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When your "A"s become "B"s and "C"s

A rising tide lifts all boats. When a company is doing well, growing sales, achieving customer satisfaction, etc., it is easy to see all the members of a management team as "A" players. After all, if the company is successful, why would anyone be seen as holding the company back? On the other hand, when a company's sales or its market share declines, or when customers start canceling or pulling back on orders, etc., it is easy to look around and ask, "who is at fault here?" With the 20/20 vision that comes with a crisis, the CEO begins to see more clearly, and can more readily distinguish between excellence and mediocrity.

The reality is that very few companies have 100% "A" players on their management team, and almost every company is tolerating a "B" or even a "C" player most of the time. Winston Churchill once said, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the **opportunity in every difficulty**." Smart CEOs do see the opportunities in the difficulties of today's economy. The pie is shrinking, so to stay even or grow, and effectively compete in a challenging economy, more companies are aiming at a bigger piece of the pie - increased market share.

To achieve increased market share in a down economy may require painful analysis about what it will take in terms of executive talent, and acting decisively to improve the company's ability to compete. The winning formula often means strategically replacing the sub-par person with a real leader, an impact player who can increase market share, revenue, performance, etc. Ask yourself if you've been tolerating a "B" or a "C" for too long, and if you can achieve your goals for next year with the team you have. If not, make the tough decision now, and upgrade your team.

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