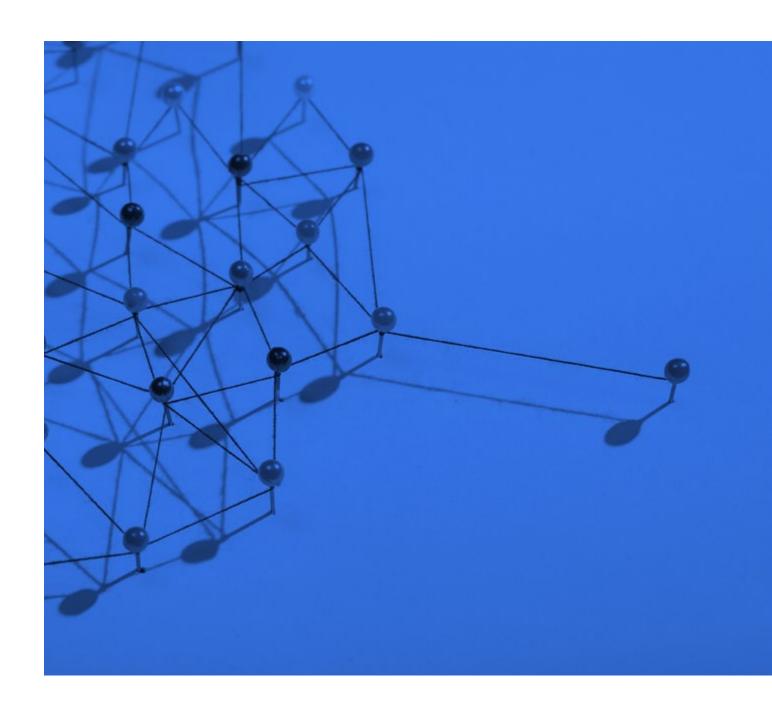


TURNING CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY:

Preparing Your Organization for a Transformed World



By: Bill Pasmore, Cindy McCauley, Alice Cahill, Mike Smith, Chuck Ainsworth, and Chuck Palus

CONTENTS

- **Executive Summary**
- Hardship is Part of the Journey
- Seizing the Opportunity for Organizational Transformation
- Moving from Threat to Challenge: It's About DAC
- **Build Direction:** Articulate a Bold & Flexible Vision
- **Strengthen Alignment:** Cultivate Innovation Through Collaboration
- 13 Inspire Commitment: Lead Change with Empathy & Integrity
- Conclusion
- Ready to Take the Next Step?
- **References**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thriving in the face of disruption starts with **leadership.** At CCL, we believe in the power of leaders to ignite transformational change — to navigate the crisis of the moment while preparing for the changed world that comes next.

The crisis of the moment, COVID-19, is massive, and what comes next is profoundly unclear. But there will be an "**after**."

And that "after" will be decided by you, and other senior leaders, who are continually assessing, acting, and evolving through the intensity and ambiguity of this crisis and its aftermath.

That "after" will be created by how you show up right now, by how you and your leadership team work together today and tomorrow, and how the leaders of the future are prepared.

That "after" will be determined by the strength of your organizational culture and how freely effective and honest conversation flows up, down, and across the hierarchy.

That "after" will be formed by the collective strength and capacity of your organization to accelerate change, fast-track innovation, and drive performance in neverbefore-imagined ways.

We are now months into the COVID crisis. Decisions have been made to keep communities safe, shift employees to working from home, and implement

social distancing and other protective measures. Budgets, workflow, headcount, and priorities have been altered — in many cases drastically — but things are by no means settled.

While the initial spasm of shock has occurred, you will continue to face difficult short-term decisions. At the same time, you know that important things are going to change forever — and your **long-term business strategy will need to change**, too. You need to plan for your organization to emerge from this disaster as strongly as it can, before you lose critical talent, financial wherewithal, or the capacity to adapt to the demands of the new normal.

> It's time to talk about pushing your organization toward reinvention, not retreat, and how you can start creating the "after."

