishing?

Communication? For example, should you do more of tailoring messages to your audience? How's your body language and what signals does it send about your competence? Do you ensure that others know about your  
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good ideas, successes, and accomplishments? If it seems in poor taste or feels uncomfortable to tell people outright, try to find some other way of getting the word out. Perhaps by telling the office gossip (I'm

saying this tongue in cheek but ...) or by putting it in writing in a report or newsletter. You get the idea. When times are great, it's easy to ignore weaknesses but in times like the current one, it's shortsighted to do so.

The trick, of course, is effective implementation. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses has to be followed with the hard work of following through with behavior changes. Select just one or two key areas to start out. Set some firm benchmarks for yourself and hold to them. If you need help, get it. While these survival tips are no guarantee, they will help you to move forward with greater self-insight, enhanced abilities, and a fuller measure of self confidence during the possibly tough times ahead.

[www.shelleman.com](http://www.shelleman.com)

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#### Practical Tip

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Before going into an important meeting, you will be more effective if you plan what you want to say ahead of time and, if necessary, rehearse it. Write it down and practice it. This strategy compensates for the common introvert tendency to be unable to "think on one's feet".

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#### RESULTS: What's your opinion of women as leaders?

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This is sure to spur some controversy! Last winter and spring we saw a heated Democratic primary election between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. I presented a quickie survey called, "Does gender make a difference in leadership?" I only received a few responses but those that I did were heavily weighted toward the female gender! Hmmm. Perhaps it had to do with the contentious election. :-) I think both sexes have their strengths and I'm not certain how I would have responded. Here are the questions and the responses from readers.

1. As leaders, women do things differently than men.

All respondents agreed (average = 4 on a 5 point scale)

2. Women are more effective than men in situations that call for leadership.

All respondents strongly agreed (average = 5 on a 5 point scale)

A survey respondent commented:

"I do think women do things differently because they tend to manage by emotion more than men do. They take people's feelings into account and incorporate that into decision making whereas men seem to look only at

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the desired outcome and the people affected by the outcomes are less important."

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#### In the News: Rypple

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Rypple is an on-line self-improvement tool that allows you to get performance feedback from those who matter the most to you. For example, you can ask how you did at the recent team meeting and get responses from trusted colleagues. This can help you target improvements and not waste time on areas where you're already doing well. Check it out!

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