





**J**ack Stack, CEO of SRC Holdings, is an early riser. That comes from a lifetime of working in factories. But these days, in the middle of the coronavirus crisis, Stack is getting even less sleep than normal. “My day starts at 4:30 a.m.,” he says.

Stack, like most business leaders these days, is trying everything he can think of to help keep SRC’s people safe and its factories running. That includes coming up with contingency plans to retain SRC’s employee-owners even if the factories are forced to shut down. Survival, to say the least, is a stressful job.

But Stack has a secret weapon: SRC’s culture, which is built on the foundation of the leadership system called The Great Game of Business®. The Great Game™ was actually bolted together on the factory floor of SRC’s first plant, now called SRC Heavy Duty. Stack and his associates spun Heavy Duty out of their parent company, International Harvester, right in the middle of the 1983 recession.

You could say that SRC was playing from behind right from its start. It had a debt-to-equity ratio of 89-to-1, which meant any missed payments would mean closing the factory doors. The recession was also hitting demand for their main product: remanufactured diesel truck engines. What had worked in the past

wasn’t going to help the company survive in the future.

The idea behind the Great Game was to get everyone inside the business—from the folks on the frontline to the executives—to work together as a team. There would be no secrets—including the company’s financials. In fact, the financials became the team’s scorecard, their North Star; the goal that

guided them through their toughest times. The financials gave them a common language to communicate with and to plan their next actions. That included finding ways to diversify their business and to find ways to earn small wins, especially when things looked the darkest. Perhaps just as importantly, the team began to develop the confidence to look past the crisis confronting them

today by developing growth and contingency plans for the future.

What’s remarkable is that SRC has relied on this same game to not just survive, but also thrive through four economic recessions. And the tough times we’re weathering today will be no different. In short, the Great Game of Business was designed and built to help companies facing a crisis—just like many of us are today. That’s why now is the time to double down on the principles and practices of the Great Game. And you can do that best by revisiting the Ten Steps that help everyone Get in the Game.



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## Step 1 | Begin with the Right Leadership

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At any given moment, the average person is seeking leadership. Throw in a global pandemic and widespread panic, and that same person craves leadership. And like it or not, it's you they're looking to.

To deal with what is happening today, you'll need to get your leadership team together and reconnect with the four characteristics Great Game leaders share: Humility, Vulnerability, Servant leadership, and Courage. In times like these, you'll need them.

Once aligned, you can begin working on your plan of action. This is a great time to remember the first core belief of GGOB leadership: If I don't inform my people, someone else will. Right now, EVERYONE is informing your people, and not in a good way. The misinformation is so bad, that FEMA created a coronavirus Rumor Control site a couple of days ago. Have you created your own rumor control? Start now by taking the fear out of your organization. (You can read here about how Jack Stack encourages you to take the fear out of your workplace.) Tell your team what your real situation is, and what you plan to do.

## Step 2 | Share the Why Before the How

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While you probably have your noble cause, your values, and vision, you might consider a short term 'why' to get (and keep) everyone focused and energized. Today, your 'why' is probably about jobs. Specifically, your plan for protecting jobs. In uncertain times, SRC's founder and CEO, Jack Stack, is a master at defining the 'end of the world' scenario—the day we are out of cash and we have to lock the doors forever—and then moonwalking away from the edge of that cliff, one step at a time. By establishing levels or stages of response to a crisis situation, we can put that crisis in perspective. We may say that the last thing we'll do is cut jobs. One step back from that is to cut healthcare benefits and 401k match. Another step back is to share the burden by

sharing salary cuts. Yet another might be to ask people to take vacation time. The furthest step away from the end of the world is to say: "Here we are today. We're okay, but we need to act fast. What ideas do we have to salvage revenue and lower costs?"

When people are not worried about survival, whether it be a threat to their health or their finances, they cannot think clearly. By removing panic, you create a safe space, and in doing so, you can unlock some of the most creative thinking you've ever seen.

## Step 3 | Open the Books and Teach the Numbers

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There is no better time to be transparent than right now. Teaching your people the economic realities of the business (not just showing them the numbers) garners trust far more than treating them like children by 'protecting them' from the real story. This is the perfect time to not only teach your people about the business but also how each and every person in the company connects to the financials...and how you can ask them for help to improve the story.

