

## Welcome to the 'new normal' - and normal it is not

by Carl Donnelly

**If you and your team are waiting for things 'to return to normal - to survive the current storm' - then not even the best life-saving kit will help you.**

**Here are a few indicators of the 'new normal'.**

### **The new normal may well include investor intervention**

Banks and investors may seriously question the senior management team's ability to deliver in terms of financial covenants. Therefore, expect:

- lenders restructuring investment teams to take a robust approach to incumbent management. These teams will not shy away from insisting on change to ensure that financial covenants are achieved.
- lenders to take a close look at the 'mindset' of the team. Are they anchored in day-to-day survival? Or are they in an optimistic forward thinking "Thrive" mode, supported with creative, yet realistic ideas to grow the business.

### **The consumer's impact on the new normal will definitely see**

- consumers using a variety of channel distribution methods to gain knowledge on price and service delivery - mobile phones as well as PCs and laptops.
- an expectation of instant access to information, high-quality content and a fast response.
- social networking media content - product and service reviews - which will influence consumer decision making.
- demographics having an impact with the 50+ market seeking not just value but authentic, practical, convenient and affordable exclusivity.

### **Order making will replace order taking in terms of sales initiatives**

- Conference & events and room sales teams will need to be coached and developed on this important business dynamic.
- Researching internal data on past and present customers and good record keeping are essential traits in an effective 'order maker'.

### **Lifting the mood and focusing on consistency and creativity will be the new norm with service delivery**

- Create an atmosphere that encourages revenue-producing 'dwell time' by using atmospheric touch points in lobbies and welcome points in bars and restaurants. Offer free tastings and product samples - your suppliers may help you fund this.
- Revisit your food and beverage product offering - revisit does not necessarily mean

reducing your prices and margins. Clever re-engineering using good value products is the best route.

- Remember your team is under pressure so seek genuine ways to lift and sustain their mood. Switch from constantly pressing your teams to 'sell more and reduce costs' to encourage your teams to 'give more genuine customer value'.