

Training in This Economic Downturn- Part II

I was watching “Man vs. Wild” the other night. I love this show. Bear, the show’s host, said the marine’s mantra is “Improvise, Adapt and Overcome.” Through out the hour-long show, Bear illustrates how he implements the marine’s mantra into his survival techniques. This got me thinking about training. Last week I talked about the three reasons you need training in this economic downturn. This week I will address three types of training by way of the Marine’s mantra: improvise, adapt and overcome.

- **IMPROVISATIONAL TRAINING**- You’re an IT business analyst who keeps getting asked to step into the role of a software tester. Why? It’s convenient to your IT manager to have you do the testing since most of the IT team was inconveniently let go. You are taking improvisational training whether you like it or not just to survive in your job. By the time you get home from work, you are mentally drained from doing the tasks you don’t know how to do; you’re scared of losing your job, and you’re dreading the next day when you have to do it all over again.
- **ADAPTATIONAL TRAINING**- Once you’ve been required to go through improvisational training, adaptation is expected. You need to fit into your new role and make the appropriate modifications. You know the saying, “it just is what it is.” Well, adaptational training just is what it is. This type of training is probably the least desirable yet unavoidable.
- **OVERCOME TRAINING**- By now you may be thinking this marine mantra is for the birds. Don’t despair; this stage of training puts you more in control of your situation. You and you alone are in charge of your career path. We often let fear stop us and to be fair in this economy, we are facing the unknown. That’s the whole point of overcoming isn’t it? Facing our fears and rising above our circumstances.

No matter what industry you are in, you need to consider how you are going to overcome this economic downturn. You can either accept your situation with a defeatist attitude or rise to the occasion and get some significant training. If you’ve been recently laid-off, now is the perfect time to take some classes and beef up your resume. If you’re still with your current job and you’re being forced to improvise by doing the job of three people, guess what? Now is the time to get trained in those other roles that you’ve been asked to step into.

If you’re waiting for your company to pay for your training, you will be waiting a long time. Hint: This is adaptation. Don’t like it? Me neither. So, don’t depend, beg or whine to your boss to pay for your training that benefits your career path. You may not like this next statement, but here it goes. Your company doesn’t owe you money to pay for your training. They pay your salary and if you’re lucky, they provide health benefits. Beyond that, it’s up to you to overcome your situation and ante up on your training.

As a trainer I am constantly surprised at how many people complain about how unfair it is that their company won't pay for training. Cry me a river! I know I don't sound very sympathetic, but this country was founded on individuals overcoming great obstacles. I don't think paying for your own training to better yourself, maintain your job or market yourself for a new position is a great obstacle to overcome.

Lastly, what classes should you take? Here are a few suggestions:

- Analyze your last performance review; the areas you scored low such as say communication skills, take a Dale Carnegie class to improve in that area.
- Is your company struggling to stay competitive? Take a class at the Disney Institute on benchmarking.
- Have you been forced to take on another role in your company? Take a class in that field and become the expert.
- Are you stuck in a rut? Take a class to brush up on new techniques and review old techniques that are true blue.

So, what are you going to do? Improvise, Adapt or Overcome? The choice is ultimately yours in how you will survive in this economic downturn.