

# Effective Leadership

The Post COVID-19 Workplace Reframed

## PART 1 OF 2

The Six Principles to Guide your Transformation



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# SERIES BY:



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### **Effective Leadership: The Post Covid-19 Workplace Reframed**

The current pandemic crisis has created a number of core business challenges. You are likely aware of these and some may be keep you awake at night, including:

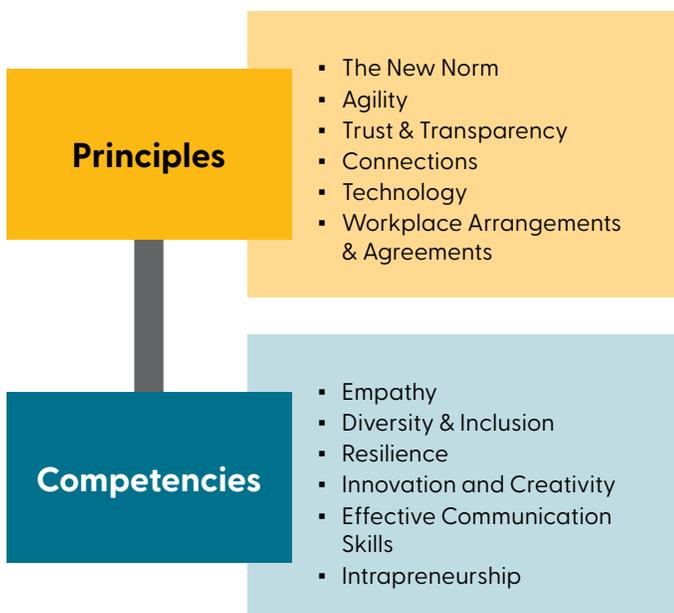
- When do we reopen?
- What does re-opening mean in the short, medium, and long term?
- Who is coming back to work?
- What will the new workplace look like?
- Do we continue to allow staff to work from home?
- How do we keep everyone safe?
- Will our business be affected, and how?
- What do our clients expect?
- What are our clients doing?

What you may not have considered is how to use this unique opportunity to reframe your organization. In this two-part series, Effective Leadership: The Workplace Reframed, you will learn more about the Principle Strategies and Competencies that may elevate your organization. This series provides a perspective to examine necessary change through the lens of opportunity.

# PART 1:

## The Six Principles to Guide your Transformation

### The Post COVID-19 Workplace Reframed



One of the authors once worked with a CEO who had a tremendous talent for taking issues and flipping them over to see what opportunities lie beneath. His ability to visualize new opportunities was legendary resulting in a company that grew, in a few short years, from a handful of people to thousands.

Not all of us have that innate ability. However, assuming everything will fit nicely back into the shape it was before is not realistic which means that some level of change is necessary. Given this, why not consider this an opportunity to hit the reset button by reframing your organization with new principles and competencies and challenging the norm? The current situation has given rise to necessary change, but also presents the

opportunity for evaluation. Take some time to consider what this transformation could encompass and what could be gained?

The six principles that will be examined in the first of this two-part series can help guide you in considering and evaluating transformation:

