



People At Their Best Leadership Exchange
What Good Leadership Looks Like in a Crisis & Actions Taken in Response to Covid-19

23 April 2020

Leaders were asked to consider the following:

1. What should leadership look like in this time of crisis – what are the characteristics of good leadership at this time?
2. What specific action have you taken during this time to lead your team and the business?
3. What 1-2 things have worked well that you think others may benefit from hearing?

What follows, are 10 micro case studies, each painting a brief picture of leadership in this time of crisis

Full Service Digital Agency: Control the controllable - people are confused so communicate as best you can until you know more: Burned down our balance sheet, adjusted cash terms to get paid quicker; provided even more flexible work arrangements: Decided we were going to be the 'voice of optimism' for our clients and provide a sense of hope – to do this we worked closely with clients to plan how they could respond (most clients didn't have a plan for how they were going to manage the crisis); we framed the event and helped them see the pathways through the 3-phases of lockdown, transition and new normal: We are speeding up turn-around times and delivering quicker to clients – we are willing to provide greater service at reduced rates and we have actively reduced our normal rates

Independent School: We defined what we want our behaviour to look like – we focused on confidence, competence and empathy: It's important to stay tuned to who isn't a team-player and to manage this closely: We set optimistic goals for crisis management and asked, 'what do we want success to look like in this time': Be prepared to adjust thinking around who your customers are, at this time: We re-visited our purpose and ethos and used these to guide action – we got consensus around, 'what are we here to do': Make sure your customers are feeling valued at this time: Understand that home-schooling is tough – leaders need to have empathy for their staff: Treat this time as an opportunity for social renewal

Professional Services Firm: Provide clarity and communicate honestly about how you see the future to cut through the noise: Find the silver-lining and communicate frequently (we may have over-communicated at start of the crisis): Be decisive: We decided on a 20% salary reduction – understand that getting agreement to this is tough and takes time: Get the team focused on the customer and understanding what your customers need (now) and what matters to them - it may be different from what you normally lead with: Need to be empathetic and care for your people - leaders need to behave themselves: Recognise that you can use the crisis to breakdown entrenched inefficiencies and poor work practices - people are willing to change work approaches: We provided an in-house financial advisor for staff: Decided if results turn out to be better than expected we will pay back monies that staff have sacrificed: Thank staff for their help

Peak Body for Affordable Housing & Homelessness: Recognise the importance of self-management and work hard to instil confidence - have self-confidence, but drop the ego: Really start collaborating with all stakeholders: Invest in organisation structure to provide resilience and ensure that everyone understands 'who is doing what' and 'by when': Leaders need to take charge (without ego) - they can't stand back and wait for instruction and clarity. Communicate in the context of what is 'known': Align the Board and key stakeholders with revised priorities so as to maintain relevance and get a mandate for action - procure a licence from the Board to continue to operate and innovate in different ways: Understand the reputational risk and work hard with all stakeholders to determine how to add value

Forestry Management Company: Call the crisis early; define your responses and action early; stay ahead of the Government guidelines: Ignore what other industries are doing and get your response right for your organisation: We have leveraged our sharing platform (Yammer) and it has been great: Find examples of 'silver linings' and celebrate those: Resist the urge to hunker down and assume that everything is under siege – while there are threats to the business, it is important to adopt a growth and transformation mindset and look for the opportunities in this 'dark cloud'

Specialist Commercial Law Firm: Manage the uncertainty with clarity and one voice - ensured I was that one voice as the CEO – this enables consistent communication - not bipolar or contradictory: Get more active with stakeholders and connect more regularly with them: Be crystal clear with your communication to get cut-through: Be methodical and get the right data when making decisions: Empower younger staff and provide means for them to stay connected: We have continued to survey our clients in order for us to determine how we can best add value to them during this time - we made it clear to clients that we are ready to do more for them at this time

State Government Trade and Investment Body: It is imperative that staff pivot and are flexible to adapt to new roles and new ways of working: We needed to help people respond positively and adapt to their new roles to ensure they best contributed to the team: We witnessed the importance of social contact, so we needed to facilitate a way that the team could all check in daily and maintain connection - instituted an 'all staff daily 15min video conference': Find opportunities to up-skill and re-skill staff during this time - work with TAFE and other education institutions

Construction & Building Services Management Consultancy: Communicate the good and the bad and focus on the action required of people: Be honest about what you can control - understand your circle of influence and apply your efforts there - ask everyone how you can make it easier for them to do their jobs: We made a decision early as to who was going to communicate to staff and ensured there was only one voice. Ensure the team comes first - despite being a Director, I made a decision to take a back seat – my leadership was about showing restraint/parking my ego and working out how I could best contribute to the team – decided to utilise my strengths and provide financial data to help people make better decisions: Be clear about what different people have to offer and what your best role/contribution is

Private Property Developer: Be the voice of optimism - share good news stories to balance the negativity: Be prepared to make tough decisions and recognise the need to make decisions rapidly: Maintain engagement with employees, customers, shareholders and Board and provide what clarity you can in the face of the uncertainty: Communicate with one-voice: We formed a Covid-19 Committee: We built a 3-tier model to categorise employees into different pay and work arrangements depending on work volumes: The executive team comes together daily and we check-in on each other: I keep the Board updated with scheduled (weekly) and ad-hoc (at least, daily) briefings

Manufacturing Company: We communicated the 'worst case scenario' to staff from week one: We mitigated uncertainty through communication as best we could: Recognise the need to be empathetic to individual challenges: We looked closely at cutting any unnecessary/immediate expenses: Our focus has been on maximising sales opportunities that have developed due to COVID 19 – to do this we have connected with customers and suppliers to design and supply new products

Leaders who participated in this Leadership Exchange - Tony Nimac – Partner & Board Member – KPMG



Mathew McCarron – CEO – Lewis Land Group

Vic Kalloghlian - MD – Allplastics

Kiri Brain – CEO – Turks Legal

Peter Clarke – Director – Construction Services & Infrastructure

Jim Wilson – Plantation Operations & Services Manager – Forico

Peter McMillan – Executive Officer – NT Shelter

Mark Jones – MD – Your Digital Solution

Steve Klipin – Business Manager – Steiner Australia & Councillor – Bellingen Shire Council

Emma Edwards – Strategic Advisor - Victorian Government Trade & Investment

Facilitators - Dom Meli & Peter Barraket – People At Their Best

People At Their Best wish to thank the 11 leaders for participating in our Leadership Exchange

It is our genuine hope that this this exchange of ideas contributes to our mission of building purpose driven organisations

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