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Reflections for Dr. Izzo - **Uncertain Times**

Well this has sure been a challenging month with a growing air of uncertainty across many workplaces. The stock market had its worst week since the Great Depression, its biggest one day gain ever, and American and European Governments are buying bank stocks. I have personally seen the uncertainty among my clients.

When I spoke a few weeks ago to a small group of high level restaurant executives in New York City everyone was feeling pretty uncertain about the future, a large financial client told me that they were told to cease all spending that was unnecessary until further notice and a health care system client told me that the credit squeeze had caused them to put a new building on hold. Meanwhile, consumer confidence in the U.S. and Canada is lower than it has been in many years. With all this uncertainty, I thought I'd share

some reflections on living and leading amidst this uncertainty.

First, we must remember that most of the time, the preview for the horror movie is much worse than the actual film. Have you ever seen a preview for a thriller only to find out that all the scariest scenes were in the preview trailer? The real movie turns out not be nearly so frightening. I read last week that a CNN poll showed that more than half of Americans felt a second Great Depression was likely to happen in the next year. This is a good time for everyone to stay calm. Things may get tough but the more we all surrender to the worst case scenarios, the more we will create the very thing we fear. Businesses need to be cautious of course, as do individuals, but remember the worst almost never happens and this time is likely no exception.

Another thing is that times like this require us as leaders to choose to be beacons of light instead of gloom. Our employees are worried enough without us bringing more gloom, they get enough of it in the news before they get to work. Stay focused on the long term fundamentals of your business, find the bright spots and share those with your people, celebrate the victories even if they are less grand, and try not to feed the gloomy mood but instead try to put it in perspective.

Down times are actually times of great opportunity in many businesses. Studies show that market share is often gained during such times when competitors cut back, reduce service, or stop advertising. It is also a great time to recruit star performers from other companies especially if your organization is relatively stable.

Sure you may have to cut costs but what a great time to engage your employees in generating cost saving ideas. My grandmother used to tell me that "idle hands were the devil's playground." Well I don't know about the devil, but I can tell you that in uncertain times, the best thing we can do as leaders is to engage our people in solving problems. Many of these efficiencies will carry over into the good times.

One of the most important things in uncertain times is not to overreact. Many companies take steps like canceling all training, asking employees to stop traveling for business, putting all celebration on hold, and so on. Some of these steps may be needed, but consider carefully the long term impact when making such decisions. Better to keep doing these things but find more economical ways to do them.

History is always a great teacher during uncertain times. During the depression Franklin Roosevelt is famous for having said-"we have nothing to fear but fear itself." Ironically fear is part of what caused the great depression-people made a run on the banks, they stopped buying things, they stopped buying stocks, and soon the factories closed for over ten years. Some of the fear is real, but much has changed since the Depression such as safety net programs, insured deposits at banks, and governments that learned the lessons of history as well. So for goodness sake, let's all be careful but not panic. I know some people are already suffering and we have all taken a hit, but panic will make it all worse.

I was at my dentists office recently and at the front appointment counter they had a Time Magazine with a cover of a soup line from the 1930's with the headline-Hard Times Ahead. I told my dentist he should get rid of that magazine or people will be canceling appointments left and right. He asked me to take it with me. So I am starting a campaign that I think could turn this situation around. Let's all replace all the magazines in offices across North America with two year old magazines with headlines about booming housing prices and how its time to buy stocks. Just might work.

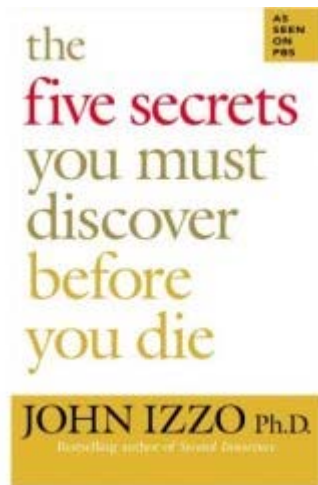
In the meantime, enjoy more time with your kids, play more with friends, and have some time for renewal, things will pick back up. Besides, if I learned anything from my interviews with older people for The Five Secrets, I learned that we focus way too much on things anyway. I have been amazed as I have talked to people these last few weeks that many people have said to me that if things get tough, they could probably live with less things and still be happy. Perhaps this tough time will bring some perspective on the things that really matter which might not be such a bad thing.

Be well and do good work.

with sincerity,

John Izzo

Five Secrets Flash Movie: Over 200,000 People Have Viewed It!



The Five Secrets You Must Discover Before You Die now has a flash movie that shares the secrets in an inspiring six minute flash presentation with inspiring pictures. Over 200,000 people have already viewed the movie. It will brighten your day and is a wonderful free gift to share with others. Link here, enjoy and pass it on - www.bkconnection.com/thefivesecrets

Dr. Izzo's book has now been translated into fifteen languages and was awarded the Gold Medal for best self-help book of 2008 from the Independent Publishers Group.

