



LEADING NOW: SHIFTING FROM CRISIS TO RESPONSE

As leaders and teams experience, discover and adapt to the impact of the pandemic, they will experience different sets of emotions, challenges and opportunities. As some countries, communities and organizations are just now starting to feel the psychological and economic tensions caused by the coronavirus, others are months into the experience. With the successive waves of change caused by the evolution of the situation, come successive phases of leadership challenge: shifting from crisis to response, maintaining momentum and shaping the new normal.

Leading in a time of crisis can be a real test of anyone's strongest leadership skills and practices. The best-laid plans must be reconsidered, teams are distracted, markets are volatile and customers' once semi-predictable behaviors seem to obey entirely new rules, or no rules at all. In other words, the way you have been leading your organization so far just won't cut it today. This is truly a time of tightrope balance. It's a time to acknowledge concern and ensure your teams have enough positive energy not to freeze. To address short-term operational and commercial issues and make sure no one loses track of the bigger picture.

Helping the team, and yourself, move rapidly into response mode requires these three key principles:

1

ACKNOWLEDGE THE DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCES

Everyone will experience turbulent times in their own, unique ways. While some will need their action-focused energy channeled to the right priorities, others will need time to step back and reflect. Ensure your communication and actions acknowledge the diversity of experiences by providing a balance of supportive care and dynamic rallying to action.

Not only are we likely to experience crisis differently, our individual reactions will shift over time. It's important to stay attentive to people's responses in the moment: check in, listen and observe. While this may be more difficult to accomplish when everyone is working from home, take the time to have video conference-based chats that give you and your team members the time to be with your emotions and reactions to the situation.

2

INFORM ON WHAT YOU KNOW

Turbulent times are often times of misinformation. As our usual reference points are shaken, we look for cues and certainty everywhere. In the absence of communication from leaders, we interpret silence. In the absence of useful, tangible communication from leaders, we make up our own. Communicating quickly, often and truthfully is of the utmost importance. Share what you know and be ready to acknowledge you don't have all the answers. As you decide to relay critical messages from authorities, for instance, do so with a few comments on what this means to you, your teams and the business. Make it real by being clear on what behaviors you want to see in your organization.

3

LEAD TOGETHER

Now is the time to partner with trusted advisors, experts and colleagues to make the most of the collective wisdom at your disposal. Social distancing shouldn't mean leadership distancing. Stay 'close' to thought partners who can help gauge the impact of your messaging and actions. Be sure not to rely on feedback from those who agree with you or hold the same position of power in your organization, but instead check in with colleagues whose style, point of view and personal experience are significantly different from yours. Take the pulse of the organization across all levels. Remember, it's much easier to feel 'in control' of a situation when one actually is in a situation of control.

The events we're experiencing globally are and will remain significant tests for our leadership skills and habits. By definition, this is a period of adaptation and stretch, where speed and endurance are both needed.

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