

UPBEAT ACTIONS FOR FOR DOWN TIMES

What do you do during down times? It's easy to get all tied up in knots when things go south. You know it's not your fault. You know it's a natural part of the business cycle, even though pandemics are not the norm. You know the downturn won't last forever.

But, what you know logically in your head doesn't always make you FEEL better. It is helpless feelings and negative emotions that create stress in the midst of uncertainty.

Stephen Covey shared some valuable advice in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. He advises us to become aware of two important "Circles". The inner "Circle of Influence" includes things under your control. The outer "Circle of Concern" includes all the things you could be concerned about. Your attitude and outlook depends on which circle you focus on. When your focus is on the outer circle, you tend to be more reactive with negative energy, shrinking influence, and less control. Yet, when you focus on the inner circle, you are more proactive, leading to feelings of positive energy, expanding influence, and more control.



Here are 10 upbeat actions for you to consider during down times:

1. Master Your Metrics:

Achieving clarity about what is really important in life, work, relationships, and business are critical to maintaining positivity in the middle of a negative downturn. Pain can create a powerfully important wake-up call to making sure you're focused on what really matters, personally and professionally. Is it ... salary and benefits, position, flexibility, lifestyle, intellectual growth, family, faith, influence, etc.? Focus on the Metrics that Matter.

2. Eliminate Personal Waste:

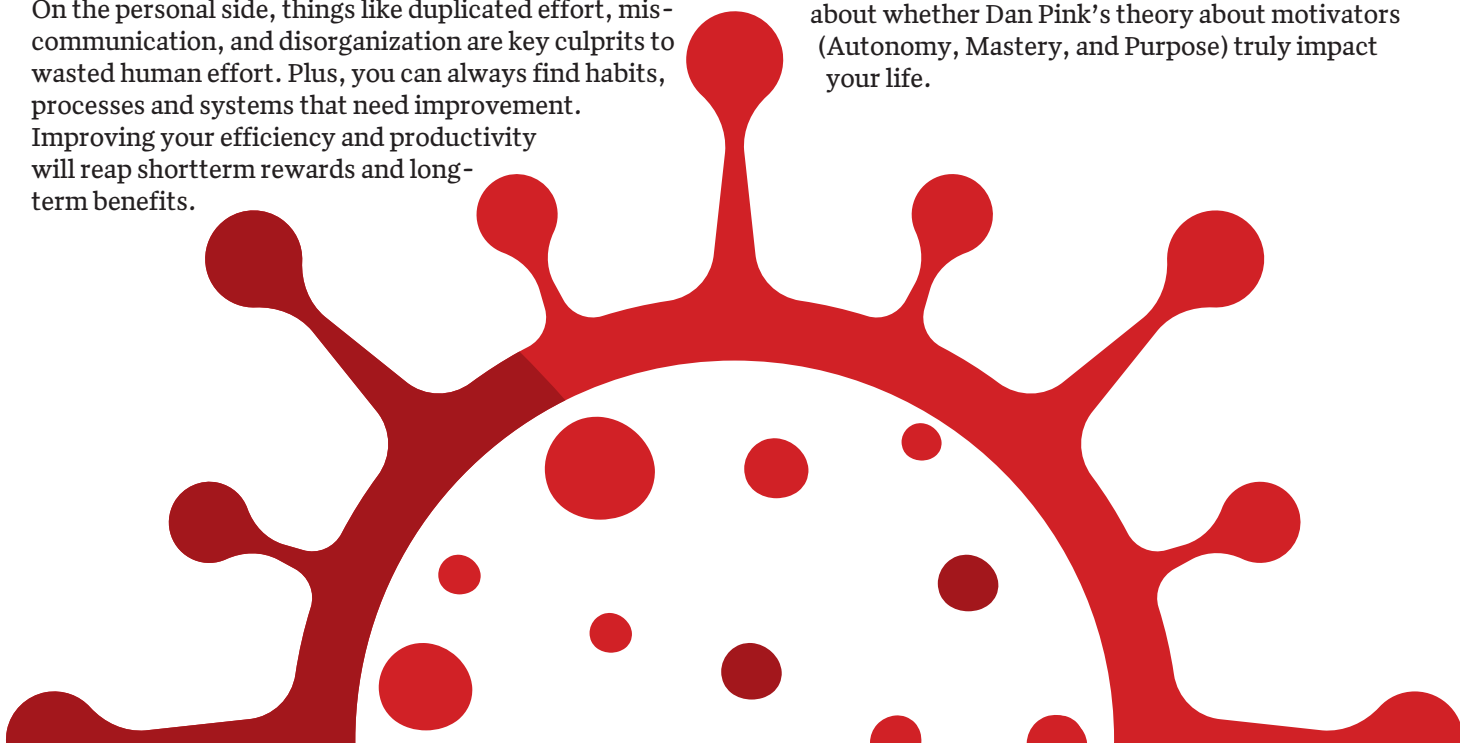
With merciless competitiveness being the norm in most industries, one proven way to survive during tough times is to rigorously eliminate waste. Yet, this requires a clear definition of "waste", perhaps even an expanded scope. On the personal side, things like duplicated effort, miscommunication, and disorganization are key culprits to wasted human effort. Plus, you can always find habits, processes and systems that need improvement. Improving your efficiency and productivity will reap short-term rewards and long-term benefits.

