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Nicole Heimann: Will  
Covid-19 Change  
Leadership, Culture  
and Values?



## **Covid-19: accelerating the change process**

Before the Covid-19 virus stopped the world in its tracks, we were already navigating deep societal change with complex social, gender and environmental issues on a global scale. Values were clearly shifting, and our world was moving in its own rhythm towards agility and digitalization. With the strong presence of social media, leaders are much more visible and judged than ever before and challenged to show up in new ways. Pre-Corona virus, there was awareness that the old leadership rules simply don't apply anymore, but the urgency to make the shift was not yet there. The Covid-19 virus creates this urgency and triggers the acceleration of this process. As if the slumbering change was an active volcano, and Covid-19, the trigger of a sudden eruption that put the world in crisis-mode.

## **Authentic Leadership**

Almost overnight, the expectations of leadership have changed – globally.

The priorities are now on keeping employees healthy, building resilience, managing cash-flow and strengthening liquidity, re-thinking strategies and budgets and how they operate virtually.

Covid-19 is evoking great changes in leadership for the better: It confronts leaders and employees with the core of our humanity and leads us to ask ourselves existential questions:

- Who am I?
- What/Who really matters to me?
- What provides deeper meaning in my life?
- What are my values?
- Am I living my values?

This changing and uncertain new reality confronts us with a range of raw emotions and people are literally seeking more realness, empathy and compassion, real connection and relationships – and more humanity, which translates in the business world as more authentic leadership and a new way of working and being together.

Nobody is immune to the virus, and neither to the transformational process it has initiated. This process of introspection which Covid19 has triggered, will change our lifestyle, shift our values, our way of thinking, our behaviors and the choices we make.

## **The bridge between resilience and leadership is authenticity**

It is a paradox that the slowdown imposed by the Corona-virus accelerates the speed of renewal and of the new reality being created. The speed and the increasingly interconnected complexity of our new reality requires leaders to know themselves at a much deeper level than was necessary until now.

Without true authenticity, it is going to be a bumpy ride. Why? Because one of the key qualities required to lead with agility and speed into the post-Corona era will be resilience (before efficiency!) The Oxford dictionary defines resilience as “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.” The “bridge” between resilience and leadership is authenticity. Long-term resilience starts from within and cannot be achieved with some quick fix management tools.

Long-term resilience is built when we do the inner work on expanding our authentic self.

Authenticity is like an inner compass, continuously evolving with increasing awareness and consciously reflected experiences.

Regardless of what happens around us, the compass remains calm on the inside, scans and evaluates the environment, and allows us to lead with awareness and responsibility for consequences and impact, serving the greater good.

This is what leaders describe as “inner peace:” the experience of being “in control” in a relaxed way, without any need to enforce control. Because, even if we are navigating in a world full of uncertainty, when we are connected to our inner compass – our authenticity – we are connected to our values, and we know that we are doing the right thing in this moment. And this—is long-term resilience from within.

### **What’s next?**

As we prepare and start thinking about the post Covid19 phase, we invite leaders to reflect on how this personal transformation of yourselves and of the people in your organization is going to translate into changes in expectations of corporate culture. What is needed and what needs to happen?

With the execution of the business strategy being “interrupted” through Covid-19, a lot of focused attention will go – and must go – to the strategic outcomes. It’s important that culture doesn’t fall off the radar. Let’s not forget what Peter Drucker said: “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.”

Corporate culture is one of the topics a CEO cannot delegate: The creation of a new corporate culture starts from within. The quality and depth of your awareness have a direct impact on the results you will achieve and on the culture you will create.

Personal leadership and corporate transformation are integrated. They are dependent and essential factors required for our success in the post-covid19 era.

Consider this question to prompt your thinking process with your team:

How do you think the personal introspection process of your leaders and employees will impact the corporate culture and values of your organization?