

Stand Up in Any Market

3 Irrefutable Secrets to Survival

by Doug Nielsen, CSP, MSW, LCSW

Are you one of them and don't know it?

Right now many leaders are blowing it and don't even know it.

They are literally making things worse than the actual circumstances warrant.

As a leader how do you lead your people to peak performance during difficult times?

Right now that is a question on the mind of every leader worth his/her salt. *Read on to learn three critical must do's during a major storm!*

Four Types of Riders in the Storm

There are four types of leaders when the storms come:

First is the leader who runs and hides in the face of adversity and denies that there is a problem.

Second is the leader who is paralyzed, does not know what to do and therefore does nothing.

Third, there is the leader who overreacts and makes decisions based on an overly pessimistic view of circumstances. Fourth, there is the leader who sees the reality of the situation and chooses to find the opportunities within the storms.

Storms Reveal the True You

It has been said by many a sailor that it is in the storms that the true self is revealed. When the winds are stiff, the waves big, and the sky dark, that is when a genuine leader is revealed. *A two year old can steer a large vessel in calm seas, but it takes courage,*

strength, and leadership to take the helm in the storm.

The first storm I recall being part of was while working at a home town Ace Hardware store. It was the locally owned and operated store that had a hello and smile for every customer. I loved working there.

The store manager (Brent) was an outstanding leader, the likes of which I have not witnessed since. Because of his leadership, we not only weathered the storm but came out riding on top of the waves.

As I have reflected on what he did to lead us through this major storm, I have identified the following:

Win Your Employee's Heart's

First, he had the uncanny ability to win the hearts of his employees. He made it a point to recognize employees for their efforts daily. His complements were sincere and specific and deeply impacted the recipient. Next he made it a point to personally connect with employees. He knew our interests, hopes and goals. We knew he was our advocate and genuinely cared about us.

Be Your Preaching

Second, he led by example and demonstrated how to exceed customer's expectations. He constantly discussed his vision for caring for our customers, shared stories of outstanding service at every opportunity but more importantly he demonstrated his vision through his interactions with his employees.

A leader can preach all they want and not a soul will believe them unless their actions demonstrate that preaching.

He managed by wandering around. He was not above getting his hands dirty loading pipe or loading cement for a customer. He would

never ask his employees to do something he was not willing to do.

Give the People What They Need

Third, he ensured that we had the tools, knowledge and skills needed to succeed and to offer the best service anywhere. To him *knowledge was power when used to solve a customers' problem*. He was a firm believer in the importance of his employees' continual learning. Training on products, teamwork, communication, etc. was absolutely critical to success. He was constantly bringing in experts in different areas to train us. He wanted us to know our products inside and out.

Be Accountable to Hold Accountable

Fourth, when an employee gave less than stellar performance, he would pull them aside and help them learn from the mistake. The beautiful thing about his approach was that he never (rarely) wounded the spirit of the employee.

How did he do this you might ask?

Simply he ensured that he kept each employee's *emotional gas tank* at least 50-75% full. Bottom line, as his employee, you knew that he cared for you. That made it much easier to receive feedback.

Another key piece of his success was not only holding us accountable for performance but he also held himself accountable to us. *Accountability to him was a two way street. He felt he had to earn the right to give you feedback and to hold you accountable. An earned right!*

Proofs in the Pudding

Then the storm came. It appeared that the little home town store was about to be blown away by a hurricane. A national chain was building next door to us. The building alone

for this giant hardware chain was well over four times our size. It truly was a Goliath.

This could cause many leaders to run, but not Brent. *It was time to demonstrate courage in the face of uncertainty!* He had built a solid foundation from which to weather the storms. This was his time to rally his troops, to continue to focus on our strengths, to keep our vision for providing "out of this world customer service" at the fore, continue to invest in his employees and to keep accountability alive.

His philosophy for life was simple "*Proactively be prepared for and face the storms. Never run away from them.*"

He believed that as we individually gave everything we had to our customers and as we worked as a team, our true nature of world class service would anchor us to success. The mega hardware store impacted our store, but after the water settled, we held on, out served and out-performed the Goliath. They ultimately closed their doors years later! We weathered the storm, better and stronger than ever before.

So What About You?

How can Brent help you weather the storms of a massive down turn in the market?

I believe that there are 3 secrets that he built his success on. They are Vision, Insight and Personal Accountability. These three secrets can help you as a leader to keep your people engaged and performing at peak levels during the storms.

VISION:

First, like Brent you must first have a clear vision for yourself as a leader. Do you have written goals and plans to reach them? Next you must ensure that your leaders have a crystal clear vision of their role in accomplishing your vision complete with goals and plans to meet them. Then make sure

that each employee knows and understands their part of the vision and takes ownership for it. This ensures that they in turn can inspire their employees with the power of clarity.

It is amazing how many leaders, in and out of the storm, try to side step this process. However, it is absolutely critical for success.

INSIGHT:

Next you must feed your mind with information that will fuel your vision. Without insight and learning it's like having the space shuttle without any fuel for take off-- it looks good, but good for what? It is so important to ensure that your people's minds are learning and engaged with skill based instruction, communication and personal ownership skill training. Do not forget to invest in your people like you do your equipment! *If this is overlooked I can promise you that the gains in people performance can be lost quickly!*

PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Hold yourself and others accountable, not with a blaming attitude, but with a "let's solve this so it won't happen again" attitude.

Make it a habit to make deposits into your employees emotional gas tank with genuine and sincere words of praise so when it comes time to hold them accountable you can do so without them closing off their spirit from you.

When someone makes a commitment to you, you need to hold them accountable. Otherwise, people will get in the habit of agreeing to do things, but knowing that you will never follow up and hold them accountable. Hold them accountable.

Additionally, ensure that you are accountable to your employees. Do what you say you are going to do. Tell the truth and involve your

employees in the decision making process at every chance you get.

I invite you to write a paragraph of how you will implement each of the VIP principles starting with Vision. Next get in the habit of asking yourself first thing in the morning how you will utilize each of the principles with yourself and your team today.

The storms are fierce, but using the VIP Formula will act as an anchor in uncertain times. Now is the time for you to stand up and be strong, leading with courage and clarity. Your people need your support, hope, and guidance. Remember that even though you did not choose this storm, you can always choose your attitude and actions in it-no matter what!

Sail on my friend. You will not only survive, you will thrive.

Copyright ©2011 Doug Nielsen

Doug Nielsen is a professional speaker, trainer, coach, and psychotherapist with over 17 years experience in

aligning people with performance through personal ownership.

He is also author of the recently released book, Take Life By The Helm: Proven Strategies For Gaining Immediate Control. To talk with Doug further about gaining the "Ownership Advantage" for your organization contact him at 801-391-4356 or doug@dougspeaks.com

