



Are you a resilient leader?

Whenever I think of a leader that shows empathy and support but gets the balance right with decisive decision making Jacinda Ardern comes to mind when she acted over the Christchurch shootings. She knows how to connect with people and stay connected and you want to trust her because she has total clarity. Firms now need leadership that encompasses compassion and that over used word “empathy”. What lessons can we take from her when we all face the most challenging circumstances? Ardern means what she says, says what she means and is not afraid to speak out. Ardern sees difference and wants to respect it, embrace it and connect with it and so can you.

Quick and clear communication

It is a very hard line to walk in a crisis between ensuring individuals are safe and that you are compassionate to their needs and fears whilst at the same time taking hard, rational decisions to protect the firm and its financial performance, prioritising every issue and really listening to the needs of your clients and staying engaged with them.

Decisive actions taken without doubt when everything impacting the firm might mean those decisions change constantly and need courage.

You need to have transparency about your current realities and even how difficult the future may be, but you need to inspire everyone to persevere.

Resilient business leaders have long term focus not just the here and now, innovation will emerge to help define the future. They will manage continuity and help the firm become stronger once we emerge from the current crisis. They will look for opportunities to add value because true leaders really listen not just to the needs of their staff but to their clients to find out what their real needs are and what support as a firm you can give them. With the right approach they will help create real value and differentiate your offering from others.

Recognise the impact

Currently there is huge uncertainty and that will impact your staff at all levels. Partners are often high achievers who cannot express their vulnerability and are not good at asking for help. Working remotely might exacerbate this and impact in so many ways, what does a good leader need to have? Emotional intelligence will be critical, showing compassion and understanding on how Covid-19 will impact lives of everyone they work with. Concerns for family health being uppermost, how to accommodate working from home with school closures and the lockdown. Are your younger staff anxious about working from home when they don't have a team to help and support them and they in all likelihood will not have a home office set up conducive to work as they are used to. Uncertainty can be crippling, and you need to be compassionate about the upheaval that your teams are facing. Maintain contact that gives face-to-face time, a full inbox can be overwhelming, and emails don't tell people you are concerned or worried, they just deliver a message.

Your first priority was to safeguard your staff ensuring their immediate health and safety and their economic well-being. Psychological stress is very real, most staff if questioned will always say they are fine. Don't accept that answer but dig deeper and find out what they are doing to stay fine and what their immediate worries are. Your perception of how they really are will lead to them having better trust in you.

Clients.

Are you sensitive to your clients needs in the current crisis? Do you command their respect by showing the same empathy you give to your staff? We all like to be treated as we treat others, kindness and understanding go a long way but at the same time you must safeguard the future of your firm protecting financial performance during and throughout the crisis. You will have to make hard decisions to protect performance. You will have to show decisiveness in a rapidly changing economic environment. Give total clarity to those things you can do to accommodate clients and those that are non-negotiable. Above all have open communication with your clients so you understand the impact that Covid-19 is having on them. If you show leadership, listening and working with them they will not only stay with you in uncertain times but will remain with you in the future.

Give everyone a sense of purpose

If you instil a sense of purpose and are transparent about what it is, your employees will feel more engaged, they will stay with you as you transform to a different way of working and will help you evolve and emerge at the end of the crisis. Talented individuals will come to the fore and will help address ongoing issues. Innovation both internally and externally might come from areas you least expect, even thinking of ways to take the initiative to develop your corporate and social responsibility to local communities will be well placed in a time of crisis. Encourage new initiatives at all levels within the firm. Lead, don't constantly aim for consensus as you will have to confront things that you could not have anticipated. Admit that there are things you don't have the answers to but build trust and you will transform relationships.

Operating differently

Challenges may seem overwhelming now, but they may also present longer-term opportunities as you enhance and strengthen your digital capabilities. Remote working may even bring positive long-term results. Remote working can reduce costs, it will make you evaluate and strengthen some working practices, what seemed impossible might become normal, better and create value that we had not anticipated. Ardern leads from her heart and her head to inspire and so can you to survive and thrive through this Covid-19 crisis.

