



MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

The COVID-19 pandemic has catapulted a lot of businesses into uncharted territory. It has brought a whole new meaning to the phrase 'change is the only constant'. Living and working in the new normal of radical uncertainty is a true test of our ability to deal with high levels of anxiety and ambiguity. As the virus spreads its way across the world, we see different countries and their people at different points of the change spectrum. Some have been through the worst of the crisis and seem to be emerging at the other end of the tunnel whilst others are seeing a resurgence of the virus.

Our initial response to a crisis was one of an adrenaline surge; many organizations and leaders did what it took to ensure safety and care for their employees and business overall. But as economic and health implications unfold, we are realizing there are no quick fixes or easy answers. Moving from a crisis response into a period of ongoing stressors, constant ambiguity creates a state of chronic anxiety. Many leaders have accepted that they will need to find new ways to lead through the crisis and into a changed world over the next few years.

Resilience is not isolated to a crisis response; resilience encompasses our personal resources that help us to grow, learn and adapt to change. Leaders can build more resilience in their people by practically supporting their people to strive to survive through these tough times, so they can thrive again and create a sustainable future.

1 SUPPORT

Most leaders did a good job at reaching out to their people when we initially responded to the crisis, to ensure they had enough emotional and infrastructural support at hand. Our client conversations show that this is a lever that most leaders are struggling with at a personal level. Whilst they are offering support and compassion to those around them, they are failing to access similar support for themselves. Leaders need to recognize that they are also going through significant change, and to identify who they can confide in to process their emotions and concerns. Also, as teams look at a prolonged period of social isolation, leaders need to be creative in terms of how they create a culture of support. Teams need a mix of formal, structured support and informal support. For formal, leaders can set up peer coaching pairs or create a space on their team agenda to share personal challenges. Informally, leaders can continue to bring as much fun or humor to other virtual connections. If you work in a global or regional organization, reaching out to someone who is at a different phase of the crisis, it helps to look at our experience through a different point of view.

2 CONFIDENCE

Many leaders responded to the crisis by addressing short term concerns with a focus on securing people and teams, but uncertainties about the business and the future still loom large, especially in the minds of senior leaders. Anxieties that were originally about health and wellbeing have now morphed into uncertainty about the economy and jobs of people we lead. This is the time to separate our anxieties around that which we can control and that which we cannot. Reverting back to purpose and values and taking decisions in the present while keeping future options open is critical. Leaders need to constantly reframe and simplify the situation for their teams, to ensure their confidence is built to keep progressing one step at a time into a new future.

3 STRIVING

Leaders and their teams found new ways of delivering and collaborating in the need to rapidly move to remote working. However, after a prolonged period working in uncertainty, most goal-oriented individuals will start to feel lost as the business' objectives keeping shifting and leaders need to keep reforecasting. Traditionally, successful organizations may have reverted to scenario planning but given the nature of this pandemic, while scenarios can be planned, the probability of any of these being reality is unknown. Hence, the best thing leaders can do is to simplify goals, both for themselves and those around them. Becoming sharper about immediate priorities and defining actions for the team that help them keep their purpose alive is the best response to keep the momentum. For example, in the next 4 weeks we will focus upon XYZ... (This requires a shift away from a perfectionist mindset and a constant review of what should be aimed for in this time and what needs to be deferred). This is a time where not just what we take up, but more importantly, what we let go of becomes critical.

4 RECOVERY

The move to remote working forced people to review their understanding of what energizes and de-energizes them. Some people have adapted good habits whereas others have struggled to create new rhythms for themselves. The ongoing stress of social distancing and broader uncertainty means that good recovery habits are essential. Leaders need to encourage their people to experiment with new routines that are manageable during these times. Teams can share resources, their own personal tips on what they have found to work and to foster habits that help maintain energy and positivity.

5 ADAPTING

The earlier phase of responding to the crisis pushed everyone to quickly adapt to a completely new way of working, but as we look to the future, acknowledging that we will not be returning to pre-COVID life, we need to pause and learn from this period to ensure we adapt to a new context. We can learn from people and countries at different phases of managing the crisis to observe how their organizations are responding with their own change. This requires us to stay aware of our assumptions, be open to letting go and changing perspective, and constantly communicating the shifts in thinking to our teams. Establishing a rhythm through which leaders can learn with their teams and stay nimble to make changes is critical. If leaders feel they do not have the time to stop and step back, they can add reflective processes to existing meetings to ensure people are developing flexible thinking strategies.

Maintaining momentum during these times means we need to keep prioritizing our resilience strategies. In doing so, we need to learn to access them and use them in different ways. As leaders, it means being ready to question our assumptions on a daily basis and being open to change our decisions. For teams it means using every element of virtual connection that we can to constantly re-frame the situation to stay positive and keep each other supported to adapt to evolving situations.

**LEARN
MORE**

YSC offers a range of Leadership Resilience interventions to help individual leaders and their teams maintain momentum and continue to have impact

Email info@ysc.com to find out how we can support your leadership teams.

YSC.COM