



Leading In Times Of Uncertainty

With the devastation of war and far-reaching impacts of sanctions, organizations all over the world are facing unusual circumstances. Impacts range from loss of employees due to death or resignation to fight/care for family, to business operations, financial risk/exposure, employee well-being and issues of public opinion/license-to-operate.

These developments surfaced new and unanticipated uncertainties and require different strategies to navigate and adjust continually. Leadership under these circumstances is different and challenging. Specific actions can help to navigate the many uncertainties and changes that leaders and their teams are facing.

Borrowing from multiple disciplines (team effectiveness, crisis management, employee well-being, learning organizations and after/before-action reviews), and applying lessons learned from navigating the early impacts of the COVID pandemic crisis in 2020, below suggestions can support (senior) teams and HR to adjust their ways of working until a 'new normal' emerges and the current uncertainties/ impactful changes are normalized again

As a starting point only, these suggestions will be adjusted and updated according to emerging needs, developments and feedback from managers and employees.

Each organization and HR department should carefully look at their unique business context, organizational challenges and additional needs their senior leaders, managers and employees are facing – and adjust these suggestions accordingly.

Employees

What can every employee do to get involved, care for each other and stay healthy?

Teams & Managers

What can every manager do to support their team, and continually adjust as needed?

Senior Leaders

What can senior leaders do to support and enable their managers and employees, while they navigate the business challenges and uncertainties?

HR/People Function

What can the HR/People function do to support employees, managers and senior leaders?

Leading In Times Of Uncertainty

What Employees Can Do

GOING WELL DO BETTER

Join

Join initiatives and get involved to make a difference for impacted families and communities. From financial to practical ways of helping, all of us can make a difference

[\(click here for resources\)](#)



Self-Care

Care for yourself by building habits of healthy sleep, diet, outdoor activities and disengaging from news. Talk to an (occupational) health professional when you are not coping on your own



Other-Care

Care for those around you, from colleagues to family to friends (incl veterans who may be struggling). Become familiar with resources and support that may help them



Listen

Listen and practice empathy, as everyone responds differently – and often for a reason. Make an extra effort to understand others, and role-model attitudes of respect and kindness



Channel

Channel any anger, disappointment, or frustration when you are triggered by a news item or response from a colleague or friend, until you find a constructive way to handle them



Feedback

Provide feedback to your leadership on the organization's stance, response and involvement in the current crisis. What resonates, what could be done better/more?



Check

Friday Spot-Check: Friday Spot-Check: how are you doing, how are you supporting those around you, what else can you do for yourself and others?

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What Teams and Managers Can Do

GOING WELL DO BETTER

Ask

Ask how each team member is doing, how they are personally impacted (e.g. fear, worry, anger, shock) and any support they may need/support they can give others



Know

Know the resources and tools that are available to help your team members; ask your HR department for an overview and available support



Share

Share ideas and actions to get involved and take care of each other in the process; you are in it together and a shared burden makes lighter



Assign

Assign partners who agree to work on new challenges and priorities together; collaborating under pressure can forge new partnership but also put stress on relationships



Align

Align any shifts needed in the team to navigate business impacts and/or personal circumstances in the team; reprioritize as a team and make all are informed about any changes



Meet

Meet frequently to share quick updates, check in on each other and stay aligned; short but frequent touch points can help adjust to uncertainties in a quickly-changing landscape



Check

Friday Spot-Check: what is working well, where can you step up/improve next week? What else can you do?

Leading In Times Of Uncertainty

What Senior Leaders Can Do

	GOING WELL	DO BETTER
Agree Agree on top priorities and consider possible scenarios in navigating this season of uncertainty; provide clear and specific guidance to your managers and departments on key priorities, and what to stop doing, for now, to make space for these priorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Divide Divide the challenges and risks that surface between designated partners at the table to secure swift response times while involving key departments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Triage Triage new challenges and risks efficiently by agreeing who coordinates the information flow, decision making, communication cascade and meeting agenda/follow up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicate Communicate frequently and directly; you need to be seen and heard as your organization looks for leadership, transparency and direction. Get the tone right, iterate based on employee feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support Support the managers and teams visibly and personally, with focus on who needs you the most; boost morale by showing up with care, confidence and appreciation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet Meet frequently to share updates on key priorities, new challenges that emerged with proposed partners to respond, and confirm key messages to speak as one voice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Check

Friday Spot-Check: what is working well, where can you step up/improve next week? What else can you do?

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What HR/People Function Can Do

GOING WELL DO BETTER

Curate

Curate the many available resources and tools for employee well-being, how to get involved etc in a simple and manageable overview; it's easy for employees and managers to get overwhelmed



Support

Support managers and employees through access to simple and short podcasts, webinars and support groups on topics they are asking for; speed up response times to 'get to market' fast



Coach

Coach senior leadership in key messages, being visible for their teams/organization and striking the right 'tone-from-the-top'; step up & don't shy away from addressing issues that surface



Channel

Channel sentiments, concerns and requests from employees to senior leadership and the HR executive team; let employee feedback inform priorities and course adjustments



Prioritize

Prioritize the HR agenda and resources; what can wait with limited impact, what can't wait now and what new work emerged that needs resourcing? Continually revisit and adjust



Meet

Meet frequently to share updates on key priorities, employee and manager feedback, sentiments and needs, and senior leadership challenges that the HR executive team can support



Check

Friday Spot-Check: what is working well, where can you step up/improve next week? What else can you do?