Get Ready For Retirement: Keeping Older Workers on the Job

A recent survey of HR managers found that most companies expect about 20-25% of their employees to retire in the next five years. Smart companies work hard to keep experienced people working longer. Here are the things that make the biggest difference to keeping older workers: Provide flexibility such as working fewer days or having more vacation time. Many older workers, especially managers, would love to stay on and would be open to job sharing as well. Surveys show that many workers would like to work well into their early seventies if they can have more flexibility. Another idea, use older workers in coaching and teaching roles. Many workers later in their career enjoy sharing their experience with others so create roles that use this desire such as "master engineer" or "master nurse" and so on. When a valued worker is thinking of retiring, ask them if there area any things that might encourage them to stay on? Finally, start an alumni program like IBM where retired workers can be in a pool to be called upon for special projects or assignments. Remember some of your best talents are already in the room and leaving soon. For more on employee trends order Dr. Izzo's revised book, *Values Shift: Recruiting, Retaining and Engaging the Multigenerational Workforce* - www.fairwinds-press.com



Are You a Kind Boss? Survey Shows Kindness Matters

A recent survey by the American Management Association asked employees to rate their boss as either "kind" "a bully" or "neutral". Seventy-five percent said their boss was kind. Those who worked for kind bosses were twice as likely to want to stay with their employer, twice as likely to look forward to coming to work, and 40% more likely to work as hard as they can for their employer and much more likely to speak up. Olivia McIvor with the Izzo Group is the author of *[The Business of Kindness: Creating Work Environments Where People Thrive](#)* and you can order it here. Ms. McIvor and The Izzo Group have developed a program on the Business of Kindness that is being used by Healthcare Clients to address cultural challenges such as aggression from patients, colleagues and the ongoing culture changes with staff shortages and short tempers. Kindness at work that can have a real impact on the bottom line. and the book talks a great deal about its value and importance especially in a time when tempers are flaring and uncertainty is prevalent Contact us to find out more. www.theizzogroup.com

Leading in Tough Times

I have spend the past six months writing articles for dailies across the US and Canada and I have been asked to give speeches that discuss my experineces in leading in challenging times.

How do we keep people engaged and motivated during tough economic times? What are the keys to keeping people on side and leading them through change? The Program **[Leading in Tough Times:Engaging Your People During Change](#)** will explore the keys to leading people during tough times and engaging them through change. The session will help leaders understand what people need in changing times and practical ways to engage people during such times. Filled with real life examples from working with over 600 companies, Dr. Izzo will help your leaders learn the secrets to companies that navigate tough times effectively. Among other things, leaders will learn: How to keep people focused on the long term? How to engage people in change so that they help you stay successful and don't act like victims? How to keep a climate of recognition and success even when things are tough? What are the five things people need from leaders during times of change and how can leaders deliver it? How to become the employer of choice when things are tough?

On the Leadership Road

It has been a busy fall so far with lots of opportunities to influence leaders at all levels.

This is a new feature in our e-newsletter which gives clients an opportunity to hear some reflections from Dr. Izzo based on some of his most recent work.

September had me speaking at the **[Women's Leadership Forum in Vancouver](#)** where over 500 women leaders were gathered for two days. There was an amazing energy at the conference and I was reminded of how far we have come in terms of female leadership in the corporate world. There is, of course, much more to be accomplished but women are now influencing the conversation we are having about work and life in profound ways. I believe it is women who initiated the "balance revolution" and who continue to push the boundaries of integrating life with work. While there I



spoke about the lessons from my book, *The Five Secrets*, in which I asked 235 people over sixty to reflect back on their lives as well as a breakout on creating a great workplace.

In early October, I was asked to conduct a session with leaders from the **Department of Defense in Washington, DC** as they prepare for a transition with a new White House administration about to take over in January. It reminded me that there are people of very good will who work everyday to tackle problems much larger than the ones that occupy most of us. It occurred to me that leadership transitions are great opportunities to examine our assumptions. Transition is never easy but it is always instructive. In fact, almost all growth happens during times of change when we have to find ground again for ourselves. Many people and organizations are going through transition now and the best advice was given by former Yankee Yogi Berra who said "when you come to a fork in the road, take it." That is, be open to what the transition wants to teach you.

September and October found me finishing up a series of talks I have been giving over the last two years for the Electronic Systems Division of **Northrop Grumman**. By the time I am finished I will have spoken to thousands of their leaders about creating an engaging work culture and how they as leaders can engage their people more deeply. As a speaker and consultant, I have always enjoyed these long term engagements where real change builds over time. This client has been very intentional about taking many steps to create a great culture. My talks are only one part of a much larger array of activities, meetings and decisions that are shaping the culture. The president and I did a series of sessions with senior leaders that included both of us talking about culture and then engaging the group in dialogue with us and with each other. One of the things I have discovered over the last several years is the importance of having people dialogue about learning. It's great to hear a good talk by someone internal or external but when you talk to colleagues about what you learned and what you "want to do" based on what you heard, the learning is much more significant.

Finally, I spoke at two client events for **Kronos** and **Manulife**. The first was an event for restaurant executives from across the USA and the second for HR leaders from companies across Canada. Separated by three weeks I got to see how the uncertainty is spreading across businesses right now. Everyone seemed pretty nervous about the upcoming business climate and many were wondering if the "war for talent" was over. I was reminded that great companies use downturns as an opportunity to win talent and to cement their relationship with existing employees. How we treat people during the downturns often impacts the relationship we have with employees for years to come. If we treat people with dignity and do our best to look out for their interests when times are tough, they will often do the same for us. I admire companies like Manulife and Kronos that put on these kinds of events even during tough times which is exactly when we need them the most.

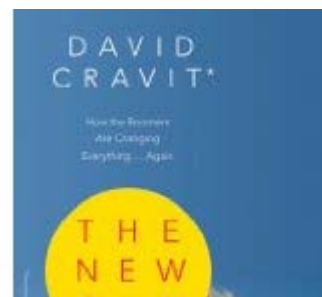
For a listing of Dr. Izzo's Events please visit www.theizzogroup.com/speaking2007.htm

Recommended Reading - The New Old

The New Old: How the Boomers Are Changing Everything...Again

by David Cravit

This book by David Cravit is a fascinating read on everything you wanted to know about the baby boomers and how they are changing the consumer



world as they age. This is a great book on how to market to and understand the baby boomers. It suggests that we are aging very differently than our parents did. A great read for Baby Boomers as well as those who are trying to win their business.

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