

COVID-19 RESPONSE

# MANAGING THROUGH CRISIS: COACHING TIPS FOR LEADERS

As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic becomes increasingly apparent, including worsening economic conditions, businesses need to act fast to prepare for extreme disruption. With uncertainty surrounding timeframes and disparity in governmental guidance globally, it is increasingly important that managers take a strategic approach to directing employees and business objectives. Indeed, as reported in a new Edelman Trust Barometer survey, people are looking more to their employers than to governments or the media for leadership and information in this crisis.

This guide lays out simple coaching tips for business leaders to help you create stability and consistency, giving your business the greatest chance to weather the storm and protect your value for recovery.

# Coaching tips for leaders

## 1. KEEP CALM AND REFLECT ON YOUR OWN EMOTIONS FIRST

*"Put your own mask on first, before helping others to put on theirs."*

It's far too easy in times of crisis, as you respond to the emotions of others, to forget that your own emotions will play a substantial role in *your* response. The unique psychological and physical pressures that manifest in times of crisis can lead to your own feelings of agitation and distress, and people are exceptionally well equipped at picking up on these.

Remember: *you have more control over your emotions than you might think*. Take the time to do a self-inventory—recognize your emotions and then commit to maintaining calm. In times of high stress and ambiguity, it is important to get adequate sleep, so that you can think clearly and remain in control. Take time to breath and meditate, particularly when you're running against the clock. The benefits of taking a few minutes to clear your mind can produce exponential returns for the time you'll spend managing others.

## 2. EXPRESS CONCERN NOT FEAR

While fear is a *natural* response to crisis, it is also, by its very nature, uncontrollable. Expressing fear can easily lead to others perceiving you as lacking control at times when a steady hand is needed to weather instability.

Concern, on the other hand, is a *rational* response to crisis, when coupled with a sense of resolution. When you express concern, you express the need to understand the problem and to find productive ways to resolve it. Expressing concern has the added benefit of humanizing you as a leader, which creates a sense of trust with those who depend on your leadership.

By communicating concern with confidence and composure, you avoid spreading panic and also provide reassurance to your employees.

## 3. ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR COMPANY'S REALITY AND MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

In a crisis, people have a natural tendency to want a quick resolution. As a leader, it is critical that you have a deep understanding of the magnitude of the situation and its potential impact on your business and its people.

A key part of demonstrating emotional intelligence in times of crisis is to *acknowledge your reality*. Doing so will have a significant impact on your ability to make decisions as a leader. Others will perceive you as grounded, objective, and in touch with the current work environment.

Acknowledging the reality of your business context also means avoiding "sugarcoating" the situation. Platitudes such as "do not worry, everything will be fine" may cast doubt on your ability to grasp the severity of your employees' experience. When communicating an analysis of the situation and the strategy for response, be clear, manage expectations, and remain objective.

## 4. ADOPT AN OPEN MIND FOR MISSTEPS

A key thought to remember and revisit is: "Failure will be a part of the resolution. Not every decision I make will yield positive results." Do not overreact when a decision you make turns out to be unfavorable, and be generous when others make mistakes.

While you can take control of your emotions, you cannot take complete control of outcomes. Opening up yourself and your business to a tolerable level of risk—one that is perhaps greater than your normal tolerance—will allow you and others to navigate the crisis with a sense of resilience, while taking decisive action.



For more information, get in touch: [www.alixpartners.com/contact-us](http://www.alixpartners.com/contact-us)

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These are the moments when everything is on the line—a sudden shift in the market, an unexpected performance decline, a time-sensitive deal, a fork-in-the-road decision. But it's not what we do that makes a difference, it's how we do it.

Tackling situations when time is of the essence is part of our DNA—so we adopt an action-oriented approach at all times. We work in small, highly qualified teams with specific industry and functional expertise, and we operate at pace, moving quickly from analysis to implementation. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our clients until the job is done, and only measure our success in terms of the results we deliver.

Our approach enables us to help our clients confront and overcome truly future-defining challenges. We partner with you to make the right decisions and take the right actions. And we are right by your side. When it really matters.

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