hemsleyfraser

LEADERSHIP



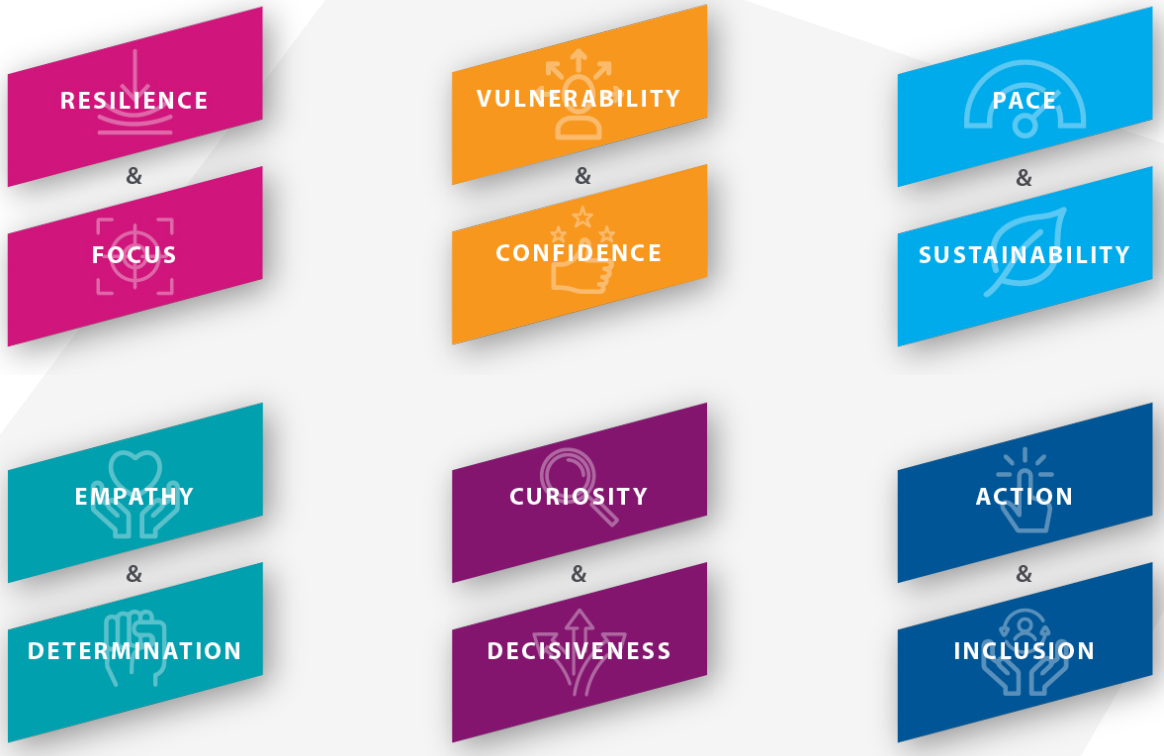
'IN THE BALANCE'

Action plan: *Balanced leadership for thriving organisations in 2020 and beyond*

SEVEN ACTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONAL SUCCESS

Today's organisations need to select and develop leaders who have the qualities required to lead and thrive in 2020 and beyond. Leaders now have a responsibility not just to their business and their people, but to the communities they impact. As many of us feel a real sense of loss, both professional and personal, leaders need to balance the tools in their kit to create a roadmap for the future.

These seven actions offer a recipe for organisational success in an era of constant change. Though the desirable traits of current leaders may be similar to those required in the past, the perfect balance of these skills and attitudes will alter as we move into new environments and business landscapes. By equipping themselves with these capabilities, leaders can move forward with the ability to emerge in a position of strength on the other side.



