

# Bouncing Back from a Recession: The ABC of the Three Rs

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Every day it seems that another household name announces shorter-hours working, redundancy consultations, site closures, business re-structuring or some other form of consolidation in reaction to the current financial crisis. While it took a while for the UK to enter recession “officially”, the main talking point this time seems to be how *quickly* the downturn happened and how unprepared we were for it. Now everyone is feeling the pinch, and whether they are biting the bullet or waiting for the other shoe to drop, no-one seems immune. As ever, metaphors abound...

But what can anyone do about it?

The organisations that bounced back fastest from the last recession were those that grasped the reality of the situation and began adapting early. Commentators and business leaders are already talking about “post-recession planning” and the “turn-around” leadership skills needed to fill the void created by the erosion of trust in management. As ever, jargon abounds. But we think that the underlying message is very simple – we need to get back to basics and re-learn our ABCs and Three Rs:

**A**cknowledge the **R**eality

**B**uild honest **R**elationships

**C**ommit to delivering **R**esults

Having helped organisations during the last two recessions, we know that it’s not always an entirely “linear” process, but these are the three basic steps. Here’s what we mean and how CGR can help:-

**A**cknowledge the **R**eality

Some things that need to be done to survive a recession can damage trust and confidence. Attempts to restrict information and a failure to engage with the reality of people’s disappointment, frustration or anger damages respect and heightens uncertainty. Leaders need to be honest about their intentions, and they need to listen to staff; helping to counter false rumours and to clarify expectations. It’s not always easy to talk at a time like this, and so **Step One** we offer our services as “confidential facilitators”; of focus groups, of staff surveys and other forms of 2-way communication such as our own “Managing Through Uncertainty” programme.

**B**uild honest **R**elationships

In all of the trust and turn-around leadership literature there is a lot of talk about something we perhaps instinctively know to be true – that openness and transparency are vital to cement longstanding relationships. **Step Two** involves going beyond merely acknowledging reality to making positive moves to “right-wrongs” and repairing damaged reputations and loyalty. Again, this isn’t easy but our experienced Occupational Psychologists can help you with all aspects of team dynamics and we offer “away days” and workshops to help you to build or re-build team cohesion.

**C**ommit to delivering **R**esults

The final step is to deliver; to make good on commitments and promises by doing things differently or better. Here, we both support those working to deliver results through tailor made development and coaching programmes and we help to quantify improvements by developing 360 Feedback “before and after” measures and other KPIs. During **Step Three** CGR will help you to close the loop and to deliver a new and improved reality.

In the bicentennial of his birth, perhaps we can take inspiration from the words of Charles Darwin: *“It is not the strongest...nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change”.*

If you are already thinking ahead and want a little help adapting to the post-recession climate, why not make a start by taking to CGR?

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