

# 10 STRATEGIES

TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS  
IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

A close-up photograph of a Bird of Paradise flower (Strelitzia reginae) with vibrant orange and yellow petals and a dark blue-green bract. The flower is set against a background of dark, moody clouds. The large, dark green leaves are covered in water droplets, suggesting a recent rain. The overall mood is dramatic and resilient.

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## Introduction

A tougher economy does not mean your business cannot survive. But it does mean you need to be more intentional, instead of reactive.

When customers become cautious, the businesses that **stay visible, protect cash flow, and adapt quickly are often the ones that come through stronger**. The businesses that struggle most are often the ones that keep operating as if nothing has changed, or scramble to try and fix the situation when it is already too late.

This is not the time for panic. It is the time for strategy.

This guide gives you 10 practical ways to make your business more resilient, more relevant, and more ready for changing conditions. You do not need to do everything at once. But you do need to start looking honestly at where your business is vulnerable, where money may be leaking, and where opportunities may still exist.

### 1. Protect cash flow like it is oxygen

Cash flow is what keeps your business moving. You can be profitable on paper and still run into trouble if cash is not coming in when you need it.

In tougher times, many businesses get caught out not because they have no demand, but because they do not have enough working cash to ride out slower payments, reduced sales, or rising costs.

Start by reviewing what is coming in, what is going out, and what can be tightened.

Prioritise:

- chasing overdue invoices (offer payment plans)
- tightening payment terms where needed (if your client needs your product or service to operate, then they will pay you first, if not then you might end up chasing the money and will be the last on their list to be paid. Be careful who you offer terms to, and ideally avoid it all together if possible)

- reducing slow-moving stock, or cut back service options (cash is king in best of times, clearing stock that's costing you time/money/space, will help bring in cash for the most in demand product)
- cutting unnecessary spending (it's time to comb over your expenses and really cut back on the nice to have but not critical)

If cash flow is weak, everything else gets harder. Marketing becomes harder. Hiring becomes harder. Decision-making becomes more reactive. The more clearly you understand your cash position, the more power you have to act early instead of scrambling later.

Remember borrowing funds to invest in growth is opportunity, but borrowing to pay your bills is dangerous. If you do not have the capital for growth, you may be able to get finance now, but you will not be able to get it when you are not making ends meet.

## 2. Cut unnecessary overheads

When conditions tighten, every expense needs to justify its place.

Go through your costs line by line. Ask whether each expense is helping you deliver your product or service well, retain customers, generate leads, improve efficiency, or support growth. If it is not, it may need to be reduced, renegotiated, paused, or removed.

That might include:

- underused software
- excess space
- low-value subscriptions
- duplicate tools
- branding or ad spend with no clear return

This does not mean cutting blindly. Some businesses make the mistake of cutting the very things that help them stay visible or operate well. The goal is not to strip your business to the bone. The goal is to remove waste so your business becomes leaner and more sustainable.

**Word of warning:** most businesses cut their marketing spend first, as its the one that seems the easiest, however there have been plenty of cases where spending more on marketing in touch economic times has been a blessing for the business.

For example - a women's clothing boutique that was forced to shut it's store during Covid restrictions, instead of accepting their sad fete, they invested \$60K in one month on Meta ads, which results in \$1.2 million in eCommerce sales for just one month, which was the highest grossing month EVER, all while their primary sales channel was shut. The reason it was so successful is the business already had all the bones in place, quality eCommerce store, large email list, and they were clear on their target customer and what they wanted. Achieving the same result would not have been possible, if they had to create an eCommerce store and email list AFTER they realised their primary location would be closed. Always remember: **Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.**

### 3. Invest in skills and expert advice

This is not the time to wing it.

When money is tight, it can be tempting to avoid spending on support. But poor decisions become more expensive in hard times. If your pricing is off, your marketing is weak, your positioning is unclear, or your systems are messy, those issues can quietly drain far more money than the cost of fixing them.

Invest in the support that helps you make smarter decisions. That might mean working with a strategist, marketing expert, accountant, mentor, or specialist who can help you see what is not working and where the best opportunities are.

Sometimes the fastest way to think outside the box is to get advice from someone who is not stuck inside your box.

## 4. Get your marketing right and audit it now

A tighter market is not the time to disappear. It is the time to market more clearly and more strategically.

Before you spend more money, review what is already happening in your marketing. Many businesses are wasting money simply because they have never stopped to assess what is actually working.

Ask:

- Which channels are actually bringing leads, enquiries, or sales?
- Which efforts are draining time or money without delivering results?
- Is your message clear and relevant to current customer pain points?
- Are you still targeting the right audience for current conditions?
- Are you following up properly with leads, past customers, and your community?

Make sure your marketing communicates:

- who you help
- what problem you solve
- why it matters now
- why your offer is worth buying

A tougher economy usually does not reward louder marketing. It rewards clearer marketing. Businesses that understand their audience, sharpen their messaging, and stop wasting money on random tactics are often far better positioned than businesses that panic and pull back.

## 5. Focus on the segments still able and willing to spend

Your usual customer may not be your best customer during an economic slowdown.

