



For Immediate Release

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As job cuts increase, organizations and managers face tougher task executing strategy

Boston, MA, March 27, 2008 – Organizations and the managers who run them are at increasing risk of being unable to execute their strategies due in part to economy-related jobs cuts and the uncertainty they create in the workplace, according to The Forum Corp., a consulting company that helps companies with strategy execution.

US organizations have cut 85,000 jobs in the last two months, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

“Managing in an uncertain environment in which employees are worried about their jobs and confused about the company’s direction is extremely challenging and, when done poorly, can really derail an organization. However, doing it well is one of the hallmarks of great leaders,” said Ed Boswell, CEO of The Forum Corp. “These can be the times when great companies step up by equipping their leaders with the skills they need and great managers stand out by leading better than their competitors.”

Research by Forum into growing companies and high-performing managers shows that there are eight areas in which top managers out-perform their on-par peers. These eight areas are important for individual managers who want to better their performance and for companies who want to develop these skills in all managers to ensure their ability to execute strategy.

According to the research, top leaders:

- Successfully manage organizational dilemmas as well as their personal energy to maintain focus on clear goals at times of upheaval. By contrast, their on-par managerial colleagues struggle with competing and changing priorities, and burn out in environments of uncertainty and ambiguity.
- Assign clear roles and accountability, enabling employees to understand their jobs and giving them the power to get them done. On-par managers speak without specificity, providing vague mandates with little decision-making authority.



- Challenge the current state of affairs when necessary in order to ensure the organization stays on track and achieves its goals. On-par managers accept the status quo, even if policies and processes get in the way of growth.
- Establish a climate in which employees are confident to act on ideas, and feel like they are important to the organization's success. On-par managers fail to provide recognition and connection, discouraging employee loyalty and 'above and beyond' behavior.
- Make the organization more responsive and agile by incorporating non-traditional, non-hierarchical, networked, and flexible management processes and structures. On-par managers, by contrast, overplay the authority card, relying solely on a traditional command-and-control approach that limits the organization's responsiveness to critical new opportunities in uncertain times.
- Manage the dilemmas presented by fluid situations by adjusting plans in response to changes while staying focused on overall strategic intent. On-par managers forget to flex, staying set in their plans and ignoring changing market conditions.
- Actively encourage experimentation to drive learning – even in a down economy -- and recognize that experimentation and innovation will include failures. On-par managers inhibit innovation, failing to distinguish between poor performance and appropriate risk-taking and innovation.
- Have a profound curiosity about their customers and the markets in which they compete, not only understanding their customers' needs but also realizing which are being met and which are not. On-par managers fail to cultivate customers, neither understanding, nor seeking to understand, their customers' needs

"To continue to grow despite the economy, companies should pay special attention to the skills and abilities of their managers, who are the lynchpins to successful execution of strategy," said Boswell. "Companies who grow the best managers will not only weather our current economic storm but also enhance their prospects for growth."

For more information about Forum and its capabilities, or to obtain a copy of its leadership for growth research report entitled "One Size Doesn't Fit All," visit www.forum.com.

About The Forum Corp.

Forum is a world leader in helping organizations execute strategies through people. For 35 years, its work has helped clients increase profitability, market share, revenue growth, and customer and employee loyalty. Forum combines experience and research-based insights in learning design, consulting, and facilitation to bring about changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that enable employees to achieve and exceed the desired benefits of a strategic change, to reduce time to improved performance, and to sustain the change over the long term.

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