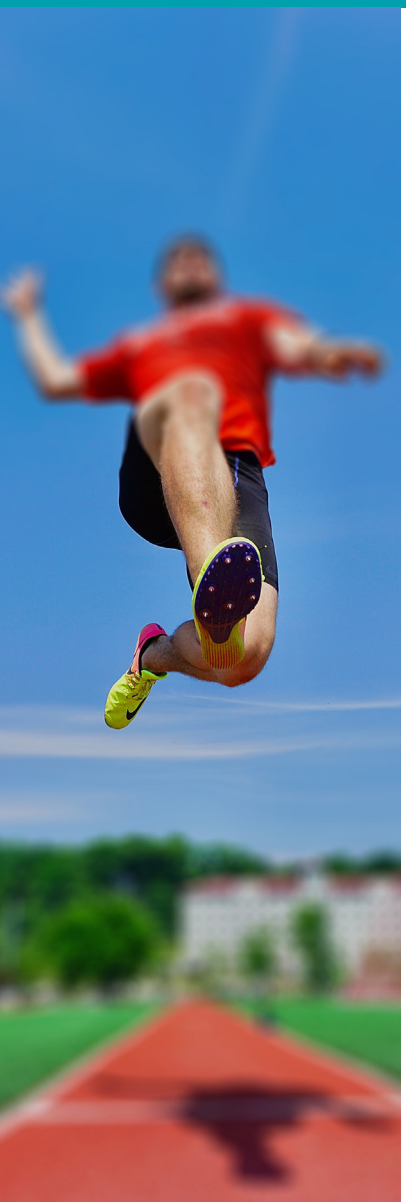
1. COMMUNICATE A COMPELLING STRATEGIC DIRECTION

It is no longer realistic to expect strategy development to be in the hands of a few at the 'top' of the organisation. This is where the value of collaboration comes in. Adjusting organisational direction in light of recent world changes will be a critical job for leaders at all levels, including the development of contingency plans that address the level of 'unknowns' which can't reasonably be predicted. Leaders should be honest with their teams, communicating possible plans for different scenarios, while still creating an overall vision – perhaps without finer points of detail which will need to evolve.

For some leaders, this will involve a fundamental shift in mindset. However, it should result in a broad strategy for the organisation that feels real to people. This strategy must be communicated and interpreted so that employees can understand how their individual work aligns and contributes. It should drive workforce engagement and productivity, which is particularly pertinent when employees are working virtually and need clarity and shared focus. Keeping employees focused on goals that are attainable and realistic will give each member of the team an anchor in times of change.

ACTIONS

- Ensure you understand the new strategic direction, and are confident in the plan.
- Communicate this strategy to your team(s) clearly and concisely, making the most of traditional and virtual communications tools.
- Allow time for your team(s) to consider, question and understand the strategy – make sure you open two-way lines of communication.



2. BUILD CAPABILITY & CAPACITY – QUICKLY & WITH AGILITY

The days of hiring people for a steady job, with a predictable workload, are over. Organisations must be agile and responsive to macro trends and factors beyond their control, at the same time as seeking to shape their destinies through intentional, strategic moves.

Success will depend predominantly on whether people have the capability – and capacity – to work effectively, in an increasingly virtual environment, and to take advantage of opportunities that arise. Organisations must focus on upskilling individuals with both the capabilities that were in short supply pre-pandemic and those required for our new working world. McKinsey predicts that this will involve a broad range of skillsets, with organisations required to focus on digital, cognitive, social and emotional and adaptability and resilience capabilities.

A differentiating factor between winning and losing organisations will be their willingness and ability to develop people – to boost capability and capacity on an ongoing basis and in response to changing circumstances and needs. Creating a healthy and organic learning culture, that's agile enough to flex quickly to meet emerging knowledge, capability and performance needs will be paramount.

ACTIONS

- Analyse the required skillsets of your organisation, where are the gaps in knowledge and behaviours?
- Implement organisational learning which allows teams to quickly build new skills and behaviours within the flow of work.

3. CREATE A CLIMATE THAT FUELS THE ENGINES OF SUCCESS

Not every organisation can leapfrog the market through technological innovation or magically overcome the challenges presented as a result of the pandemic. Success may come from moving more quickly, scaling activity or working effectively, virtually and inclusively.

A key leadership challenge is to create the right environment where innovation and collaboration can flourish and where the 'engines of your future success', whatever they may be, are recognised and valued. Giving employees the chance to innovate will challenge and motivate them to perform at their best.

Part of creating the right climate is aligning all systems and processes – such as digital/IT infrastructure, HR and knowledge management – to support the way that people need to work today. It also includes recognising and appreciating people for the contribution they're making and providing practical and emotional support to help employees to balance their work and life priorities.

ACTIONS

- Check-in with your teams. Do you understand how the past few months have affected them as individuals?
- Create formal and informal means of communication. Employees must have safe spaces to discuss problems or concerns.
- Provide regular feedback through structured performance reviews and more casual check-ins.