Different customer groups feel economic pressure differently. Some become extremely cautious. Others still have spending capacity, but become more selective. Some will only buy when something feels urgent, practical, or strongly justified.

Look at:

- industries less affected
- buyers with stronger financial flexibility
- customers with urgent pain points
- customers who still prioritise convenience, quality, compliance, or milestone spending

This may mean adjusting your messaging, packages, or even your target market. It might not be your original dream customer, but a customer with money and a current need may help keep the business stable while the market shifts.

## **6. Make your offer easier to buy**

Many businesses assume they have only two choices in a downturn: keep prices the same and hope for the best, or slash prices and damage margins.

Usually there is a better option.

Instead of immediately discounting everything, think about how you can make your offer easier to buy.

Consider:

- smaller packages
- phased services
- payment plans
- off-peak discounts
- bundles
- lower-risk entry offers

The goal is to reduce friction without destroying value. You want customers to feel that saying yes is more manageable, not that your brand has suddenly become cheap or unstable. A good examples on pricing: if a business advisor said that it will cost you \$5200 to work with you for the year, and you will meet once a week. This might feel uncomfortable, and a big investment. What if this was positioned as - it will only cost

you \$100 to work with an advisor for the year. Same price. Completely different value proposition.

## 7. Nurture your community

People are more likely to buy from businesses they trust.

In harder times, trust matters even more. Businesses that have strong relationships, goodwill, and an engaged audience are often more resilient than businesses that constantly rely on cold outreach.

Stay connected through:

- email updates
- pre-order specials
- loyalty offers
- appreciation messages
- events or collaborations
- regular communication

Community creates resilience. When people feel connected to your business, they are more likely to keep buying, refer others, engage with your content, and think of you when they are ready to spend.

**Ask for help** - your community and loyal customer are likely to rally to support your business if they know you need help. One of the most effective marketing posts I have seen was a tradie posting on a Facebook Buy Swap Sell group, saying that he has made some mistakes in his life but is now turning his life around for his son, and is starting a decking restoration business and to keep him in mind if you need your deck fixed. The post went off! 400 comments promising to get in touch. The value in small businesses to consumers is it is personable, there is a person behind it, working hard. Share your story.

## 8. Use quieter periods to generate demand

Most businesses have slower periods, quieter days, or unused capacity. In a tougher economy, those gaps matter more.

Instead of just accepting quiet periods as lost time, look for ways to create offers or campaigns that help generate demand without undermining your premium periods.

Could you create:

- weekday specials
- limited-time offers
- local promotions
- referral incentives
- tactical campaigns for quieter times

This is especially useful for service businesses, venues, hospitality operators, wellness providers, and any business with time-based capacity. A quieter slot that is strategically filled can still create cash flow, visibility, and future referrals.

## 9. Look for creative partnerships and contra trades

When cash is tight, it helps to think creatively about how value can still move.

Ask where value can be exchanged.

This may include:

- swapping services
- sharing venue space
- collaborating on promotions
- co-hosting events
- partnering with complementary businesses

A contra arrangement can work well when both parties genuinely need what the other offers. A partnership can also help you reach new audiences, reduce costs, or create more value than you could alone.

Just be sure the arrangement is fair, clear, and commercially sensible. A good partnership should support your business, not create confusion or hidden costs.

## 10. Re-think how you use what you already have

Your business may already have underused assets that could become part of the solution.

Think about:

- unused retail or office space
- spare appointment capacity
- underused equipment
- excess stock
- skills that could be repackaged
- content that could be turned into a product or resource

Sometimes resilience comes less from building something completely new and more from using what you already have in a smarter way. That could mean renting out part of a space, turning knowledge into a digital resource, packaging an existing service differently, or monetising capacity that would otherwise sit idle.

For product businesses, pre-orders can also be a smart way to test demand before committing to production. This can reduce risk, protect cash flow, and stop you from tying up money in stock that may move too slowly.

## The bottom line

Recession-proofing your business is not about fear. It is about strategy. All of the ideas above are a good idea anyway, regardless of looming economic downturns or not.

The businesses that adapt fastest are often the ones that stay alive, protect momentum, and come out stronger. There are always stories of businesses that survive, pivot, and even thrive during difficult economic times. The difference is often

their willingness to respond to what is changing rather than clinging to what used to work.

Start with the easiest actions first. Protect cash flow. Get clear on your market. Improve your offer. Stay visible. Keep building trust. And do not be afraid to get expert support if you need a clearer path forward.

## Here to help

At Strategy to Impact we are committed to supporting businesses with everything they need to nail their strategy, be it personalised advice, expert guides to build your business acumen and capability, or marketing audits to help you waste money on marketing. There is an option to suit any budget and capability. If you need help with any of above ideas, or identifying your from-survival-to-success strategies you may find these options valuable:

1. [The Lowest Hanging Fruit - Marketing Planning Guide](#)

Everything you need to know about marketing to make sure



2. [Marketing Impact Audit](#)

Independent review of why your marketing isn't meeting expectations



3. [1:1 consultation and strategy workshop with Katya Ellis](#)

Problem solve your individual case with an expert