In this paper, we'll prompt senior leadership teams to be at their best, operating as a cohesive source for organizational transformation, and explain how the way you respond to the current hardship will directly affect your organization's ability to survive and thrive.

We'll also outline why it's so important that executives address their people and their culture as they invigorate organizational direction, alignment, and commitment.

HOW TO TURN CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNIT









HARDSHIP IS PART OF THE JOURNEY

We believe that leadership is a journey. It is

a personal journey and a collective one. It can be a deeply private experience, or, as in this global moment of crisis, an experience that is shared and highly visible.

At CCL, we've been part of that leadership journey for individuals, organizations, and communities for 50 years. We've traveled alongside many executives, providing more than 20,000 hours of coaching per year, as

they've navigated career and organizational challenges. We've embedded ourselves in leadership teams, and guided organization-wide development and capability-building efforts.

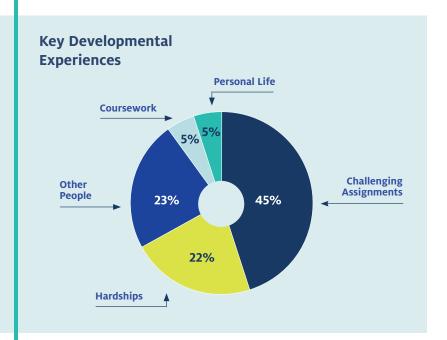
We know a lot about what goes into a leadership journey — yet in a time of extraordinary global crisis, we, too, find ourselves in disturbingly unfamiliar territory. Then, we remind ourselves that *hardship is* part of the journey.



We've been widely recognized for the **70-20-10 framework** for development first articulated in the 1980s, based on our research on how executives grew over their careers. The framework describes 3 types of experiences that drive leadership learning and growth: challenging assignments make up 70% of those experiences, while 20% of them are centered on developmental relationships, and 10% on coursework and training.1

But there were 2 other factors — **personal life and hardships** — that were also part of the leadership development story that have arguably been forgotten.² In the original research, hardships were considered just as transformative as developmental relationships, and lessons from one's personal life played as large a role in development as coursework and training.

Yet the longstanding focus on just the 3 factors is understandable. These 3 were the part of the leadership journey that could be created, curated, or encouraged, given the societal and workplace norms at the time. Coursework could be replicated, mentors could be assigned, challenging assignments could be delegated — but who



could guarantee hardships, or would wish them on anyone? How could organizations enforce guidelines on learning from personal life?

Yet, hardships — unplanned experiences that create adversity — are always present. They may be situations happening at the organizational level (e.g., business failures, downsizing, crisis) and at the individual level (e.g., mistakes and errors of judgment, career setbacks, firing employees, ethical dilemmas, experiencing discrimination). And lines between the personal and professional are hardly clear particularly during this COVID crisis. For many, that blended experience is a more authentic one.

Hardships can be powerful learning experiences for all of us, both individually and collectively.

For individuals, hardships can provide deeper self-knowledge, increased sensitivity and compassion, greater flexibility, and new perspectives. For organizations, hardships provide an opportunity for the senior team to identify and carry out the actions necessary to align the organization and move it forward.

Yet while hardships can fuel individual development and serve as a catalyst for organizational transformation, positive outcomes are not guaranteed.

Some organizations will disappear as a result of the COVID crisis; others will manage through the crisis but survive only as a shadow of their former selves. Those who adapt, emerging with newfound agility and strength, will thrive. But it will take collective efforts and bold action — by executives and the entire organization — to create a new path forward.

We believe that the current hardship — one that is shared and fuses individual, group, and societal experience — provides not just an opportunity but an *imperative* to reinvent your entire organization.

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Now is the time for senior leadership teams to be at their best, operating as a cohesive collective, to architect the trajectory to the future.

Yet if the past is any indication, this opportunity will be missed by many senior leaders.

The single biggest strategic mistake that companies made before the crisis was failure to change when change was needed. The problem was one of leadership mindsets, where executives allowed themselves to be fooled into thinking that the requirements to change seemed too costly. Now, the strong desire to "return to normal" after the pandemic may further deepen that mindset.

