



Embrace the “New Normal”

by Mike Hawkins
mike@alpinelink.com



Call it a recession, downturn, or tentative recovery. It doesn't matter. The current economy still has significantly more capacity in it than demand. We know painfully well how difficult times are compared to what we enjoyed a couple of years ago. In the “good old days”, sales for some could be won by just showing-up. Not anymore. There are no “leftovers” to be had.

You may long for the return of the good old days, but they are not going to return the way they were before. Buyer behavior has shifted permanently. What we are dealing with is not a temporary fad.

Business models and markets have changed forever. There is no latent demand that is about to burst open. Instead, there is a “New Normal” that we must accept. The burden is now on business owners and workers to reset to the new reality.

Here are five “A”tributes that business owners and employees can embrace to be successful in the New Normal:

- **Affordable** – Extravagance is over. Customers are cost conscious. Austerity is part of the New Normal. In the past a customer might pay a premium for a convenience such as buying local. Now they expect both convenience and a low price. Price is no longer a secondary consideration. It is a primary one. Organizations must lower their costs and pass savings on to their customers.
- **Available** – With 24x7 online shopping and the cost of next day shipping less than the cost of gas for a round trip to the store, customers expect immediate availability. They want “now”. There is little patience for service providers that don't show up for a week, people that don't quickly return calls, or retailers that don't stock a certain item. Businesses must find ways to reduce waiting periods and be more responsive to their customers.
- **Advanced** – Average performance is no longer acceptable. Quantity is not a substitute for quality. There are too many advanced alternatives for people to accept mediocrity. Businesses must not only be a low-cost provider, but a high-quality supplier. A business offerings' performance, features, and functions must be at least as good as available alternatives. Businesses must put more value into their offerings.
- **Adaptable** – No longer does one-size-fit-all. Customers expect suppliers to cater to their individual needs. Customers want personalized solutions. They have little interest in generic solutions that only partially meet their needs. Businesses must incorporate flexibility into their offerings and adapt to the needs of their individualized target markets.
- **Attention to Health and the Environment** – People might not be able to pay extra for environmentally friendly or healthy products, but all else being equal, they prefer them. Businesses must promote how they reduce waste such as in their packaging and energy consumption. They must embrace healthier lifestyles and show how their products positively impact people's health.

Many businesses have gone out of business. Others are at a crossroad. They can either go out of business doing what they've been doing or they can make the shift to the new reality. If you have yet to reset, get out of your comfort zone. Embrace the New Normal. Let go of your old tired strategies that are leading you nowhere. Learn from the adversity and move forward. Don't waste the crisis you've been through. Redefine yourself and your business. You will not only survive, but will thrive.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.activatingyourambition.com), and president of Alpine Link Corporation (www.alpinelink.com), a consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

For other articles on reaching your peak potential, visit
www.alpinelink.com/Leadership_Sales_Management_Consulting_Papers_Tools_Templates.aspx.