

# Digby Jones

## FIVE TIPS TO SUCCEED AS THE COUNTRY MOVES OUT OF RECESSION

# 1

Whatever you do ... don't overtrade. The temptation is huge. Orders pick up, demands on time, people and cash increase. Everyone is excited and relieved. Suddenly you're spending (or committing to spend) money you don't yet have ... and the bank say NO! Work hard at converting your work-in-progress to cash. It is a time for studied leadership; encourage, enthuse ... but keep your feet firmly on the deck. Remember ... more businesses go bust as the economy improves than as it deteriorates.

# 2

Keep investing in your people. If you think training's expensive, try ignorance! Involve them in your business decisions. Communicate, Communicate ... and then Communicate some more. As you get busier that extra five minutes with your people, with that awkward devil, with that "bottle of pop" salesman, with the one who doesn't quite get it ... it all seems a waste ... you have much better things to do. Well, you haven't! Your people are your differential! They're your USP. Train 'em ... train 'em ... then train 'em some more.

# 3

Do not bank your customers! That's the job of the banks! Never put a bill in unless you have agreed how much and what for ... then insist on payment on the due date, chase, chase, stay on top of it ... and stop working for people who are effectively borrowing money off you by taking time to pay you. Do not be a busy fool. Don't fall for the "well they're too important to us for us to upset them by chasing" line. What on earth is the point of working for customers who borrow money off you for free and put your business in jeopardy?

# 4

Do not rush out and take on more people as the first swallow of post-recession summer appears. Absorb the increasing workflow within your existing resource. Be imaginative as you utilise those who came through the recession with you ... overtime, flexitime, workshare ... or just good, old-fashioned hard work. Incurring the ongoing liability of taking on new people is not for you until the upturn is secure. Then move cautiously. Recruit, but on your terms. If you're a good employer; train well, fair-minded, happy workforce ... you will have no problem recruiting. But think about how to use them. Could you delegate more? Could you change working practices to enhance productivity? Could you get people to work more cleverly rather than just harder?

# 5

By investing in your people, investing in technology and kit, by chasing new leads and going after new markets (consider exporting ... there is a very big market out there ... globalisation! Get advice ... it does wonders for your competitiveness) ... you will put the ball in the net. So celebrate success! Don't be quiet about it. Throw a staff party. Your people put up with the insecurity of recession. No payrises, short time, maybe even work-for-no-pay. So be generous, share the upside ... I bet you said "we're in this together" on the way down ... so mean it on the way up ... now THAT is what bonuses should be for!