

4 Best Practices for Leading in Uncertain Times

1. Communicate - Keep People Informed

In times of uncertainty, your employees are watching you, the senior team, and their managers. **You are in a fishbowl.** What will you do? What will you say? How well will you handle things?

- Many people perceive uncertainty as frightening; leaders need to display behavior that brings a sense of trust and credibility. Effective managers must develop the emotional maturity to behave rationally and confidently in stressful and uncertain situations.
- Think carefully about communication. In an uncertain environment, what you say, don't say and the manner in which you do or don't say it may have both intended and unintended consequences.
- Don't let circumstances dictate your overall message. Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose three terms as president included the great Depression, Pearl Harbor and World War II, didn't get caught up in the negative details of the current day. Instead, he focused on communicating about working for a new and better tomorrow, saying... "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today."
- Increased communication and visibility is imperative during difficult times.

Opportunities – Help your team manage their communication and crisis leadership skills through **Executive Coaching, Leadership Development, and Strategic Communication Planning**

*"If you get too far in front of your troops, you start looking like the enemy."
Anonymous*

2. Encourage Creative Thinking & Innovation

In uncertain and risky business environments reframe the uncertainty as a vehicle of possibilities rather than a threat.

- Challenging times are an opportunity to be better, create more effective processes, uncover and solve problems, move in new directions or create new products.
- Be proactive vs. reactive by engaging in a strategic planning process, looking for tactical advantages to set you apart, be more efficient, or save money.

Opportunities – This is a perfect time to revisit or even create some new strategy through **Strategic Planning** or **Creative Problem Solving** processes.

"Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents, which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant." Horace

3. Involve employees, Invest in employees

A time of uncertainty and challenge is one where all hands are needed on deck.

- Even during tough times, talented people can and will go where the opportunity is. Competition will still recruit to get the edge. Make sure you engage your talent to keep them. Make them a part of the solution - give them a chance to grow, shine, and be visible. Your smart, talented employees will help get you through, and your future leaders may emerge.
- Get the most out of each member of your team. Stretch assignments and lots of coaching and feedback. Performance management and development planning increases your capacity. It's a great potential career building time for employees.

Opportunities – This is a wonderful time to focus on **Talent Development, Performance Management** and **Succession Planning**.

“Leaders learn by leading, and they learn best by leading in the face of obstacles. As weather shapes mountains, problems shape leaders.” Warren Bennis

4. Develop a Stronger Team

People naturally want to pull together during tough times (think hurricanes). However, they need a leader to help them do this. Encourage your employees to rely on each other.

- Smart leaders will help their teams channel fear into action.
- Keep the team focused on the larger mission, values, and strategy instead of the short term problems.
- Engage them in being part of the solution. Teams can create strategic and tactical plans to help stay focused on reaching departmental or company goals and objectives.
- Do more team activities and celebrate the little wins.
- Help them cope with change and keep stress levels low

Opportunities – This is a perfect time to engage in **Team Building and Planning** initiatives where teams get to be part of creating the strategy and plan for achieving goals.

“Good leaders make people feel that they're at the very heart of things, not at the periphery. Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization. When that happens people feel centered and that gives their work meaning.” -Warren Bennis