

LEADERSHIP IN TOUGH TIMES

> I'm sure you have heard the saying, "The only thing constant is change." It's true! Things are changing so rapidly that our new expression could be "What's next?" Don't you wish you knew? No one does.

Over the last months you as a businessowner may have assumed you knew the next fork in the road, the outcome of your loan application, the implications for your businesses and your life, and how others would respond. You used your intellect, resources, research, and advisers, but still the outcome was other than what you expected.

At times, you probably feel like a failure. At times, a winner. Other times, you don't feel anything. Over the course of a day, hour or minute, you may feel some or all these emotions. I'm here to tell you: You are not crazy, and you are not alone.

But as the leader of your business, you do have to find new tools and ways of thinking to move forward. Here are strategies that you can use to assess and communicate with credibility and compassion in these uncertain times.



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As the leader, your team believes you have all the answers. In the current situation, you don't. Be direct, honest and vulnerable about that reality.

Get help. Now is an ideal time to get out of your own head and gain insight and perspective from an objective third party. Discuss your situation and potential options with someone who is not emotionally involved or invested in the outcome. Consider the information and insight you receive. If you hear an "out of the box" idea, this is the time to be creative and receptive.

Embrace "intros" and "outros."

Communicating often with your team has never been so important. Help set expectations and remind them of the fluidity of situations by providing context at the beginning and end of conversations. For example, I recommend starting a conversation or email using an intro such as: "As of today (or this morning/this afternoon), this is how we are going

to approach the situation." Then, end conversations or emails using an outro: "If anything changes regarding the topics discussed, I will communicate those updates in our next meeting or discussion."

Be vulnerable. As the leader, your team believes you have all the answers. In the current situation, you don't. Be direct, honest and vulnerable about that reality. If you find you need to change your approach, own it, and explain the reasons and next steps. (One phrase to try: "I just learned xx so that means we need to change xx and do xx.")

Honor people's fear and trauma.

Fifteen years ago, my house burned down, and I lost almost everything. I lived with my best friends for nine months while I was rebuilding my home and my life. During that time, I experienced the

generosity of people that I had never even met and came to understand what was "really" important. The keys to my home were delivered on Christmas Day. When I walked in, I sat on the floor and cried in gratitude for the kindness, compassion, understanding, and support of others. The trauma occurred, and I was never the same. We've all experienced some type of trauma in our life: illness, the death of a loved one, losing a job, divorce, etc. This crisis has brought new traumas and new experiences into your life and your employees' lives (self-quarantine, illness, lack of freedom, being alone or with family, learning about your spouse or kids, home schooling, learning technology, working from home). Recognize and honor those experiences. You may be surprised by the generosity with which your team members and supporters rise to the occasion. 🌿

Glenna Hecht is a speaker, trainer, consultant, author and certified senior professional in human resources. glenna@glennahecht.com