



Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda...

“Coulda, shoulda, woulda...” That’s the usual response we get from my husband whenever someone in the family looks in retrospect at something that didn’t turn out quite the way they had hoped it would. If we had studied harder, we could have received a better grade. If we had waited just a little longer, that suit, television, snow blower, or computer would have gone on sale and saved us some money. If we had handled that presentation better, we would have landed that big project. The sky’s the limit when it comes to situations where we might have done something just a little sooner, faster or better and achieved an



Think about this for a minute. Had you assumed at some point in your business planning that a long, drawn out recession could hit, and given some thought to ways you could, or should, react, do you think your firm ‘coulda, shoulda, woulda’ fared differently when it actually did happen? How might you have planned for your biggest client or customer leaving you for a competitor? What might you have done when a major customer stopped paying your invoices on time? What if a large sector of your customer base all of a sudden just disappeared? What if one of your biggest vendors or suppliers suddenly went out of business? Too often we blindly roll along from day to day, thinking that life is fine and our business is doing well—until one of these things actually occurs. Then, we enter scramble mode, trying, or at least hoping, to get things back under control.

All of these things, and more, have occurred over the past several years; in many cases with devastating effects. Too many organizations were hit by the *shock and awe* of it all, never having thought a recession of this scope and magnitude could actually hit their businesses. They had not created an emergency plan to address major change.

I’m a big fan of Jack Stack, CEO of [SRC Holdings Corp.](#) (formerly Springfield Remanufacturing Corp.), in Springfield, Missouri. The organization started in 1983. Stack and a dozen partners banded together to buy a floundering division of International Harvester to save its employees jobs. Today, SRC employs over 1200 people in 17 business units.

In an interview ([No More Etch-a-Sketch Planning](#)) in the December, 2001 issue of Inc. magazine, as the US faced a dip in the economy, Stack shared that his company routinely plans for recessionary times. *“We’ve been planning for a recession for the past 19 years. For 18 of them we looked pretty stupid. Now we look smart.”* Always planning for the hard times, or at least talking about them and how challenges might be addressed can be the difference between a company’s survival or destruction.



Scenario planning can make a major difference in an organization’s ability to cope with significant changes to your business environment. It can put you in a position to better understand and manage risks that could realistically confront you in the future. Think of the process as asking your leaders a series of ‘What if?’ and ‘Then what?’ questions. What could seriously affect your company’s ability to grow and succeed? What if the cost of oil quadruples? What if incandescent light bulbs become illegal? How might these things affect your business or your suppliers’ businesses?

You might want to give some thought to some of the things that could plausibly become reality in the not too distant future and how those changes could affect your ability to succeed. Pre-thinking your options can assure your continued growth in spite of hurdles and barricades thrown in your path.

VISUALIZE - ANALYZE - STRATEGIZE

‘Designing Strategies’ is a publication of: **Maurer Consulting Group**

812 Westridge Rd. | Akron, OH 44333 | 330.666.0802 | tlmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com