Senior leadership teams will be tempted to avoid taking bold action and having the toughest conversations and will retreat to the closest thing to the status quo that they can find — but that will leave the organization weaker and less prepared for the future than it should be. Some will want to restore elements of the business that should not be restored, or focus on new ways of doing the same old things. Instead of **imagining a different future**, built on candid and courageous conversation, they will be uninspired and unmoved.

Inaction now, in the face of this threat to continued survival, will be a tragedy that could have been prevented. Leaders must assess the situation honestly and do the right thing, right now — which is the opposite of what many are doing, just cutting costs and hoping for a return to normalcy.

Forward-thinking leaders will act differently.

They will have conversations their competitors are unwilling to have. They'll change how they work together, engage their people through the crisis, and collaborate to make critical decisions and adapt in real time.

> The single biggest strategic mistake that companies made before the crisis was failure to change when change was needed.





MOVING FROM THREAT TO **CHALLENGE: IT'S ABOUT DAC**

Right now, people are likely to be feeling threatened, not challenged.

Shifting the collective leadership mindset will require addressing this key roadblock to change in a crisis. This is a distinction made in the stress literature we reference below: there are times when you're stressed and you feel threatened (there's a possibility of harm or loss) and there are times when you're stressed and **feel challenged** (there's a possibility of benefits or mastery of the challenge). The thing with threatening situations is that people often are (rightly) focused more on surviving than learning; thus, people who are feeling more threatened than challenged are less likely to report learning.

In contrast, people who experience a stronger sense of challenge in a stressful situation are more likely to perform effectively in that situation and learn as they go.3

While the COVID crisis requires clear understanding of the threat, focusing on the challenge will boost your ability to flourish in the face of this unprecedented hardship.

Collective leadership is the way to move from threat to challenge to reinvention.

At CCL, we believe leadership is about creating Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC):

- **Direction is agreement on goals** that the collective group is trying to achieve together.
- **Alignment is coordinated work** that supports integration across the group.
- **Commitment is mutual responsibility** within the group for its success and well-being.



DAC is created through the interactions and exchanges among people with shared work — between managers and their direct reports; among colleagues, teams, and committees; and in the relationships, structures, and processes of the entire organization. DAC allows people to work together to achieve results they would never accomplish on their own.4

For people to pull together in any context, they need shared DAC. But those outcomes are ever-more important in a crisis, and signal a way forward now.

In a crisis, creating **DAC requires everyone's involvement** and requires responses that are both authoritative (top-down, planned, exercising individual authority) and collaborative (bottom-up, improvised, with forms of collective leadership).

Authoritative	Collaborative	Outcome of Leadership
Singular focus on effectively navigating the crisis	Ongoing adjustment of strategies for navigating the crisis via shared sensemaking	Direction: Do we have agreement on overall goals?
Use of authority to tightly coordinate independent actions on key initiatives	Bottom-up self-organizing of motivated individuals	Alignment: How well do we coordinate work?
People in power demonstrating commitment to the collective	Collective responsibility for each other and broader society	Commitment: Do we take mutual responsibility?

Table 1: An effective leadership culture in times of crisis is both authoritative and collaborative.

We're seeing this now — formal leaders across the globe have issued orders and made sweeping decisions. Teams at every level have changed how they work, improvising and building on experience. Organizations and communities are rapidly reinventing, often with previously unconnected people, groups, and businesses creating solutions together.

In 2020, an organization's ability to survive will be contingent upon its culture and its ability to create direction, alignment, and commitment. That's why to prepare for the post-crisis future, the senior leadership team's critical role is to:

In 2020, an organization's ability to survive will be contingent upon its culture and its ability to create DAC.

- 1. Build direction by articulating a bold and flexible vision,
- 2. Strengthen alignment by cultivating innovation through collaboration, and
- **3. Inspire commitment** by leading change with empathy and integrity.



