When the going gets tough, a leader gets going
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For anyone in Alberta, and especially the energy industry, 2015 has not started the way many had hoped. Falling oil prices, a steady stream of corporations releasing revised and reduced corporate and/or capital budgets and non-stop press releases announcing dividend cuts have lead many industry analysts (and a couple global banks) to predict there will be blood in Alberta.

Not exactly the optimism and enthusiasm that is normally associated with the start of another new year.

Don't get me wrong, I know things are not exactly rosy right now. As an industry, we have seen better times. No doubt the current environment will continue to challenge companies from a financial perspective and with that, some will be better prepared than others. This is the way it has always been.

But it goes deeper than that. Just like some companies will be better prepared financially (or operationally, which ties back to financials), some companies will be better prepared to weather this latest storm from a leadership perspective. How organizations choose to face these challenges will be a direct result of their leadership abilities.

So, what is your job as a leader? Regardless of your level in the organization, what can you do to lead your people, your teams or perhaps your entire organization through this uncertainty?

I have three thoughts and suggestions for you.

1. **Think and provide direction.** Lead with action, not reaction. As a leader, your people look to you for guidance and information. Take some time to collect your thoughts, analyze the situation and figure out what is really going on and what it means for you and your people. There is no shortage of speculation and uncertainty in the news media and market, but as a leader you need to reduce that uncertainty or control it—not add to it. Provide clear direction and leadership to your people without adding panic.

2. **Be stable.** If we look at sports or high-profile news events such as the 2013 Calgary flood, you’ll see that the best and most effective leaders are stable, non-emotional, focused on the goals and in control of the tasks at hand. Your people are looking to you and expecting you to lead them, perhaps now more than ever before. As difficult as it may be, you must remain stable and keep your composure. Think of an airplane pilot. If, after some turbulence, a pilot announces in a panic that he doesn’t know what happened and doesn’t think he can fly the plane, you’re not going to have much faith and confidence in his abilities. However, if he calmly announces that it was just a small pocket of unstable air, you’ll likely feel much better. Be the calm pilot.
3. **Communicate.** This is the most important point and shows how you will execute the previous points. Communication is an absolute priority. The main purpose of communication in this sense is to share information and manage expectations. In times of uncertainty, what people want most is for the situation to be over, something that is easier said than done. As a leader, you must manage the situation. Although not all of the information you have to share may be positive, it is critical to make sure your people feel included and informed and aware of the true size, scope and magnitude of the situation. While you may be tempted to downplay or withhold certain pieces of information, being transparent and truthful is appreciated.

While it may too late to impact or control the organization's financial well-being, and impacting the overall economy is completely out of your control, during times of uncertainty the best and most effective leaders will turn their efforts and energy to things they can control—how they choose to lead. Reflect on these three points and see how you can incorporate them into your current style and delivery.