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POST-COVID-19,

REIMAGINING LEADERSHIP RESILIENCY

BY AMIT PATEL

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By Amit Patel

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented global humanitarian and economic crisis. For businesses across the world, leaders have the daunting task of coping with uncertainty while ensuring employees' safety, wellbeing, and productivity. This article examines business leaders' resiliency and resolve in the form of four key leadership skills that are essential in transitioning to the post-COVID-19 new normal.

"The essence of great leadership is influence, not authority."

Ken Lear

LEADING IN A CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic is unlike any other crisis in recent times. As the number of new COVID-19 cases continues to grow globally, business leaders face unprecedented challenges. The mounting uncertainty of when things might return to normal, what the new normal will look like, how they will not just survive, but thrive, makes this one of the toughest test business leaders have faced.

As overwhelming as the COVID-19 crisis undoubtedly is, with the right tools and perspective, determination and resiliency, business leaders can help their organizations weather difficult times. In speaking with executives across industries on how they have taken on the challenge of resiliently coping with the current crisis, we see the thematic grouping of four key leadership skills emerge:

1. Positive mindset
2. Build trust
3. Manage fear
4. Transparency

"Leadership is based on inspiration, not domination; on cooperation, not intimidation."

William Arthur Wood

1. POSITIVE MINDSET

Many leaders are struggling to find the right path to navigate through the COVID-19 crisis. Every day, the COVID-19 pandemic spells gloom and doom – it becomes increasingly difficult to stay optimistic when the number of new cases of COVID-19 and associated deaths continue to rise.

It would be easy for leaders to be negative. However, the reality is this is precisely when leaders need to take on the COVID-19 crisis head-on. To pull through and emerge stronger in the post-COVID-19 new normal will require leaders to be resilient, think positively, and have a positive mindset.

Mindsets contain both intellectual and emotional elements that affect our perceptions, interpretations, and actions. They guide what we think and how we feel about people and

things. From a leadership perspective, a positive mindset is foundational for success – nothing can be achieved unless you believe it can.

For businesses to thrive in the new normal, organizations will have to reimagine their business model. Regardless of whether the reimagined business model change is incremental and evolutionary or transformational and revolutionary, achieving it starts with a positive, and "people first", mindset from the leadership.

Within an organization, serving as credible and influential role models and propagating a sense of possibility from which their behaviors and actions follow, leaders influence the behaviors and mindsets of their employees. For example, consider Steve Jobs, whose out-of-box experiences such as traveling to India to pursue spiritual enlightenment and auditing a class on calligraphy, helped to form a mindset that led to some of the greatest product innovations of the last half-century.

"Positive thinking must be followed by positive doing."

John C. Maxwell

2. BUILD TRUST

Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic require business leaders to respond under extreme time pressure. To successfully navigate the COVID-19 crisis, leaders must continue to build trust both internally and externally. Doing so enables leaders to generate goodwill, and much-needed room to make tough decisions.

During this high-stake crisis, the desirability of trust is obvious, but leaders often struggle with building and maintaining it. We recommend leaders consider the following four key elements to enhance trust levels among stakeholders – both internal and external:

Empathy
The COVID-19 pandemic has generated significant emotional stress on everyone. By reaching out to their employees with warmth and authenticity, leaders can reinforce that they genuinely care for them not only as an employee, but more importantly as a human being – an appreciation for their hardships, and a genuine concern for their health and well-being.