BUILD DIRECTION: Articulate a Bold & Flexible Vision

In groups with strong direction, people have a shared understanding of what success looks like and they agree on what they are trying to **accomplish.** In just weeks, the sense of direction has been shaken in every level across every organization, large and small. People are uncertain about what they should focus on and accomplish, or they feel pulled in different directions by confusion, or competing goals.

In the COVID crisis, clarity of direction is a big ask. But focusing on direction helps shift from threat to challenge and opportunity.

To generate shared direction during this crisis, senior leaders need to work together to frame a vision, take decisive actions, and make intentional adjustments as new information emerges.

Demonstrate your singular focus to effectively navigate the crisis. Right now, your people are asking, Where are we headed? You don't need to know the exact answer on every front. You probably do know the general direction though, and that's enough for now. Express this as openly as possible to employees, customers, suppliers, and investors through your actions and communications. Be clear about what you know and what you don't. Reflect constancy of your values and principles, even as circumstances change.

Frame the crisis as a challenge guaranteed to transform leaders bold enough to embrace it.

The need for leadership and exceptional talent has never been greater. Emphasize the opportunity for development, growth and possibility, collaboration and coordination, rather than loss. This helps create focused action and generates a sense that people do have some control and choice. They can do something to deal with the present situation and shape the future.

Set aside the organization chart. Functions, groups, and levels that made sense pre-pandemic are irrelevant or will only slow you down. Operate as you need to in the moment. Get the right people from anywhere in or outside the organization into a discussion about how to move quickly from your initial crisis response to the next move, then the next. Begin to imagine the structure and skills you will need for the future and use those ideas to inform today's decisions.

Take bold action. Forget elaborate strategy projects that will take months to complete. You cannot stay still, plan, and then implement. Instead, act your way into the future by iterating rapidly and learning as fast as you can. The faster you take action, the faster you get new inputs and the clearer your direction will be. In fact, even as you scale down or address the most immediate demands, you should already be pivoting resources to head in the new direction. And, if your pre-pandemic business is unlikely to recover, it's time to consider new business models. What is your best hope for survival?

Be transparent about what you are doing and what you are not. Some people need to stop doing what they are doing because it will only drain resources without adding value. Others need to jump into new activities. Customers, suppliers, and



partners are also trying to adjust — and may be some of your greatest resources. Communicate frequently and honestly — and ask for feedback. If you get criticism or pushback, listen for nuggets of good advice and ignore those who want to return to the way things were. You can't go back, so keep moving forward.

Build in sensemaking, then pivot or adjust **as needed.** You need to hear information, clarify decisions, and understand changes — and you need help to make sense of it all. Streamline the flow of communication to maximize access and enable decision making at the point of need. In responding to the crisis, many organizations are setting up nerve centers that tap into multiple sources of official information about the crisis as well as insights generated by employees on the front lines. This ongoing stream of information is digested by multiple teams to regularly adapt their strategies to the unfolding situation.

Find ways to personally recharge. The adrenaline rush of the initial crisis is fading, but a different type

of energy is needed to sustain you now. You and your colleagues are probably already physically, mentally, and emotionally fatigued, and that may continue for a while. Everyone will experience their own rhythm and reaction to the overwhelming scope of change. Yet the ability to make innovative, smart decisions will require you and your people to manage stress and overload. Exercise, healthy eating, meditative practices, and sufficient sleep may be new routines — or different because of social distancing — but they need to be encouraged if those of you on the leadership team are to be at your best over many months.

And, if you don't have a leadership coach, now is the time for one. A coach can be a sparring partner to test ideas and can help stabilize you when you feel weary and unclear about how to move forward. A weekly 30-minute call with a coach may be the recharge and reset that you and your fellow executives need to stay grounded, gain clarity, give your best, and get through to the next week.