#### 1) Challenging the Norm

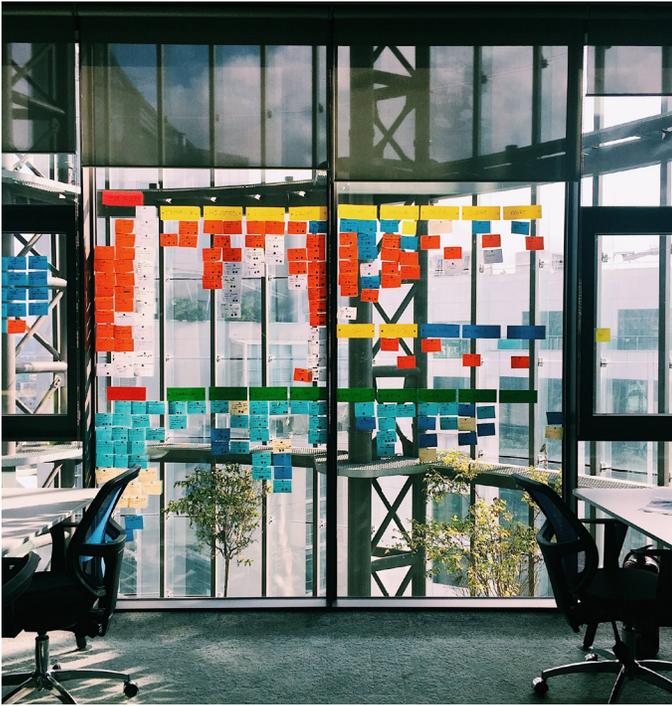
Imagine creating a new company from the ground up. Start by pulling together some of your best and brightest talent to brainstorm what this new entity might look like. Gather thoughts and ideas not just from your core advisors but from a broader and purposely diverse group, representing a wide range of diversity factors including but not limited to age, gender, and ethnicity. Seek out feedback from this diverse team, asking what is important to them and what they think you should consider.

- What do you want to continue to do?
- What isn't working (and why)?
- How would you change the things that aren't working?
- What could the company structure look like?
- What things do you think you need to do to see your business survive? To thrive?

Then compare the answers to the above questions with your organizations current state.

- Where are the gaps?
- What is the first step you can take towards addressing these gaps?
- Do you have people who can start work on these changes?

Think outside of your normal team that would support this type of initiative; consider other team members who may have time to help and can also bring a different approach and perspective.



## 2) Reacting with Fluidity, Movement, and Speed

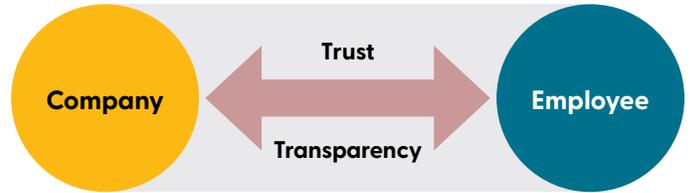
Agile companies foresee, anticipate, and swiftly respond or adapt to changes. These changes may be in the market, their customer's needs, emergence of new competitors, or the development of new products or services. Individuals and teams in agile workplaces are typically able to identify and act on opportunities and challenges, finding solutions to achieve results. Agile organizations are not hindered by overt bureaucracy or hierarchy.

The pandemic has forced agility: organizations have had to shift rapidly to public health orders, changing workplace requirements, changing market conditions and more. This forced agility can be uncomfortable, but it is an opportunity to confirm that your organization can be agile.

Consider the following questions to assess your ability to react:

- What are the most difficult aspects to reacting swiftly?
- What changes do you need to make to empower individuals and your organization to swiftly anticipate and react?
- How can you sustain these changes and apply them to other areas of your organization's business practices?

## 3) Embracing Organizational Trust and Transparency



Organizational trust and transparency are closely connected to communication and of sharing of information. How would you gauge your company's communication strategy? If there is a lack of clarity of vision or a lack of effort to communicate goals and expectations? If so, then you are leaving it up to employees to interpret what their role is and how it connects with the business.

Often, we talk about trust from the perspective of employees being able to trust in an organization's leadership and motives. On the flip side, this also means organizations should trust their employees to be accountable for the work and to do the right thing. In order for employees to do this, they need to have the appropriate guidance, tools, and resources.

I have worked for companies where information was a commodity to be closely held, guarded and enforced by rooms full of policies and procedures. I've also worked for organizations where the philosophy was "if we hire the right people, and give them the right information, they'll do the right thing." Guess which one was the most successful?

If employees are allowed to access organizational knowledge in a timely manner and are unhindered by hierarchical or departmental silos, they will be more engaged and productive, and able to make more operationally sound decisions. Taking steps toward being a more trusting organization takes time and effort. To start moving in the right direction consider:

- Communicating annual corporate and team objectives,
- Setting up a system to allow for frequent reporting on financial matters and business initiatives,
- Holding stand up meetings on a regular basis,
- Allowing for two-way communication whereby employees are asked to provide honest feedback,

- Encouraging managers to hold frequent “ask me anything” meetings with direct reports as well as frequent and informal feedback meetings with employees,
- Ensuring leaders have and are using the tools to connect with their teams and are adapting their leadership approach to the new reality of teams being configured differently,
- Providing leaders with training to improve listening, conversational, and conflict resolution skills,
- Using technology effectively to share information and allow team members to connect,
- Establishing cross functional teams to increase information sharing between groups.

