

A high-speed photograph of a water splash against a light blue background. A vertical stream of water falls from the top, hitting a horizontal surface, creating a complex pattern of droplets and bubbles that radiate outwards. The water is clear and bright blue, with highlights and shadows that give it a three-dimensional appearance.

Organisation Physiotherapy:

Helping businesses come out of rehab

Coming back from injury....

I am writing this basking in the warm glow that comes from knowing that the UK economy is now officially out of recession...just (*"Britain has limped out of the longest and deepest recession since before the war with the economy expanding by 0.1 per cent in the last quarter of 2009"* – Telegraph.co.uk, 26/01/10). But what does this really mean for businesses out there? Are they now in the best possible shape to take advantage of the uplift?

After falling growth in 6 successive quarters since the second quarter of 2008 – a record 6% drop, the scars are just about healing, but businesses are not operating anywhere near their peak.

In essence, like an injured athlete going under the knife, having reconstructive surgery and just starting to come back from injury, businesses are in rehab. And when you are in rehab, what do you need to do to get fighting fit?...*'Organisation Physiotherapy'*, of course.

Injury prone?

A McKinsey Quarterly report in the third quarter of 2009 claimed that despite the fact that 79% of companies surveyed had cut costs in response to the global recession, only 53% felt that it had helped them weather the crisis. If cutting costs when times were bad and demand was low didn't work, what will happen to those organisations as they seek to win revenue, grow market share, launch new products and services, etc?

The challenge that those businesses are facing is that they:

- **cut costs across the board rather than where they needed to;** 10% blanket cuts may have weakened areas that they need to be strong now and failed to cut the areas where there was 'fat' or activities that could be done better in different ways
- **thought about the short-term and not what was needed in the long-term (the mythical 'quarter 5');** in cutting back they did not think about what the future opportunities might be. They did not prepare for the future, just cut back today
- **did not cut back on the non-critical activities;** organisations prosper when they are clear about what the critical activities in their business are and invest in those. At the same time they take an ongoing interest in streamlining non-critical activities. Many organisations still do not do this and have problems as a result – they build up strong capabilities in things they, quite frankly, could get other people to do!
- **are trying to do the same things, in the same ways with fewer resources;** that way madness lies. You cannot continue to do this and have a fresh and dynamic workforce. Your people will tire of doing too many things with too few resources, will not do them so well and mistakes and problems will creep in.

Their positions now as we come out of recession are weak and their performance is fragile. Trying to catch the wave of economic growth when in this state will most likely lead to a number of hiccups along the way and further set-backs. Like any number of athletes who try to come back too soon from injury, without doing the requisite strengthening activities, you get injured again and never regain full fitness.

Doing the physio

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy defines physiotherapy as being activities that *“help restore movement and function to as near normal as possible when someone is affected by injury, illness or by developmental or other disability.”* Organisation Physiotherapy is about doing just that and more for businesses that have been through the trauma of getting through the recession and now wants to thrive in the future.

At Q5 we believe this is about:

- Identifying what the underlying symptoms are
- Developing ‘therapies’ that work for those specific symptoms
- Implementing them successfully and learning from the process how to prevent the symptoms returning
- Getting your business back to peak fitness and able to take advantage of future possibilities.

It is about targeting the right solution to the right place and repeating the process again and again until the affected area has improved and performance is enhanced. We use our **Organisation Effectiveness Diagnostic**, which is a web-based tool that teases out where your current performance ‘hotspots’ are. We then work with the results to help you develop the interventions, the ‘physio’ if you will, that will target those ‘hotspots’ and enable recovery.

All this is underpinned by our engagement approach that seeks to create an honest dialogue about performance and binds people into the change, making sure all your people are totally committed to driving through the improvements you need.

In essence, this is about helping an organisation adopt a new, healthy regime of targeted ‘physio’ to get them back on track.

Your new, healthy regime

Knowing that you need ‘organisational physio’ is one thing, making it part of what you do in order to drive better performance, maximise the opportunities your business has and prevent the ‘aches and pains’ returning, is another thing entirely. Here are some ways to help your organisation heal (paraphrasing from The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy’s website):

- **Keep agile;** if you are always on the lookout for opportunities to evolve, do things better and more effectively you are more likely to turn quickly and take advantage of what comes your way

- **Increase your organisational tone;** do activities that make your core activities stronger, build capabilities and competencies in new areas and make you better prepared to withstand future challenges
- **Know your limitations;** you can't be all things to all people and you get focus on everything. You need to know what you are about and what you want to achieve and go for it, ignoring distractions and not getting bogged down in diversions
- **Maintain the right balance;** organisations need to operate at a 'healthy weight'; not too slim and not too fat. This means knowing what your ideal operating model is and building your business to that end. It means continuing to develop your people, create headroom where required, and ensure that the best people get to the top roles
- **Be creative;** if you keep doing the same things you get the same results. A cliché I know, but true and one that means you need to be creative to find solutions to issues that you face
- **Know when to seek help;** we would say this wouldn't we but knowing when some outside point of view or assistance will help you achieve step-change growth is important. You can't always do it on your own
- **Be positive;** having a positive mindset, especially after what we have all gone through is essential. Creating a real 'can do' attitude across your business can help you rebuild the confidence that you need to be successful in the future.

Coming out of recession, better than you went in

Whilst no one can totally predict the future, you can prepare for it. At Q5 we are convinced that now is the time for businesses to undertake a course of 'organisational physiotherapy'. Only by looking at where you are now, evaluating your performance and being honest about your potential to improve, can you resolve the current issues you face.

As we come out of recession the businesses that are most clear about what they do and what they stand for will win. Staying still is not an option – stiffness and inactivity are partly what causes the issues in the first place – you need to face down the challenges by facing up to the need to change.

Doing the physio will help you come out of the recession better than you went in.

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