WAYS TO BUILD DIRECTION

	With Your Team	In Your Organization
Take Intentional Action	Begin to problem solve and embrace challenging tasks that can alleviate the stressful situation.	Regularly articulate the focused goal that will enable the organization to overcome the current challenges. Take bold action in service of that goal, communicating the rationale and decision-making processes.
Identify Resources	Reflect on the assets each person brings to the situation and how they can be used.	Keep everyone informed about current directives so they can adjust their priorities, support the shared goal, and bring needed resources to bear.
Generate New Ideas	Draw on past experiences with stressful situations for lessons to apply now. Consider how the team's skills or perspective can be applied in new ways.	Expect everyone to tap into their trusted networks and make emerging insights easily available to others. Establish processes for widespread sharing of collective intelligence and use it to generate new ideas that continuously reshape direction.
Delegate	Give each other permission to act.	Enable and encourage colleagues to make decisions for dealing with aspects of the crisis.





In groups with strong alignment, people with different tasks, roles, or sets of expertise coordinate their work. In those with weak alignment, members work more in isolation, unclear about how their tasks fit into the larger work of the group. They are in danger of working at crosspurposes, duplicating efforts, and having important work fall through the cracks. Innovation is stifled or disjointed.

Always, but especially in this moment, you need people to be pulling in the same direction. You need alignment up, down, and across the organization.

Now is the time for teamwork and better conversations about what matters most. To adapt quickly, processes across the organization should be coordinated and integrated in support of the shortterm demands and priority goals. People must be clear about their own contributions to achieving them. You also need efficient collaboration and the ability to turn good ideas into innovative solutions.

Avoid the temptation to run off in separate directions in a rush to execute. Or conversely, to wait for perfect, instead of executing on good-enough. Both errors can be avoided by dedicating focused time to gain alignment through conversations that balance the need for deliberation and commitment to action.

Senior leadership teams can create broad alignment by taking steps to speed essential collaboration and innovation.

Tightly coordinate key initiatives that involve people from across groups. Always a struggle, cross-boundary coordination requires more directive approaches to alignment during a fast-moving crisis. In critical areas, give clear instructions and rationale for who will work together, what they need to produce, and by when. And orchestrate what they need to manage these changing expectations for how to work together. Create forums where you

clarify what is expected. Cut levels. Create new teams. Accelerate digital transformation. Expand access to collaborative tools and technology. When things get in the way of needed progress, deal with them quickly and decisively.

Raise the bar for senior team collaboration. If

collaboration at this level is anything but stellar, you're in trouble. Broad alignment is impossible if senior leaders are working against one another, defending their personal interests, or simply unskilled at fastpaced, high-caliber collaboration. The quality and effectiveness of the conversations taking place are a reliable, tell-tale sign of how things are going — call in expert facilitation and coaching if necessary to make certain that the team is performing as it should. The senior team is the single most important driver of everything that will happen next. Make sure this is

Ensure more frequent all-way communication.

their finest hour — and that they are developing as

a unit so they are able to execute skillfully for the

long term.

The top of the organization needs to stay connected to what is going on throughout the organization. Leaders can't assume that what's happening at the front lines is what is supposed to be happening. And people throughout the organization need to know that senior leadership is making decisions based on reality. If necessary, you should adopt specific practices that enable truth-telling to reach their level. Spend more time than ever before on listening tours, in small groups and on one-on-one calls (virtually, of course, if need be). Paying attention to the facts, emotions, and values in play across the organization will unlock a deeper understanding of what is truly going on. Remember, change and transition are often a deeply emotional experience — and we are experiencing a large-scale, global upheaval. Only through effective all-way communication can insights be unearthed, and best solutions emerge.

Set the climate for creativity. What a leader says about a new idea or a team working through a problem can support — or stifle — innovation. Caution and skepticism are understandable (and typical) reactions. But those responses kill innovation. For creative ideas to be expressed, much less developed into an innovative solution, you need to show support for those who challenge the status quo. Avoid quickly dismissing new ideas or experiments, assigning innovation to one group, or insisting that all good ideas will come top-down. Common mistakes that undermine innovation in good times are more damaging in a crisis, when the energy of a challenge can rapidly be replaced by the fear or threat.

Model the culture you need going forward.

