



Essentials of Leadership in times of the COVID-19 Coronavirus crisis

Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis in Europe is now reaching a new critical phase, where governments are acting decisively to control a rapid spread of the virus. Numerous countries in Europe going into the phase of Lockdown, where measures are announced and implemented to limit physical contact between people.

We have tried to summarize what we have learned so far concerning the Leadership needed in these times of crisis given the different degrees of readiness across organizations, the increasing potential of disruption and the value of being better prepared for future crises. Based on our ongoing analysis and interviews with our clients around Europe, we have distilled the essentials for Leadership in times of the COVID-19 crisis.

Don't put your bottom line above your people

Organizations that have gone through the SARS pandemic know that it is important to put the health, safety and well-being of the staff above all else. The focus should be first on the most important asset that any business has and then worry about collateral damage and the P&L.

In practice this means hygiene programs need to be reinforced and updated, including quarantine guidelines and ensure safe environments. Additionally it means organizing flexible work plans, such as remote work and other infrastructure solutions where staff is divided over different locations and time slots to avoid transmission of the virus.

Set up Rapid-Response team(s) for this crisis

These high-level team(s) meet frequently and are armed with the power to make decisions quickly, especially when it comes to safeguarding people and core operation and preparing for the rebound.

Communicate clearly and frequently

All leaders we spoke to are underlining the need for frequent communication during a period of crisis. In the COVID-19 crisis town halls are of course not possible, but there are many additional communication tools available, such as E-mail, WhatsApp and other social media channels. Essential here it is essential to sound credible in communications with staff to avoid panic or get conflicting information. Additionally

setting up a cadence and structure in your communication, helps free up your people to focus on the tasks at hand.

Understand and respond to the new needs of clients

Sales teams can play an essential role in reaching out to (new-) customers. Use the opportunity to reach out to clients and distributors to find out where they are feeling the pain because of the crisis and what will help them. Organizations might be helped by extended credit lines, adjusted pricing or stocking up of certain products. **Unite in a common purpose**

The COVID-19 crisis has united much of China in ways not seen in years. While employees are working at their stations or remotely, the societal focus has been on the brave medical personnel, uniformed services, and volunteers who are working to bring the situation under control. Finding ways of contributing to the societal effort to combat this virus was suggested by several of our executives as a way of being responsible corporate citizens.

Learn, Learn, Learn

While the end of the coronavirus may not be insight and the full extent of its impact remains unclear, leaders must embrace this time as one that will help them be prepared better for future hardships. As one of our client said, "Don't waste a crisis. Learn, restructure, build systems, and give back to your community."

Free virtual Leadership consulting call

Our way to contribute during these times of the COVID-19 crisis is to provide you and your organisation a free 1-hour consulting call in which we will discuss on how you can apply the above approach inside your organisation.



About the Autor

Andre de Wit has more than 25 years of experience working for large corporate organizations. He worked as CEO of business units in IKEA and the Metro-group. He was the Vice President for Learning and Capability Building for the Metro-group and the Carlsberg-group for 6 years.

Andre is Dean of the Leadership Academy Amsterdam. This organization focuses on designing and delivering leadership interventions and leadership development programs. Leadership Academy Amsterdam specializes in the alignment of leadership with the strategic plan of an organization.