3. Sharpen Your Saw:

In busy times, it's easy for your skills to become dull from overuse and the constant fast pace. In slower times, it's easy to coast on your current skill set. Don't coast. Learn a new skill. Earn a valuable certification. Pursue a different interest. Rediscover your curiosity. These will add fresh interest to your life (and your resume').

4. Re-Examine Your Drivers:

What is it that really "drives" you? What are your motivations, motives, and passions? Where do you find purpose and meaning? Why do you really get up in the morning to work? Certainly money is a prime motivator. Yet beyond finances, why do you do what you do? Go deep. Ask hard questions. Find some answers. Think about whether Dan Pink's theory about motivators (Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose) truly impact your life.



5. Get Ship Shape: Scrape off the barnacles. Swab the deck. Shine the brass. There's no reason things should stay messy during slower times. Clean off your desk. Go through that stack of files. "Kondo" your stuff and spark some joy. Glean anything worth saving and recycle the rest. Catch up on your 'someday' task list. Even getting in better physical shape tends to improve one's attitude and outlook. Movement. Blood flow. Oxygen. These can certainly help.

6. Feed Your Creativity: It's easy to get stuck in the same thinking patterns. Bust the rut by exposing yourself to new stimuli: books, magazines, websites, even other industries. Listen to podcasts. Enroll in a creativity course. Zoom 'til you can't Zoom anymore! Call a creative friend and ask for suggestions. Basically you're adding nutrients, water, and sunshine to what could become a hungry, thirsty, and dark mindset.

7. BrainStorm with a Purpose: When global industry suffers, it's normal to feel that everything is out of your control. Yet, leaders and innovators see opportunities in down times. Gather your team (or a group of trusted friends) to challenge the status quo. What can you do differently? What have you missed? Where is there opportunity? Is it time to do something new? What ideas could change the game?

8. Shake the Trees: During tough times, you need every good idea you can find. The low-hanging fruit is long gone. But there are tasty ideas still up in the trees. Get a ladder, climb higher, and shake the limbs for hidden fruit. What new skill sets, tools, methods, technology, and/or business models are waiting to be harvested?

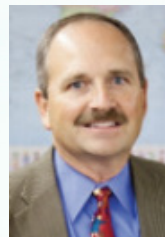
9. Network with a Purpose: You just never know when you may need to reach out to your network and ask for some help. Every industry faces down times. There are multiple ways to network (LinkedIn, virtual events, etc.) so think strategically about how you can expand your professional network. Beef up your LinkedIn profile (get tips at Wayne Breitbarth's www.PowerFormula.net). Then, be a giver and provide a positive testimonial to those in your network. Giving before getting ... a great strategy for work and life.

10. Think Outside Your Box: Maybe it's time for you to think about doing something different. Maybe some different job responsibilities. Maybe a different subset of your industry. Or maybe a new industry all together. What transferrable skills do you have that are valuable to your current or future employer? Or is it time to strike out on your own and start something you've always wanted to do? Risk is part of life. Maybe it's too risky to stay where you are, whether change is forced upon you or whether you make the leap on your own.

The bottom line? Don't waste the valuable lessons to be learned in down times. Stay positive. Be active. Move forward. Help others.

What Not to Do:

- Whine and complain
- Withdraw and hide
- Take your anger out on others
- Bury your head in the sand
- Distract yourself with "busy" work
- Feed the gossip monster
- Binge on negative news cycle



John Storm has been through his share of tough times. He serves as an innovation expert, facilitator, consultant, and trainer for a wide variety of industries. His mission is to help people get unstuck, spark new ideas, and generate game-changing results. Contact him at: John@BrainStormNetwork.com.

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