

# Chiropractic ECONOMICS

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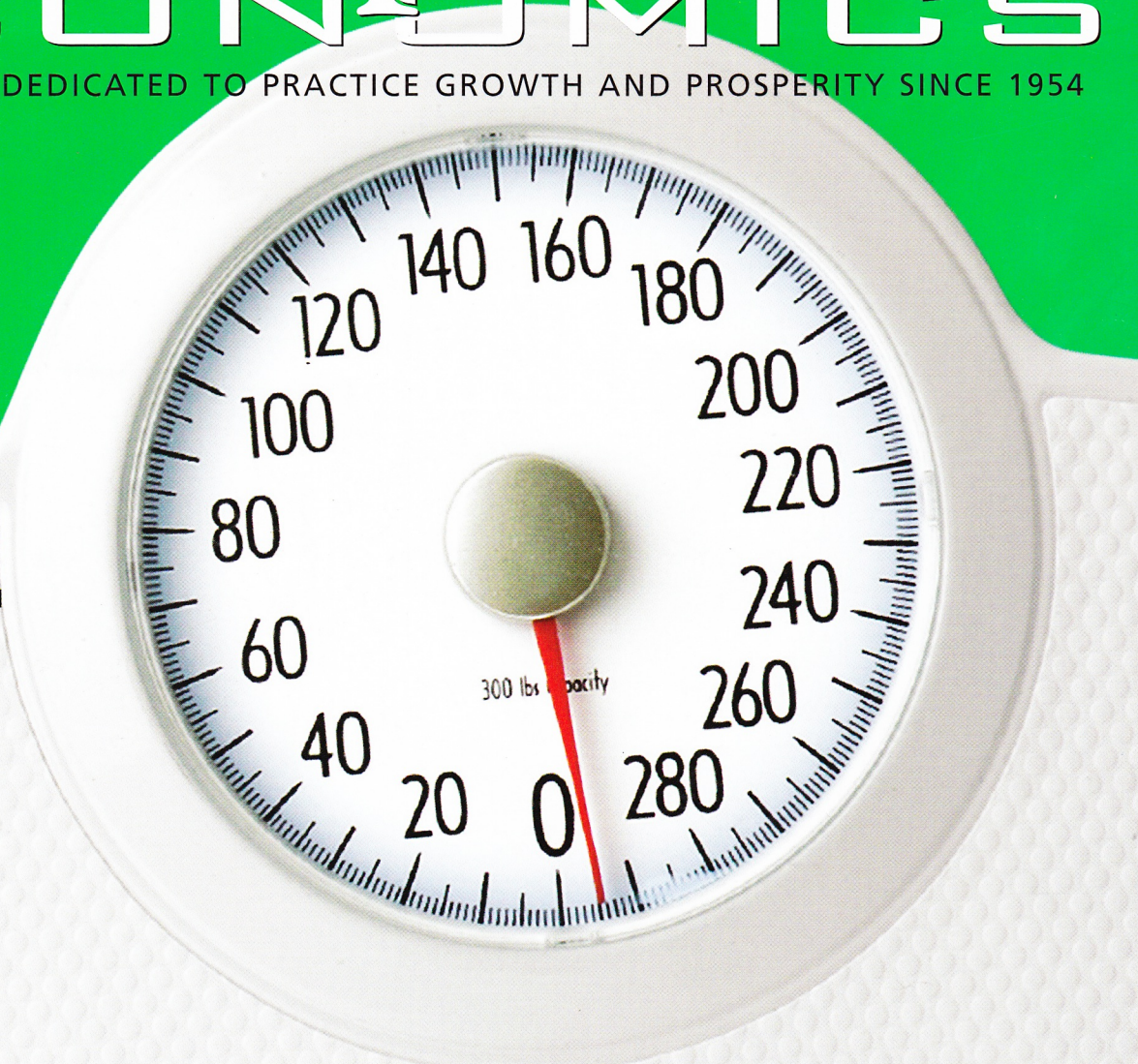
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# How to survive the downtimes

By Monica Wofford

**T**he economy has shifted. Some would say it has slowed down and gone back to a normal status. Others claim the GDP (gross domestic product) is still rising and job placements are up.

If the economic shift has affected your practice — new patients are slower to come through your door and “old” patients are postponing regular care — your staff may believe things are bad and feel their jobs are on the line.

Employees who feel their jobs are tenuous may give up caring what your business looks like.

Now is the time to change office morale from “it’s all going down” to “we can turn things around.” If you feel your team has fallen and doesn’t know how to get up, try these tips:

- **Rally the troops.** Much of the grapevine fodder in organizations is a function of miscommunication. Even in the smallest offices, one look or memo can create an avalanche of damage control and attitude issues.

Rally the troops and openly discuss what is going on with your business. What are the trends? What is affecting your business economically? Why are you adding (or discontinuing) a service, or lowering or raising prices? What can your staff do to contribute or be part of the shift?

If employees are part of the process and have needed information, they are much less likely to create their own answers.

- **Refocus training.** Training helps your staff stay current with new skills as technological advancements are made. However, skills training is not always the solution to the problem.

*For example:* Time-management training will not help employees overcome the fear of continued high-demand patients, which may be the real reason they are not greeting people when they walk in.

Refocus your training by starting with an analysis of the problem. Find out what is really causing it, and provide a solution at that level. Then, if training can help, apply the correct training program.

Refocusing your efforts may incur a slightly higher investment upfront, but will leave you with lasting results far after the downtimes have gone.

- **Get to know your staff.** Under stress, people exhibit behaviors they may not typically display.

Take time to learn more about how people behave under stress — what their backup behavior might be. Then, if an employee shows an attitude problem in a stressful time, quietly point out the behavior.

Raising the employee’s awareness of the behavior is often enough to change it and will help turn him or her around to be more rational and productive.

- **Bring in an outside source.** Voices from familiar faces lose value over time. However, when an outside source shares similar information in a different way, their credibility is automatically greater.


Bring in a consultant, advisor, or trainer whom you trust to diagnose and deliver a solution to the problems you are facing in these times.

- **Remotivate your management team.** Most chiropractic practices are very small, but are still large enough to have a management team in place.

These middle managers (your office manager, for example) feel stress from two levels: you and your employees.

They get it from you as you ask for more numbers and better results. And, they get it from employees who complain, quit, or allow personal issues to enter the workplace.

Give some thought to the middle manager(s) in your ranks who could use some kudos, a little team spirit, and a pat on the back for being the glue that helps hold the organization together.

Whether you believe times to be tough or just fine, the perception of those you work with is the reality they face every day. What you do in the downtimes shows character, strength, and conviction of your beliefs. 



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