Change can only succeed when the culture supports it, and crisis provides a unique opportunity to rapidly check your organizational culture. Reinforce elements that are essential and enduring, but if there were parts of the culture that were never helpful, say so and extinguish them. Insist on new behaviors that are critical to your future success. Reward those new behaviors and stop rewarding behaviors that will hold you back. Place leaders in charge who exemplify the behaviors you expect from everyone and establish practices and systems that reinforce the new way of doing things.

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN ALIGNMENT

With Your Team	In Your Organization
Talk regularly, seek feedback, and continuously strive to better understand the current situation and anticipate what's next.	Create a recovery task force made up of the best and brightest who are poised to feed ideas to your senior team. Seek feedback about what's working well and what is not.
Join with others across the organization who are working on important initiatives in response to the situation.	Give clear instructions and rationale for who will work together, what they need to produce, and by when. Then regularly monitor and communicate progress to everyone.
Bring a creative mindset to the work and encourage experimenting with innovative solutions.	Develop a culture that embraces innovation: expressing curiosity, tolerating ambiguity, showing persistence, and staying in a constant learning mode.
Be supportive of others' ideas and perspectives and willing to help where needed.	Insist on new behaviors that support vital collaboration and rapid innovation.
	Talk regularly, seek feedback, and continuously strive to better understand the current situation and anticipate what's next. Join with others across the organization who are working on important initiatives in response to the situation. Bring a creative mindset to the work and encourage experimenting with innovative solutions. Be supportive of others' ideas and perspectives and willing



INSPIRE COMMITMENT: Lead Change with Empathy & Integrity

In groups with strong commitment, people feel responsible for the success and well-being of the group, and they know that other group **members feel the same way.** They trust each other and will stick with the group through difficult times. In groups with weak commitment, members put their own interests ahead of the group's interest and contribute to the group only when it's easy to do so or when they have something to gain.

Most of the time, human interaction, the personal touch, and emotional intelligence are capabilities to be developed and deployed. During this pandemic, the usual expressions of human connection have had to change, as people cannot work and gather in their usual ways. Lack of social connection and support creates another level of hardship, adding to the difficulty of learning and embracing challenge. While we know that hardship can accelerate development, we also know the best learning comes when people are supported through a challenge or a difficult time. If your organization can intentionally develop and support people during this hardship, you can be confident that they will learn, become more resilient, and be prepared to work toward what's next.

Don't think of yourself as a change manager right now; think of yourself as a change leader.

Change management is about getting things done. Change leadership is about how you do it. Change leaders understand that getting through a change won't matter if all that is left is scorched earth. By leading change with integrity, empathy, and shared responsibility, your senior leadership team can create connection and generate the highest level of commitment possible.

Take the right actions, the right way. In a crisis, people look to the actions and reactions of powerful people to decide their own level of commitment. When faced with a crisis, leaders can easily become overwhelmed. Some panic, issuing ill-formed directives. Others shut down or misjudge the need to act. They lose the confidence of their followers in the process. When faced with the kind of crisis we are experiencing, difficult changes like reductions in force, closure of facilities, and pulling back from some markets — are necessary. You can lead these changes in a way that destroys the morale of the people who remain, or you can actually deepen their commitment. As a change leader, your clarity, care, and integrity are what will bring out the best in others. Engaging others in difficult decisions and providing choices whenever possible will foster shared ownership. Doing things the right way will ensure that when the immediate crisis ends and you are moving toward what's next, you will still have committed followers.

Respond with empathy to employees. The

COVID crisis will have a real impact on your people, both the employees who are working through the intensity of the crisis and those who are back after leave, furlough, or layoff. Don't overlook the hardship everyone has faced or minimize the difficult experiences and harm that has been caused. Empathy can be learned and developed, and our research has found that it is positively related to job performance. So, if showing empathy is not your usual approach, try again. Allow conversation to focus on emotion or what people are experiencing. Or, start a meeting by asking a simple yet powerful question, such as,

"What's your dominant emotion right now?" Note that demonstrating empathy doesn't mean you need to endorse how someone feels or leave them where they are. Now is the time to employ coaching skills you have learned along the way; slow down for a moment and listen deeply. Ask questions instead of rushing to give advice. Provide both challenge and support as you help others co-create next steps.

