

Streamline your leaders and teams to survive these current tough times and move toward future success

These turbulent times of extreme business challenge prompt me to offer my consulting thoughts in this, the first of a series of white papers aimed at providing some proven methods for organisational survival.

I work with senior leaders, managers and teams in my consultancy clients' companies in order to equip them to meet and overcome their key organisational challenges. I am writing to share some of the fundamental concepts for thriving, not just surviving. Below you will find three key concepts and a general description of how you can introduce these three concepts into your organisation.

Where the challenges lie...

In the tough current business climate, companies face special challenges in riding out the storm and keeping their organisation facing in the right direction. At the same time, they must remain equipped to steam ahead into calmer waters when they do come.

The swirling cross-currents of a successful past, a challenging present and an uncertain future will test leaders, managers and team members as never before.

Survival and success will come to those enterprises that excel in doing three things well as they face the current challenges.

Three things you need to know –and do

- 1. Do more with less.**
Limiting or reducing your resources – financial and human – while maintaining or increasing your output is tricky. You need to take a streamlined approach to the use of those resources in order to achieve new efficiencies. Effective deployment of the dual soft skills of leadership and teamwork will enable you to efficiently implement your technical and commercial skills – the hard skills.
- 2. Make unpleasant decisions, even if they hurt.**
Tough times take away the comfort zone that allowed the luxury of making decisions that were “popular” with your colleagues and your employees. Your decisions now need to be tight and targeted for maximum effect.
- 3. Motivate higher performance in a time of uncertainty.**
Keeping engagement and energy at high levels is crucial to steering your organisation through to its future. The key is clarity. Clarity



alleviates anxiety. Your people need clarity about the challenges they face, the plan for survival and the view of the future that you hold. Be honest with your people now so that you can command their respect in the future.

Implementing these three imperatives requires bold leadership and streamlined teams.

Bold Leadership

Leaders are those in your organisation who will be expected to ensure survival through the current tough times while steering the organisation to future success. Bold Leaders are those who see these times as “their time” – the time to step forward, embrace the challenge and make great things happen. Their decisions and actions are done *despite* the current situation rather than *because* of it. They have:

- The **acumen** to define, develop and disseminate positive paths through survival to success.
- The **art** of making decisions that optimise resource to have multiple impacts.
- The **ability** to hold teams together, maintaining effectiveness in the face of difficult times and unpleasant decisions.

Identify and encourage these Bold Leaders in your organisation. They exist outside the boundaries of your hierarchical organisational chart. They exist at all levels of your organisation. Every individual in your organisation knows how to be more effective in his or her job. Look for those people who rise to the challenge and are proactive in meeting that challenge. They are creative in doing more with less, courageous in making the unpleasant decisions and committed to a high level of team spirit. These are your Bold Leaders. Recognise them. Enable them. Trust them.

Bold Leaders are able to:

- **Turn anxiety into confidence**

Clarity is the antidote to anxiety. Right now the future seems unstable, unknown and therefore potentially dangerous to your employees. By far the most effective way to turn their fear into confidence is to make the future clear to them – to define it in such vivid terms that they can see where you are headed

- **Set a realistic horizon and rallying call**

A Bold Leader's natural tendency is to rally people toward a better future. Leaders can't help but change the present because the present is just not good enough. They succeed only when they find a way to make people excited by and confident in what is coming next.



➤ **Make actionable decisions**

Bold Leaders develop a decision-making framework that optimises resource to have multiple impacts, thus extending the effectiveness of resources. In tough times tough decisions may be deemed unpleasant among employees. **Bold Leaders** possess the skill to communicate such decisions in a way that minimises their negative impact.

➤ **Hold teams together**

Bold Leaders have the subtle skill of performance motivation in times when rewards are limited. They are experts in affirmative feedback and how to apply it across generations.

I recently spoke with a taxi driver who complained because his bosses were making cost-saving decisions that the drivers knew would not work in the short run or long run. He told his boss, “Don’t isolate us and treat us like we’re stupid.”

Bold Leaders don’t fall into that trap. They practice inclusion and seek early input from all levels of the organisation.

Streamlined Teams

Challenging times can bring out the worst in teams. Even if there once was an atmosphere of calm collegiality, external chaos and confusion can exert pressure that changes the team atmosphere to competitive criticism.

But challenging times can also be an opportunity to bring out the best in teams. Teams can examine themselves to see hidden strengths and capabilities with which to meet and overcome whatever challenges the current situation throws at them.

This self-examination is something I call “streamlining” – improving the effectiveness of an organisation by simplifying the way activities are performed. Streamlining creates an environment where the four fundamentals of collaborative team activity flourish: certainty, clarity, completeness and communication.

Streamlining your teams’ work practices to ensure future success requires a thorough six-step process that will simplify and concentrate team focus, effort and results.

Dedicated teams can streamline their own efforts by redefining their purpose, their product, their processes, their professionalism, their people and their positions:



1. **Purpose**
 - Stakeholder analysis to focus the team on the right targets
 - *Whom do we need to satisfy?*
2. **Product**
 - Define exactly the mission-critical products and services those stakeholders need
 - *What must we deliver?*
3. **Processes**
 - Design the optimal systems to support those services
 - *How do we need to operate?*
4. **Professionalism**
 - Identify the appropriate skills to operate those systems
 - *What expertise and talent do we need?*
5. **People**
 - Check that team members have the right skills
 - *Do we already have these skills or can we develop them quickly?*
6. **Positions**
 - Ensure that the team has the optimal structure to manage themselves effectively
 - *Are we set up to be effective?*

Work thoroughly through these six steps and record key elements of each section as you generate them.

Experience with this process indicates that external facilitation helps provide pace and focus to the streamlining process. If you would like to run this as a facilitated workshop, please contact me.

Closing thoughts

This white paper has outline the two crucial efforts companies should make to steer through these turbulent times, to ensure survive and to remain ready for future success. I hope you are now more able to identify, enable and encourage Bold Leadership at all levels of the organisation and to develop Streamlined Teams.

Please let me know your thoughts on this white paper or suggest other ideas for future topics to discuss in the series.

Regards,
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