



Leadership Brief: CRISIS LEADERSHIP

My days in Minnesota introduced me to Bill George who served as CEO at Medtronic, a global leader in medical technology, services, and solutions. His reputation as a leader both preceded and followed him. It was no surprise when he left Medtronic that he became professor of Management Practice and a Henry B. Arthur Fellow of Ethics at Harvard Business School. Alongside his book True North, he also wrote 7 Lessons for Leading in Crisis at the outset of the economic crisis in 2009.

Leading When Everything Goes Wrong

My hope in this edition of the Leadership Brief is to intrigue you enough to become a student of Bill George and take a deep dive into his insights. He frames four foundational questions in times of crisis:

1. Is this crisis your defining moment?
2. Are you prepared to step up and lead?
3. Can you stay on your "True North" course, no matter how great the pressures or temptations?
4. How can you make a difference in the world...which is the ultimate fulfillment of leading in a crisis?

Here are the high points of George's best practice insights:

Face Reality. Denial only makes things worse. Acknowledge your role and admit your mistakes.

Don't Be Charles Atlas. Get the world off your shoulders. Ask for help and allow your team to help you build your resilience.

Dig Deep for the Root Cause. Trust your team, but it's up to you to verify all aspects of the crisis.

Prepare for the Long Haul. Never underestimate the severity of the crisis. The situation will often worsen before improvement.

Silver Lining. It's your opportunity to make a difference and reinvent your organization. Adversity is your best opportunity to make fundamental changes in an organization. Don't just hunker down.

You're in the Spotlight. Get in front of the crisis by being open and publicly take responsibility. It is essential to be transparent to be considered credible.

Go on the Offense. Shape markets to your advantage while your competitors are paralyzed by the situation.



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Leadership Debrief

Some leadership crisis questions for your consideration:

- What is your new reality as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- What are the brutal facts of that new reality?
- How is it affecting your employees, customers, vendors, investors?
- Are you asking each stakeholder group or just assuming?
- What needs to change in how you will get work done?
- What resources are needed to make those changes?
- How will you lead differently to sustain your market share?
- How can you outpace your competition because of your agility?
- How are you ranking your "To Do" list?
- What is your next step before Monday morning?

Learning and Leading with you,

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