To help with this shift in the right direction, consider these questions:

- What new communication and information sharing practices have you adopted during the pandemic should be sustained?
- What communication and information sharing gaps did you identified during the pandemic that need to be addressed?

#### 4) Making Meaningful and Authentic Connections

Connections on a personal, corporate, and community level are more important now than they have ever been.

From our recent shared COVID-19 experience, we have all learned that accepting and adapting to change can be both challenging yet managed. We have also learned that, while we are all in the same boat, our individual, corporate, and community level experiences and takeaways may be very different, depending on varying factors and circumstances.

One thing that resonates with most of us is the need for employees and businesses to connect with our work teams and clients in a truly human way. This is an important opportunity for organizations to sustain and embrace this humanity and for leaders to continue to connect with employees on a personal level.

Organizational vision guides decisions at every level. Employees who have a connection with, and understanding of, the company’s mission and values

bring their best selves to work. For this to occur employers need to do more than just posting a mission statement; they must find ways to showcase real life examples of how the philosophy can be translated at every level, demonstrating that it is truly the organization’s culture.

Giving back and helping others is important as employees relate deeply to a greater purpose than the work itself. Whether it be corporate or employee donations, fundraising activities or volunteering - all foster connections with colleagues, customers, and our communities.

- How have you and your organization made meaningful connections during the pandemic?
- Of these practices, what do you want to continue and what other connection practices do you see as important to the future of your organization?

#### 5) Investing in Technology

If there has ever been a real-life case study highlighting the importance of a responsive and fluid technology plan – the 2020 crisis is it.

As teams evolve and develop integrated ways of working with each other, using technology to tap into expertise and content is crucial. Adapting to and working in a digital workplace are now primary competencies, arguably as important as reading and writing. Going forward, organizational technology tools need to effectively navigate, analyze, and create information and employees need to be able to quickly adapt to new systems. Technology needs to be accessible in a way that allows it to interact with and engage stakeholders (employees and clients) and encourages socialization and collaboration.

- What technologies have become invaluable to your organization?
- What other technologies do you need to explore or update to further support your people and organization?



## 6) Rethinking Work Arrangements and Agreements

The contrarian approach to investing often yields surprising results and at this juncture you may want to consider some business actions that could positively impact your organization in the future.

**Your future footprint:** Social distancing requirements have created new work arrangements. As we consider who and how people return to the office, now may be the time to consider a more versatile workplace model with less square footage.

**Flexibility where you work:** While some employees are anxious to return to a traditional office environment, other employees have adapted to working from home and would like or need to continue to do so. How can you create a flexible environment that integrates life and preferences of employees?

**Hire away!** While it may seem illogical in today's uncertain economic market, people are job searching and by reaching out to specific candidates now you may find a number of terrific and talented individuals who are considering making a move. This may include individuals who may want to move to another location closer to family and friends, employees whose organizations didn't weather the economic fallout, or individuals who are rethinking their current role. Combined with the considerations for your future footprint and flexibility of where you work, look at whether you need to hire someone local or whether you can hire from a wider geographic region.

**Gig Economy:** For several years there has been talk about the pros and cons of a "gig economy" whereby talent is hired on contract for a specific assignment rather than being hired as a full-time employee. The debate of this will certainly continue, but considering the pros and cons given the new parameters of how, where, and what we are working on may change the balance on the best approach in the present and future.

- What are your organization's needs in terms of workplace and workforce?
- What decision parameters have you used in the past that may need reconsideration?



### What's next?

In the second article in this series, "Developing new Leadership and Employee Competencies" we'll discuss how developing new business skills can take your organization to the next step.