

NEWSLETTER

March 2020 / Issue 1

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Mobilise To Stabilise in Leading your Workplace through Covid-19 Pandemic



As public health systems worldwide act to contain the spread of COVID-19 in new epicentres outside of China, systems have been thrown into disarray, particularly health, family, education and business. Each new day brings more challenges as we watch the trajectory of the disease and its impacts.

2020 will, by year end, bring new significance to the term "20/20 vision"!

What have we learned so far? How will we use that learning to future proof us and our young as we navigate the changed world of tomorrow?

As 'reflective practitioners' in the modern and emerging work-setting, the following pointers may help both Leaders and Followers to mobilise in extracting lessons for communicating, applying new meaning to the term 'critical incidents', extracting key learning and mapping approaches to applying that learning in practice ahead of possible similar events in the future.

How we can help you...

THC Consult offering its services as you use this time to:

- Review your Career,
- Build on past experience, reboot or change direction
- Undertake psychometrics as an aid to career progression
- Revisit competency profiling
- Update curriculum vitae, applications, presentations
- Sharpen Interviewer/Interviewee performance
- Review workforce, teams and company structure
- Avail of Coaching or Training via Zoom



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About Us



Teresa Hand-Campbell is Director of THC Consult and is Ireland's only Occupational Coaching Psychologist with 30 years' experience in Education Leadership roles. She blends her unique expertise together with Business Executive Coaching, Mediation, Occupational Psychometric testing and Professional Multi-Science Analysis, using cutting edge tools to assist students and individuals in the workplace in identifying their strengths and working towards optimum person/job fit.

Teresa also guides organisations in hiring and growing best talent. Teresa lectures on the Masters in Educational Leadership & Management at UL's, Mary Immaculate College of Education and facilitates on the PDSL (Professional Diploma in School Leadership) at the University of Limerick. She is presently working with Legal Island, NAPD and others, as an expert panellist, designing a series of Webinars, with capacity for 500 guests, discussing key issues pertinent to the world of Education across all levels. Her Training, Talks and Workshops delivered nationwide attract large audiences as she identifies and problematises emerging areas of challenge for schools, for the workplace and society.

A certified LIFT Ireland Facilitator - Why not opt to avail of her training so you too can be the agent for change in leading Ireland to be its best.

1. Keep abreast of events as they unfold

Stay in touch with developments daily, using sound and reputable sources of information. The veracity of the COVID-19 spread must be matched and surpassed by nations' responses to bringing it under control and beating it. Solid information is key. Your perspective will be framed by your

position in the workplace, your experience and your investment in the people with whom you work or lead. No doubt, daily reframing will occur as you navigate the unknown and challenge your innovative potential in tailoring a response in terms of continued roll out of services, albeit remotely.

2. Be discerning while staying current

Leaders are well equipped to decipher the hard facts from the hype and innuendo. The pace of the unfolding crisis coupled with the power of social media to propel knee-jerk reactions based on inaccurate information, must be met with tenacity, calm and well-informed decision making. This approach will, no doubt, inform and shape your new future once you return to face-to-face, business as usual. 'Experts'

abound, with opinions informed from multiple sources, in times of crises. Be discerning and paced in sifting through the information in relation to the epidemiology of the disease, emerging data, containment policies and forecasted multi-level impacts. A clear understanding of what is going on will inform your approach to what works and is likely to work indefinitely and certainly, in times post COVID-19.

3. Guard against assumptions - Lead with Consistency and Clarity

In the modern, highly connected world we each have multiple channels through which we keep informed. Such is the disparity of information available, it is critical that leaders digest and apply solid information to fit their particular organisation. How? By creating regular and consistent

channels of communication with Board members and with staff members, be they fellow senior managers, middle management, staff or supporting staff, you are alleviating fear and stress on all levels. Dealing in hard facts and how they affect day-to-day work practices is invaluable.

Retaining Equilibrium

As a Leader, trying to lead remotely in these days of social distancing and 'working from home' you must ensure balance is retained across key areas of your organisation. That balance and leadership you offer will strengthen relations and make for a more cohesive work environment on return to face-to-face work practice in the months ahead.

Communication

Staff will most likely be exposed to conflicting information and feel anxious or confused about the best course of action. Individual responses to the challenges arising and collective staff reactions to change will vary. Ensure that you communicate policies promptly, succinctly and in a calm and balanced manner. Furthermore, communicating contextual information and the underlying reasoning behind policies will serve to deepen staff members own understanding while giving them courage to be proactive in unanticipated situations.