4. INSTIL LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

In the past, leadership and management have been seen as different activities, with distinct skill sets and behaviours. As we head into the future, businesses should look for and actively promote leadership at all levels of the organisation. The concept of leadership being in the domain of a few select characters hinders the organisation's ability to respond rapidly, even to disruptive or seismic changes which are the reality of dealing with uncertainty. Today's organisations need leaders at all levels in order to build performance, foster innovation, harness talent and enhance engagement.

ACTIONS

- Encourage employees to work with autonomy. Ask their opinions and points of view before offering your advice.
- Allow individuals more freedom to lead on specific projects or tasks, particularly if they have championed a new idea.
- Create a culture of calculated risk. Ensure your team(s) know the value of learning from mistakes.

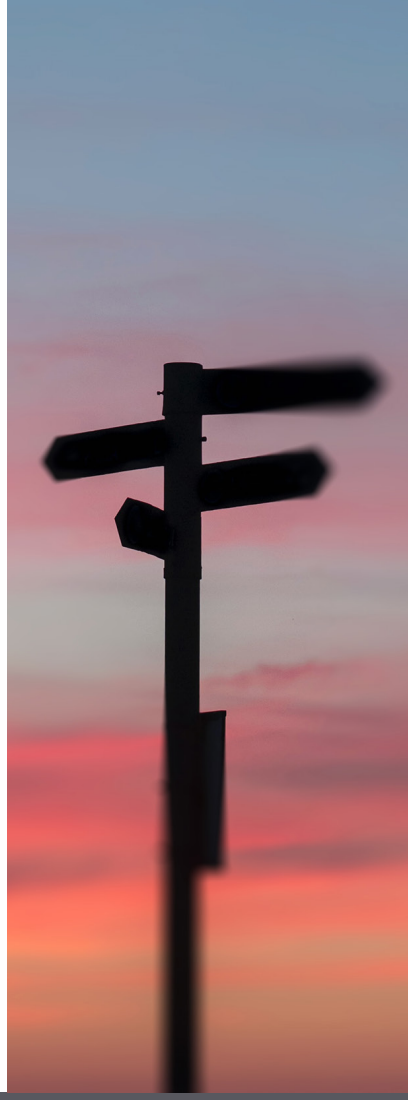
5. LIVE THE VALUES

Leaders must set an example when it comes to living the values of the organisation. They might not know their exact destination, but they can set the compass bearing and the tone for how the organisation will get there. Leaders should show employees that they're prepared to embrace this changing world with them and work within it together.

In contrast, those organisations that take a short-term view of values will pay a heavy price in terms of employee engagement, stakeholder relations and ultimately in business performance – it is simply a question of when.

ACTIONS

- Be honest with your team(s) about the challenges you're facing, and how you feel about them.
- Remain hopeful and make decisions based upon certain information.





6. PRIORITISE, SIMPLIFY & ALIGN INFORMATION

All organisations must learn to 'measure what matters'. The metrics used will have a profound impact on the effectiveness of the strategy implementation. Today we have access to more and more data, but leaders must ensure that the right information is prioritised, simplified and your teams are aligned behind it. That way, the metrics can actually support and benefit the business.

ACTIONS

- Focus on output, over input. Determine your end goal – and how this will be measured – and work backwards.
- Consider who receives what information. Take advantage of digital tools which allow employees to locate relevant communications quickly.
- Allow data to drive decisions. There must be a clear reason for collecting and analysing data.

7. BALANCE NEAR-TERM & LONGER-TERM RESULTS

There is a perennial tension for leaders in maximising near-term results – for stakeholders and the market – while at the same time building longer-term and more sustainable value. The penalties of poorly managing this dilemma can be severe, ranging from business liquidity problems and external market threats to starving the organisation's ability to invest in people, innovation and infrastructure. Leaders will always need to be highly motivated around results, competitive advantage and customer differentiation. Walking this tightrope will be an enormous challenge as we face leading into the future.

ACTIONS

- Consider the alignment of your short-term and long-term goals. Are you at risk of being pulled in different directions?
- Think about the impact of short-term decisions. Do they align with the values of the business? Would it be better to take a small hit for long-term stability?
- Ensure you communicate the long-term vision in a way which allows all stakeholders to have buy-in. Take them on the journey with you – the highs and the lows.





Taking actions such as these will instil confidence in your teams during periods of uncertainty, and will reinforce balanced reactions to both the opportunities and challenges ahead.

This is part two of our series on leadership in the balance in 2020 and beyond. To access part one, please click here.

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