



Leadership in Times of Crisis

5 Things Great Leaders Do in a Time of Crisis

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Top 5 Things Leaders Do in a Time of Crisis

1. Maintain Accountability
2. Be Decisive and Adaptable
3. Control the Chaos
4. Exercise Caution while Taking Action
5. Stay Positive



“If you see a turtle sitting on top of a fence post, you can be sure he didn’t get there all by himself.”

~Coach Fisher DeBerry



“Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible.”

~Colin Powell



Maintain Accountability

Your most important responsibility is to those under your command. You want to get the job done, but you also need to ensure they get to and from home safely

- Focus on the “why” not the “what”
- Conduct crucial conversations – ID non-performers and don't protect weak actors
- What you permit you promote

Success = Accountability + Responsibility + Empowerment

Be Decisive and Adaptable

In a crisis, you must make quick and/or tough decisions. Being responsible sometimes means pissing people off.

- Establish goals and objectives...and a plan to get there (Key Results)
- Use Team Problem Solving in high acuity situations
- Avoid “analysis paralysis”
- Communicate the plan & Debrief everything

A good plan executed now is better than a perfect plan tomorrow. Don't wait for an inspired solution. Work your way to the ending and see what comes up.

Control the Chaos

The work environment can very quickly slip into chaos due to stress and fear. Leaders must stop the panic from spreading.

- Control your own emotions – “wind the clock”
- Delegate tasks
- Praise the little things – behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated
- Show empathy

It is only possible to begin a crisis action plan if everyone involved is focused and determined to complete the task at hand.



Exercise Caution While Taking Action

A crisis is not an excuse to throw caution to the wind and risk it all. A crisis is the combination of both Danger and Opportunity.

- Be transparent about your concerns of the risks
- Watch for “Red Flags” – both clinical and teamwork
- Take quick but measured action

The alertness of mind is a valuable skill for leaders to have as it is especially handy during times of a crisis. Don't look through a soda straw.



Stay Positive

A leader's optimism tells the team that things are going to get better.

- Human truism: Teams adopt the leader's traits
- Contagious optimism is a force multiplier
- You will still need to lead in the aftermath

"Optimism: a cheerful frame of mind that enables a tea-kettle to sing though in hot-water up to its nose."

~Anonymous

"The names of the patients whose lives we save can never be known. Our contribution will be what did not happen to them."

"And, though they are unknown, we will know that mothers and fathers are at graduations and weddings they would have missed, and that grandchildren will know grandparents they might never have known, and holidays will be taken, and work completed, and books read, and symphonies heard, and gardens tended that, without our work, would never have been."

Don Berwick, MD, MPP
Former President and CEO, Institute for Healthcare Improvement,
most recently served as the Administrator of CMS



Questions from Participants



Question # 1

As the COVID-19 crisis has unfolded, did it serve as a "crucible" to test the effectiveness of your leadership team, and did everyone pass the test... were all your leaders ready and able to lead effectively in a crisis?

Question # 2

Regarding your team's performance during the COVID crisis – can you share an example of performance you found lacking, or needing improvement?

What steps will you take for the “next” one?



Other Questions About These Key Points?

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2. Be Decisive and Adaptable
3. Control the Chaos
4. Exercise Caution
5. Stay Positive

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