Show you are human. You may be moving too fast to grieve, but you must signal to people you are experiencing this as a person, too. As decisions get made and the organization changes, avoid being cold or calculated. Don't be afraid to show some vulnerability; doing so may be just what is needed so your people see you as human and relatable. Let others know that you are moving forward because you have feelings, not in spite of them.

Help employees develop the skills and behaviors that will be important for future success. People will be working with one another and engaging with partners, customers, clients, and communities in new ways — and more often, virtually — as they move forward from this crisis. Regardless of role, industry, or location, your people need to hone and use 4 critical leadership skills — self-awareness, communication, influence, and learning agility. Helping them develop and leverage these skills will position your workforce to be able to collaborate, work together more effectively, and emerge from this crisis more committed to your organization than ever before.

WAYS TO INSPIRE COMMITMENT

	With Your Team	In Your Organization
☐ Grow Positivity	Share good news and stories of progress. Express gratitude.	Communicate good effort and good outcomes. Express appreciation. Use resources to respond to societal needs and their employees' desire to contribute to the greater good.
☐ Acknowledge Difficulty	Willingly share perceptions and concerns with people at the top, and with colleagues.	Express authentic concern for others. Be transparent about how tradeoffs are evaluated in making decisions with negative consequences for individuals.
☐ Encourage Growth	Create space for collective learning. Reflect on learning through hardship with conversations and journaling. Don't make decisions for people when you can give them choices.	Share ideas for how employees' collective talents and resources could help others. Help people whose roles have gone away or changed refocus on using their talents for broader or new purposes. Give people the opportunity to help you make difficult decisions.
☐ Set Boundaries	Recognize limits and guard the team's well-being.	Acknowledge uncertainty and lack of control. Understand and communicate that the way forward will include a lot of saying no.



CONCLUSION

No one knows yet how long this new reality is going to last, or what exactly is on the other side, but we do know that **leadership can be the differentiator** in every organization. It's more important now than ever.

Impactful leaders and effective leadership will emerge from the current crisis and its aftermath. We predict that the organizations that flourish will be experts at harnessing the powerful catalyst of hardships.

The leadership that is created during this time will not resemble a power that simply

flows from you and other influential individuals. Rather, it will be created collectively by resilient people who can adapt together not just surviving, but thriving while facing the stress and chaos.

Leadership is more **important** now than ever.

Those who can move from feeling threatened to feeling **challenged by this uncertainty** – and who are able to pull together to achieve shared, desired results - will be the ones who turn this crisis into opportunity, together reinventing their organizations for the future.



READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

For Executive Teams

Achieve the highest level of performance. In the best of times, this team's ability to work together to drive change and execute strategy may be the most critical element in your organization's success.

Today, there is no room for error. The senior team is the single most important driver of everything that will happen next. We can help your executive team become world-class.

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For Leaders

Support yourself and take care of your people. Right now, you may be struggling to keep your people connected and on task while they're dealing with distractions. You've had to be the bearer of bad news during this trying transition. You're managing so much and may need help to figure out how to "show up" as your organization faces new challenges.

You may need a sparring partner to help you make sense of everything you're managing, or a safe space to test ideas and figure things out. We can provide on-demand, virtual coaching, focused only on whatever is most important to you right now. Your carefully matched coach can also give you a confidential space to test new ideas, help you maintain energy or regain focus, recapture your sense of clarity and purpose, and navigate tough decisions with major consequences.

Our world-class coaches will help you **prepare mentally**, **emotionally**, **and professionally** as you lead your organization through the immediate crisis and an uncertain future.

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CCL LOCATIONS

Americas

+1 336 545 2810 ccl.org

Europe, Middle East, Africa

+32 (0) 2 679 09 10 ccl.org/emea

Asia Pacific

+65 6854 6000 ccl.org/apac

Greater China

+86 21 6881 6683 ccl.org/china



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