

## Grow Your Small Business in a Bad Economy

Corpus Christi, TX – The National Federation of Independent Businesses' May 2008 survey paints a picture of some very stressed out small business owners. Small business' earnings are at their lowest point since 1992 and 9 in 10 owners surveyed expect the economy to continue to decline over the next six months. Laura Harris, a nationally renowned speaker and author of the new small business owner self-help book "Surrender to Win" (October 2008 release), says, "The answer for small business owners in hard economic times is to hire and retain the right staff." Here are Harris' 5 hiring tips: 1) Take enough time to get to know your prospective team member rather than hiring on a gut reaction. Part of the interview process should include introducing the potential employee to key staff so you know how the team members will interact. This process can be invaluable. 2) Don't hire a prospective employee with an unprofessional phone voice or sloppy appearance. The first impression you have of a perspective employee is the same first impression a client will have of your company. 3) Hire an inexperienced person you can train to mesh with your style of leadership. Personnel with experience often come with old habits and pre-conceived notions. Training someone from scratch means you can mold them to perform the way you prefer. 4) 'Steal' good employees from other industries. Someone who goes above and beyond for their current company has a good enough work ethic to work hard for yours. 5) Hire someone with different strengths and weaknesses than your existing team rather than hiring someone just based on how much you like them. Adding staff should expand what your business has to offer. And Harris' 5 tips to retain and grow employees who think like owners: 1) Every company needs a foundation of uniformly enforced rules and guidelines on which to agree. Create a detailed employee handbook and stick to the guidelines so everyone (including you) knows the company policy. Having rules in writing helps the employees understand what is expected of them so they can succeed as a group member. 2) Invest in your employee's education by paying for courses and offering time off to take classes. Rather than worry your team member will get so smart they'll leave or want a raise – worry your business will remain stagnant if you don't invest in employee education and they don't grow their current level of expertise. 3) Help your employees put their families first. Allow time off for children and parents when it's needed. Putting family first doesn't detract from the job – it creates a well balanced work environment for the boss and the employees. 4) Hire responsible people, take the time to train them well and give them room to work. Micromanaging stifles creativity, creates second guessing and leads to stress for both the owner and the employee. 5) Be loyal to your staff and they will be loyal to you. Spend time investing in the right person so they stay with you. A resignation or firing is disruptive to the flow of business and bad for the morale of everyone remaining on the team. And Harris says sometimes it's not the employee you need to fire – it's the client. "Know what type of client gives you the highest return and is the most hassle free. Gear your advertising and public relations toward taking on new clients like those." Owning a small business can be less stressful and more successful with the right team members and clients.

### About the Author

Laura Harris is a nationally renowned speaker who has helped hundreds of small business owners throughout the United States improve individual and business performance while inspiring them to simplify their lives and renew a passion for developing a business that outlives them. Harris has been in the insurance industry since 1979 and opened her own insurance agency in 1994. Laura has acquired the prestigious insurance designations of CLU, CIC and ChFC. Laura is a fourth-degree black belt and USTU Certified Master Instructor in Taekwondo. She lives in Corpus Christi, Texas with her children and grandchildren. "Surrender to Win" is her first book geared toward helping small business owners build their companies and their staff. [www.lauraharris.com](http://www.lauraharris.com)

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