Employee Wellbeing

Observance of restrictions on movement and congregating to ensure health & safety of staff will give rise to different work practices such as working from home. Staff will need advice on workspace set up and work-day timetable together with help on approaches to accessing services across healthcare, education, daily provisions etc. Leaders should anticipate and improvise to create an information hub with ease of access for all employees while inviting updates from staff to meet gaps in information which may emerge as we go further in to this worrying time.

4. Opt for 'Adaptability' over 'Inertia'

Taking an overview of a changing situation and scripting a plan to deal with it often results in lack of further action. The bigger the organisation, the more inflexible it can be in changing plans into which much time and effort has already been invested. There are many reasons for this – fear of appearing indecisive, lacking in leadership or hesitation in case of creating confusion among workers. Adaptability, on the other hand, is the ability to be flexible and to work effectively in a variety of changing situations and with different groups and individuals. Openness to change binds a workforce together as it

mobilises in its efforts to retain stability. Even more importantly in these days of uncertainty at the hands of COVID-19, adaptability is about your willingness to change your ideas, plans and policies on the basis of new information or evidence as it emerges. While COVID-19 is somewhat out of control, we CAN control our reactions to it. Retaining flexibility in adapting to change is a real skill worth developing. The word, 'Review Ongoing', stamped on working documents and policies guards against stagnation and paves the way to adapting effectively and with ease in rapidly changing situations.

5. Managing Bureaucracy

Arriving at midline consensus on controversial issues among senior management and a host of other aligned functions and agencies can be challenging and can lead to generalisations and a slowing down of the decision-making process. Gathering together a tight and trusted team equipped with enough latitude to make quick, strategic decisions is

imperative. Aligning the process with the pace of new information and events happening outside the organisation drives and guides communication. Capitalising on the accessibility of digital documentation, shared wisely, drives the speed, accuracy and relevance of policy and plans based in fact, not speculation.



Retaining Equilibrium

Travel

Ensure that travel policies are clear and in line with national recommendations. Leaders should remind employees of social distancing and curtailment of unnecessary work-related travel during this period of COVID-19, with information around when the policy will be reviewed.

Working Remotely

Clarity and uniformity around workplace policies, where they apply, how they will unfold, recommended daily routines and when they will be reviewed will reassure employees as they enter an indefinite period of home-based, somewhat self-initiated work practice. Daily check-ins, be it through agreed Zoom, Google Hang Outs etc, will help detract from the initial feeling of isolation, while ensuring everyone is updated and in touch with the organisation's ongoing approaches to work. This approach, if adapted widely, will ensure uniformity of approach across organisations and a reduction in gaps of provision to customers, clients, students, parents. Performance management remains key during times of crises and informs perceptions of an organisation's overall effectiveness in the long-term.

Playing your role in the broader solution

Strong linkages which have been forged between education, community, business, local government, regional and national bodies offer avenues for co-operation in mobilising towards creative solutions in unprecedented times and lead to the the realisation of organisational vision.

6. Be the Model of 'Resilience' in action

Stability, efficiency and productivity are judged through the lens of a stable world. However, sudden and unpredictable changes such as those brought on by COVID-19 demand resilience. Resilience is the ability to 'bounce back' and to 'roll with the punches', the ability to deal with perceived adverse situations in a positive and creative way, to transform challenge into

opportunity and to absorb the learning offered by setbacks quickly and at minimum physical and mental cost. In times of change it's becoming increasingly important for individual and workplace performance. The response to COVID-19 by resilient workplaces will ideally have key characteristics in common:

Optimisation

Using available resources – physical and human – to the maximum to meet the demands of the situation. Co-creating innovative solutions, leaders and workers can act reflexively in moving to meet emerging voids without delay. Outcomes will inform future approaches to work, the size of the workforce required to carry out the tasks and avenues for success going forward.

Diversity and Innovation

The diversity of ideas from a workforce in times of crisis can enhance the development of novel solutions. In a culture of trust and mutual respect, innovative solutions are born through pooling diverse perspectives and capitalising on a workforce's talents. Identifying the hidden connection between people and process lies at the heart of the innovator's advantage. Merging talent, skills and leadership styles required for best performance is essential in ensuring that the teams formed reflect the multi-dimensional nature of the crisis – organisational, logistical, financial and so on.

Prudence

The future course and impact of COVID-19 are unpredictable and, as yet, unscalable, but prudence in envisioning worst case scenarios and galvanising against chaos through developing contingency plans should feature high on workplace and education institutes' lists. The blueprints developed now may well prove invaluable should similar or worse crises emerge in the future.

