



the call for

Resilient leadership

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The impact of COVID-19 has compelled organizations and leaders around the world to remain resilient during this time of crisis, constant change and uncertainty. All of us

and in particular leaders, need to call upon their core strength and provide support to those they serve. This will be imperative as we manage the current situation and just as importantly prepare for what will follow. We need to be mindful that the individuals we lead are managing a range of emotions due to the following:

- Increased social isolation
- Anxiety and uncertainty around their future and the economic impact on their lives
- Confusion and at times resistance to accepting what is happening around us
- Being increasingly overwhelmed as the situation evolves

In a crisis situation, our ability to think clearly, manage our relationships effectively, focus attention on the priorities and make smart, informed choices, can be compromised.

In an effort to be pro-active, let's look at the evidence of what we know about the importance of *emotional intelligence* and *leadership resilience*.

Heightened leadership self-awareness is an indispensable asset in leading organizations during a time of ongoing change and uncertainty. Self-awareness means having an understanding of our strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. It includes the action of how we gather and process information, how we handle uncertain and stressful situations, and our interaction with others.

Emotional self-awareness allows leaders to connect their emotions that allow them to be more effective in their interactions with others. An important step is to be more aware of what we are feeling at any given moment to effectively guide our actions.

The following highlights *7 resilient leadership behaviors* we should be intentional about:

Exercise Empathy

Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand and appreciate how others are feeling. You have to be able to genuinely articulate your understanding of others and their perspectives. Aside from the risks associated with the virus itself, people are concerned about the well-being of loved ones, the effects of social

isolation, a volatile economy, and an uncertain future. It is anticipated that there will be significant changes, many of which we are not even aware of yet.

Address the fear and anxiety your direct reports or members of your team may be experiencing; by active listening, demonstrating empathy all the while attempting to meet the personal and practical needs of each person.

Effective Communication

The need to communicate consistently provides reassurance and clarity. When working in isolation, fear and anxiety can easily fester. Ask yourself and your team these questions: What is most important right now? What might we be missing? How might things unfold from here, and what can we influence now that will make a difference?

Consider trying to leverage multiple forms of communication to keep your team aware and informed. Ask your team for the types of information they need right now and make every effort to respond in a timely manner.

Utilizing Feedback

Good decision makers are effective problem-solvers and identify the impact on others. They engage and consult with others on the range of decisions or actions that need to be made with immediacy as well as identifying long-term decisions. Ask yourself, have you created a feedback mechanism? Effective feedback will inform your decisions. Your team needs to be heard.

Strong Interpersonal Skills and Relationships

Strong leaders have the ability to maintain effective relationships, acting with honesty and integrity especially, during times of crisis. It is important to understand the needs of your team, their strengths and abilities, and what contributions they can make. Find ways to foster connection with the members of your team. When people feel valued they work well with their leader and others.

Creating the Conditions of Trust

Building and maintaining trust takes hard work and consistency. Leaders need to be transparent, honest and supportive. If you behave



with integrity, you develop trust. Listen more and talk less. Your team needs to be heard, especially at a time of such significant change. You may have team members working from home and others who may be on the front line. Emotions can range from uncertainty, to feeling exposed and fearful. Model the behaviour you want to see and find ways to express the value of your team's contributions. Leverage strong interpersonal relationships to foster the conditions of trust.

Managing Stress

It is important that leaders have a way to manage stress. Do you have a network of support to buffer you during this challenging time? Having reliable, caring and trustworthy people around you who will listen and perhaps, advise you, helps take the burden off your shoulders so that you don't feel alone. Reach out to your leadership network to collaborate and support each other. Strong leaders do not work in isolation.

Cultivate Hope

Remaining hopeful keeps you and those who report to you moving in a proactive direction. Some things will work in your favour while others will not. As leaders, we will have an opportunity to look back on this time and grow from the many lessons learned. Above all, we need to prioritize our energy and focus on the support of others.

Hope and optimism are our greatest assets.

"Hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons." (Vaclav Havel)

References

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