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Foxhole – “Staying-in-my-Bunker” Manager is Not the Best Strategy

I read this past weekend a great article in the business section the NY Times by Kelley Holland. Kelley wrote an op-ed about the need to have good managers helping their employees to cope with the uncertain times we have ahead. We know that 2009 will continue to be a challenge and we also know that we will come out of this with better processes in many of our business as a result of the tough slugging we are going through.

It is great to look at the challenges we see today for our managers. If we think about it, in North America we have seen over 4 million jobs disappear in the USA, and another 600K disappear across Canada with the auto sector being a large hit for Ontario and Michigan. Large numbers of managers have had to focus on cost cutting in new ways not seen before. They have had to demand more productivity and do more with less like never before in their working life. They have been forced to deal with colleagues losing their jobs and be really smart at rightsizing.

We also have seen that the new technologies of tweeting, facebooking, and blogging has replaced older paper memos and created new communication challenges. The manager in 2009 is seeing outsourcing challenges affecting their decisions and now may be working with more offsite workers in virtual teams unlike previous managerial groups. Again new challenges in communication styles and environments each day are presented. How do I “read” someone when I only see them once a month or work with them entirely over the internet or on Web Ex calls?

With these challenges it is common for managers to go into a “bunker mentality” where they stay in their foxhole and stay out of the line of fire while the “noise” works its way hopefully past them. Kelley Holland writes in her article that this is really the exact wrong thing to do and in fact why we have managers – to lead to set aside their own concerns and to help their employees to cope with the, at times, frightening environment they are now in.

We have seen in our practice at Predictive Success Corporation that at times like these leading skills must come to center stage. Managers must retrench in a mini-session of self awareness and a revisit to their Predictive Index® survey. This is a great use of their time and will focus their communication when dealing with their staff in the most efficient and empathetic manner in both the tough messages, as well as create a better way forward.

By spending time with your people and treating employees like adults with a view to the EI or emotional intelligence of your team through the Predictive Index survey, the people that work for you will believe that their managers understand them and respect them. These people will better understand the basis for management decisions and have better communication. The smart manager today in the spring of



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2009 will allow her/ his employees to be understood as a whole person not just part of a cost center. Productivity will follow if we can get all our managers to move out of the bunker and back into the battle field prepared to fight the great fight with their people as we move out of the challenges we see ahead in the last six months of 2009.

Take the time to relook at the PI[®] of yourself and your key team members. Looking inside will allow you greater insights on how you as a leader can achieve better productivity from your core team. Every member will both understand and appreciate this communication and team building as we look to drive revenues, cut costs, and plan for what will be a better 2010 and beyond.

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