Our Expertise

Career Consultancy

Identifying optimum career choices from youth to retirement, through testing, CV preparation, job applications and professional presentations, perfecting interview performance.

Competency Modeling

Helping organisations in aligning employees' skills, knowledge and abilities with the company's strategic goals through job profiling, employee selection & retention, individual development, succession planning, employee training & performance management.

Vocational Assessment

Testing, Assessing and guiding the person-job fit for those experiencing difficulty with placement due to physical/cognitive challenges, acquired or otherwise

Personnel Selection & Assessment

Guiding and assisting employers through the selection process

Motivational Mapping & Psychometrics

Personality & Ability Testing (BPS). profiling motivational styles - identifying clients' strengths

Business & Executive Coaching

Equipping clients with tools, knowledge and opportunities for self-development, effective workplace performance and greater personal & organisational leadership.

Effective Communication

Guiding clients in maximising what they have to offer. Speaking & presenting with confidence and conviction.

Change-Orientation

Of particular relevance in the current climate is the notion that there is a 'tipping point' in social change which has been made popular by Malcolm Gladwell (2001)*. He holds that there are key 'rules' that underlie the phenomenon that '... ideas and products and messages and behaviours spread just like viruses do' (p.7) and that the tipping point is '... that one dramatic moment in an epidemic when everything can change all at once' (p. 9). Have we yet reached a 'tipping point' in terms of COVID-19, I hear you ask! Are we open to the changes that will ensue? The metaphor of an epidemic has been invoked to describe the scale of transformation that is within the reach of systems such as the school system in some nations, for instance. 'What must underlie successful epidemics in the end, is a bedrock belief that change is possible, that people can radically transform their behaviours or beliefs, in the face of the right kind of impetus (Gladwell, 2004, p. 258). In mobilising to stabilise this present situation, leaders and followers must collude as the change-agents who offer reassurance to the service user, now more than ever.

Belonging

Organisations, be they large companies, SMEs or universities, colleges or schools, are key stakeholders in a nation's wider economic, business and social systems which are coming under great stress as COVID-19 reaches contagion across the world. This calls for close examination of ecosystems in order to retain impact and competitive advantage once out the other side of the crisis. Co-operation in finding solutions which serve all - workforce, clients, service users from all systems - driven by a 'win-win' approach to supporting all, will enhance trust and lay foundations for lasting collective growth and success in time to come. Remaining steadfastly true to our core values and respecting those of others in times of crises is the bedrock of future growth and prosperity.

7. Living your Learning

Such is the nature and depth of change occurring around us, it follows that life cannot and will not return to 'normal' as we knew it. Collectively, we should not squander this unique opportunity for learning. Individually, organisations must take time to review, discuss and distil lessons learned from an unprecedented event for which no organisation was prepared. While strengths which emerged will be self-evident and most likely highlighted ad nauseum, weakness will have to be examined e.g., failures to lead, inability to make hard decisions, excessive bias towards consensus and aligned slowing of responses, lack of organisation and lapses in communication - these represent real opportunities for future improvement and growth.


*Gladwell, M. (2001) The Tipping Point, Abacus, London

Contact Us

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Check out www.thcconsult.ie/Events to choose an upcoming Talk of interest to you. Bespoke Talks & Training are organised on request.

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8. Future Proofing

Covid-19 may be a trial run for more challenges to come. We should remain prepared for extensions to this current phase in the form of additional epidemics in the future. Literature around past experiences of crises highlights both preparation and pre-emption as most predictive of future success. It follows that preparation for the next crisis, or for an extension of our current crisis, will lead to a heightened likelihood of success in terms of response on many levels.

Trouble-shooting as a back up to intellectual preparation for the future is essential. Scenarios can ultimately be updated in light of our most recent experiences and with the benefit of hindsight, as it were. Risks identified will guide future plans going forward. Capacity and capability building incorporated in to role-play, for instance, offer learning around our behaviours under stress and can untangle organisational pitfalls which have a tendency to complicate, slow down and, often impede, progress.

9. Embrace a Changed World

Already we see that COVID-19 has changed society and our approach to business and education in significant ways. Many of these changes will remain. Approaches to work, including an extension of opportunities to work from home; promotion of blended learning/ on-line teaching and learning at all levels – primary, secondary and tertiary; online shopping; a movement away from hard

currencies and investment in health are but a few examples. Changes in the way we do business together with a reconfiguration of companies and their supply chains will most likely follow as part of our learning from this crisis. Once we have navigated this crisis, organisations should consider the implications of this crisis and ensure this is reflected in future planning.

Other Talks and Training on Zoom video conferencing

