

How the Best Leaders Are Already Planning Past the Crisis

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When a crisis disrupts the usual order of things, leaders cannot settle for just dealing with what's in front of them today. They need to immediately begin looking ahead and planning for the future to make sure they are prepared for what comes next—even if they have no idea what shape it will take.

It may feel like a time to sit and wait, but in fact it's a time to be proactive about the future—yours, your team's, and your organizations. Here is how you can emulate the best leaders in planning through crisis.

1. **Brainstorm.** Gather the sharpest minds and most insightful thinkers in your organization to discuss what the next months and years may look like. Spend time together exploring a range of scenarios and tracking for each of them how you can move the business and its people beyond the crisis.
2. **Discover opportunities and threats.** In the discussion of each possible scenario, include a big-picture assessment of possible opportunities and threats, grounded in awareness that the crisis is changing not only your organization but also your industry and your customers.
3. **Create certainty about priorities.** You can empower people through uncertainty if you hold true to the values and priorities that drive your team's mission and communicate those values and priorities clearly and often. When everything is shifting, people need a North Star to navigate by.
4. **Lead with speed and agility.** In unpredictable times you don't have the luxury of playing wait and see—you must be proactive and able to move quickly and confidently in a new direction, with the willingness to pivot and make adjustments as events unfold.
5. **Learn from the present while planning for the future.** As a crisis is unfolding, you are learning something new in every moment. Make sure the most current information and trends are reflected in your strategic planning.
6. **Gain commitment from your people.** Especially if you are faced with moving in a new direction, your people need to fully commit to the vision and plan. That means it cannot be a top-down initiative—their voice and involvement are an important part of the process. Leadership based on collaboration and not control—trusting that people are smart and know what to do—fosters the commitment and energy your team needs to tackle the crisis and to continue a journey of growth when it's over.
7. **Connect vision to mission.** Any new vision must meet two criteria: it must be inspiring, and it must be tightly aligned with your organization's purpose.
8. It is easy in difficult times to become paralyzed by the day-to-day challenges. But it is the leaders who think ahead with courage and vision who will achieve long-term success.
9. **Lead from within:** The best leaders are always building on what is happening today to create successful future. When crisis hits, they keep their fears to themselves but share their courage and vision with others.