In our book, *Get in the Game*, we walk through the 'Dollar Exercise.' Consider doing this again with people. Let's say you are at 6-cent profitability. It literally only takes a minute to show folks that every dollar they can save in costs or expenses is worth \$16.67 in sales! Now connect everyone to a line item on the income statement, ask them to take ownership of it and to make a change to the positive. If they find a thousand dollars in savings this week, that's covering over \$16,670 in lost sales! In the coming months, revenue is likely to constrict, so connecting people to their impact on the financials is incredibly important. After all, who is more likely to impact the number than the person closest to the number?

## Step 4 | Focus on the Critical Number

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You may have established your Critical Number last fall planning process. Maybe it is Net Operating Income or Revenue per Employee. No matter what it is, right now, cash may be your Critical Number. You need to know where your cash is. You're not abandoning your plan; the goal post didn't change. But right now, how you're going to get to the goal changes with every play. Make sure you don't run out of cash so you can pursue your other plans unencumbered.

## Step 5 | Act on the Right Drivers

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How can we get more revenue? Are we following up with customers on receivables? What can everyone do to help the organization—that's the question. Right now, it's all about the line of sight. Concentrate on helping your people make the connection to things that improve your cash to cash cycle: accounts receivable days, inventory days and accounts payable days it's about teaching business and generating cash. Plus, these are some of the same things that become great MiniGame targets!

## Step 6 | Create an Early Win with MiniGames

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Right now, we are seeing a lot of MiniGames around driving revenue and cutting costs. But how's your team's morale? MiniGames on morale and culture are not as common, but also might be your secret weapon in keeping everyone in the right mindset. Others are using the current slowdown to execute on their 'list of things to do when there's nothing to do', like cleaning and performing long-needed maintenance while their workforce is not in full-on production. Another is paying teams to participate in training, which will be invaluable in preparing for the upturn that will follow the current crisis.

## Step 7 | Provide A Stake in the Outcome®

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There are a number of companies reporting record performance right now, but most are feeling the pinch of canceled or delayed orders. Many can see that paying out a bonus may not be in the foreseeable future. This is an important time to not only be transparent, but creative. Transparency can help people understand why they're not in bonus territory, but why not celebrate even tiny wins as soon as they happen? One digital marketing agency told us they have been taking a moment to celebrate every contract they sign, even a \$300 win. Given some thought, your teams will come up with amazing ways to keep people connected and 'up' during tough times.

## Step 8 | Keep Score

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Now more than ever, you need to keep up the discipline of tracking, measuring and reporting. You and your teams deserve to know exactly where you stand at any given moment. Some organizations are reporting that they have extended their pipeline far into the future, so they can see light at the end of the tunnel. Others tell us that they are creating new scoreboard opportunities, so quarantined and dispersed workers can measure progress. Sometimes, any forward progress is what we need to see just to keep our spirits up.

## Step 9 | Follow the Action

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Huddling keeps us connected and informed, and there are so many platforms that allow us to be in a virtual room together. Keep Huddling! Maybe even increase their frequency. Right now, accountability within a safe environment is essential. Forecasting may seem truly impossible. But now more than ever you must stick with the discipline of forward forecasting. The numbers don't lie. It's better to see things coming. If it's good, we can look

forward to it. If it's bad, we have time to make some moves to mitigate their impact.

## Step 10 | Sustain with High-Involvement Planning

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Just yesterday someone told us they could not even imagine thinking about planning right now. But in fact, you are probably practicing High-Involvement Planning right now. Getting people together to leverage the wisdom of the crowd, creating a game plan for the next 90 days and taking action...that's what makes everyone feel better. Action cures fear. And the right action sets you up for success in the future.

What can we learn from what's happening right now? What opportunities are beginning to emerge in the marketplace? Are we set up to handle the inevitable upturn next year—or even if it comes sooner, maybe the end of this year?

## REMEMBER, YOU'RE NOT ALONE

We recognize how scary things are today—and it's not clear when the storm clouds will clear away. What's important to recognize is that by doubling down on the Ten Steps of Getting in the Game, you can help stabilize and solidify the culture inside your business to best prepare yourself for the opportunities that will come when the upturn arrives. And if you're feeling overwhelmed and still not sure how to start, remember that you're not alone. The Great Game community is here to help. Visit [www.greatgame.com](http://www.greatgame.com) to access a range of resources and tools—as well as the ability to connect virtually with coaches and practitioners just like you—all with a goal of helping you and your team get through these tough times.





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