Resources (1/2)

VIDEO MESSAGE: DR. EDITH EGER

Author of “The Choice” and Auschwitz survivor

“.. I wanted to share with you a video we created for the people of Ukraine. May they keep strong and survive, so that tomorrow they can be free. With love and strength, Dr. Edie.”

HOW TO LEAD IN A CRISIS – TED TALKS

Amy C. Edmondson, Oct 2020

“Humility, transparency and urgency are the keys to successfully steering an organization -- big or small -- through the challenges that come your way. Leadership expert Amy C. Edmondson provides clear advice and examples to help any leader rise to the occasion.”

THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE IS CAUSING SOME WORKERS SEVERE ANXIETY; EMPLOYERS CAN HELP

Stephen Miller, CEBS on SHRM.org, Mar 2 2022

“SHRM Online has compiled a list of articles on how the crisis is affecting employees and how employers can respond.”
Also see: “WAR IN UKRAINE - How Business Leaders Can Support Employees Affected by the Crisis”

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR TEAM ABOUT DISTRESSING NEWS EVENTS

Allison Shapira, HBR Mar 7, 2022

“When a news event captures our collective global attention, how should we as leaders and managers address it? Your employees need you to step up right now. But it can be hard to know what to do or what to say. If you’re finding yourself at a loss, the author offers three simple steps”

SEVEN LESSONS FOR LEADING IN CRISIS

Bill George, 2009

“7 Lessons for Leading in Crisis is a concise handbook for applying proven leadership lessons in tough times: Face Reality, Starting with Yourself; Get the World off Your Shoulders; Dig Deep for the Root Cause; Get Ready for the Long Haul; Never Waste a Good Crisis; You’re in the Spotlight: Follow True North; Go on Offense, Focus on Winning Now.”

PODCAST: LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS

PwC – Emerge Stronger Through Disruption series, September 2022

“..host Kristin Rivera and PwC Global Markets Leader Richard Oldfield explore the attributes of successful leaders in a crisis, the impact of lessons-learned on resilience, and how to emerge from the pandemic with greater employee satisfaction and clarity of purpose.”

HR FOR UKRAINE

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“The idea of this page is to collaboratively collect resources that can be useful, from an HR point of view, to support the people of Ukraine, looking at different options, including Relocation Support, Financial Support for the people that are still in the country, support for HR professionals and so on.”

Resources (2/2)

HOW TO MANAGE WARTIME STRESS AND ANXIETY

Compiled* by Dan Fallon, LPC, CEAP, Program Manager at the Wheeler Employee Assistance Program (EAP), March 3, 2022

“Since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, the media have been flooded with broadcasts and images of a country under siege. News about warfare and its consequences—the number of lives lost, people losing their homes, lack of food and shelter, and implications for the future—can be overwhelming and scary. As you follow news coverage about war and current events, it’s important to pay attention to how it affects your physical and emotional health. Here are some tips to help you recognize your emotions, avoid triggers, and manage anxiety”

THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND EFFECTIVE CRISIS LEADERSHIP

Gianpiero Petriglieri (associate professor of organizational behavior at INSEAD) in HBR, Apr 2020

“In a crisis, people don’t need a vision to inspire them—they’re already raring to act. Instead, they need what psychologists call “holding”— leaders who acknowledge their emotions and give them a sense of context and reality. Holding allows people to channel their desire to act into something purposeful, and it allows them to more fully be themselves (and thus to be more mentally healthy). People never forget how managers treated them when they were facing loss.”

4 BEHAVIORS THAT HELP LEADERS MANAGE A CRISIS

Chris Nichols, Shoma Chatterjee Hayden and Chris Trendler in HBR, Apr 2020

“Employees thrust into leadership during a crisis need to be coached in four behaviors to be most effective in their roles. They must decide with speed over precision, adapt to changing circumstances boldly, reliably deliver despite environmental factors, and engage deeply with their teams. ”

LEARNING IN THE THICK OF IT

Marilyn Darling, Charles Parry, and Joseph Moore in HBR, Jul/Aug 2005

“..an AAR [after-action review] should be more verb than noun—a living, pervasive process that explicitly connects past experience with future action. That is the AAR as it was conceived back in 1981 to help Army leaders adapt quickly in the dynamic, unpredictable situations they were sure to face.. By creating tight feedback cycles between thinking and action, AARs build an organization’s ability to succeed in a variety of conditions.. In a fast-changing environment, the capacity to learn lessons is more valuable than any individual lesson learned.”

RESOURCES FOR EXECUTIVES AND THEIR TEAMS AMID RUSSIA’S INVASION OF UKRAINE

Gartner, 2022

“This will be the decade of disruption.. be ready for a new reality of a multi-polar world” (Gartner Global Scenarios: Russian Invasion of Ukraine Long-term Business Impact). How can companies create strategies that help to prepare for possible scenarios?”



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