

# Planning past the crisis

I recently received a membership renewal notice that started with the words “In these tough economic times...” For goodness sake, it’s a membership renewal not life insurance! Give me a reason to renew, don’t reinforce why I shouldn’t. It’s fine to acknowledge the economic uncertainty, but what we could be thinking about is how our words and actions have the ability to influence a more purposeful, meaningful outcome that inevitably emerges out of the experience and clarity gained by riding the rougher waters.

Which reminds me of a story. Some time ago on a whitewater rafting trip, I found myself among a group of tourists plummeting toward a mammoth-sized fallen tree. The boat hit the tree straight on and started to take on water. Joe, our tour guide, immediately ordered everyone out of the boat and onto the log. As the rest of the crew abandoned ship, I noticed the paddles were starting to float away. So I grabbed them. And since the boat seemed to have stabilized, I continued to collect the paddles and calmly tuck each one securely under the seat. The guide wasn’t impressed with my planning. He – like the rest of the crew – was focused on the crash. But no one was complaining 30 minutes later when we continued along the journey – paddles in hand.

We need to give people a reason to get back on board. I’m talking about using our current experience as a means to greater clarity and then developing strategies that use our creativity and ingenuity to move toward the results we desire in a careful, measured way. Success doesn’t usually happen in giant leaps. Success is a process of small, intentional steps. The first step is gaining clarity.

In my group coaching sessions, we often start with an exercise to Name what we want. What happens, however, is that participants often have a longer list of what they don’t want, what’s not quite right or what’s not working in their current work experience. So start there. List all of those annoyances, disappointments, irritants. Get more paper if you need to.

But now comes the fun part – and you need to make time for this or you’ll stay stuck in the negative churn. Take each item on your list and reframe it to an affirmative statement (ie. what it is you really want). For example, you would reframe the statement ‘our internal staff meetings are tedious and always start late’ to something you do want such as ‘our internal staff meetings are well run and purposeful with an agenda, a commitment to start and stop on time, and minutes that clearly outline who is responsible for each action’. Keep reframing and rephrasing each of the statements that aren’t working into something that you want to see happening in your team. This is a simple, but powerful exercise that acknowledges the specifics of what is not working and then uses that information to create more clarity so that people have a unified focus.


With your list of powerful intentions now firmly in hand, you’re ready to start strategizing on how to get from A to B. And for that, you might wish you had held on to your paddles!



Karen Kelloway

**We need to give people a reason to get back on board.**

## Questions for Reflection

1. What opportunities do you see (individually, as a team, as an organization)?
2. How do those opportunities fit into your broader vision?
3. What’s not working or not quite right? (Make a list)
4. How can you reframe each item on your list from question three in a way that starts you moving more powerfully toward those opportunities?
5. What’s possible with your current resources? What else is possible with your current resources?
6. What other support do you need to move forward?
7. How are you going to celebrate the milestones? 

Based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Karen Kelloway is a certified executive coach trained through Royal Roads University. Karen works with motivated, dedicated professionals to take their performance at work to breakthrough levels. Through her business columns, tele-classes, individual and group coaching, Karen provides the tools and know-how to get the results you desire. Visit [kellowaycoaching.com](http://kellowaycoaching.com), email [Karen@kellowaycoaching.com](mailto:Karen@kellowaycoaching.com) or call 902-444-3985. The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of *Atlantic Business Magazine*.