

Effective Leadership

The Post COVID-19 Workplace Reframed

PART 2 OF 2

Developing New Leadership and
Employee Competencies



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SERIES BY:



ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING
ENGINEERING COMPANIES
BRITISH COLUMBIA



Sharon Batchelor, CPHR

Chair, Human Resources Committee
ACEC-British Columbia
sbatchelor@klohn.com



Marcie Cochrane, P.Eng., MBA

Project Leader
ACEC-British Columbia
marcie@acec-bc.ca

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 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 2:

Developing New Leadership and Employee Competencies

The Post COVID-19 Workplace Reframed

Principles

- The New Norm
- Agility
- Trust & Transparency
- Connections
- Technology
- Workplace Arrangements & Agreements

Competencies

- Empathy
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Resilience
- Innovation and Creativity
- Effective Communication Skills
- Intrapreneurship

In part two of this series, you will learn how rethinking and refining six crucial competencies for leadership and employees, business skills, and behaviours can elevate your organization.

The future of work is about breaking down departmental silos and hierarchical management models, creating vibrant hubs of dynamic and diverse work teams. To be

successful in a reimagined workplace, staff at all levels must develop essential competencies and skills that foster:

- Empathy
- Diversity Appreciation
- Resilience
- Innovation and Creativity
- Effective Communication Skills
- Intrapreneurship

Understanding not only what these competencies are, but also why they are important to your organization today and in the future is critical as you reframe your organization.

1) Empathy

We know that accepting and adapting to change can be difficult. Recent experience has also taught us that, while we may all be in the same boat, our specific circumstances and experiences can be vary significantly. Successful businesses understand and value the perspectives of others, recognize and remove biases, and adopt fair and respectful workplace practices.

Even five years ago it was difficult to find organizations that had empathy included in their values, whether it was explicitly or implicitly stated. However, empathy is now core to successful organizations and leadership. Making empathy a part of your culture builds an organization that is better positioned to react and adapt to change.



2) Diversity Appreciation

In recent times, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) programs have transitioned from being organizational “nice to haves” to important institutionalized core values. The lessons we have learned in 2020 to date is that it is more important than ever that organizations revamp their EDI programs into deep and meaningful practices.

The depth of the importance and magnitude of EDI change needed extends well beyond the scope of this content series. However, start by examining what programs you have in place and take time to have honest conversations about where the gaps are. Seek feedback and input and then draw upon the expertise and knowledge you have within your organization, within our industry, and from those who can support organizations on this transformation.

3) Building Resilience

In physics, resilience is the ability of an elastic material to absorb energy and release that energy as it springs back to its original shape. In today’s workplace, resilience is defined as the ability to recover or bounce back from setbacks, adapt well to change, and to keep going in the face of adversity.

In recent times, our changing world has required that we not only deal with our own personal issues, but with major regional and global matters. These matters are having impact at both the personal, professional, and organizational level.

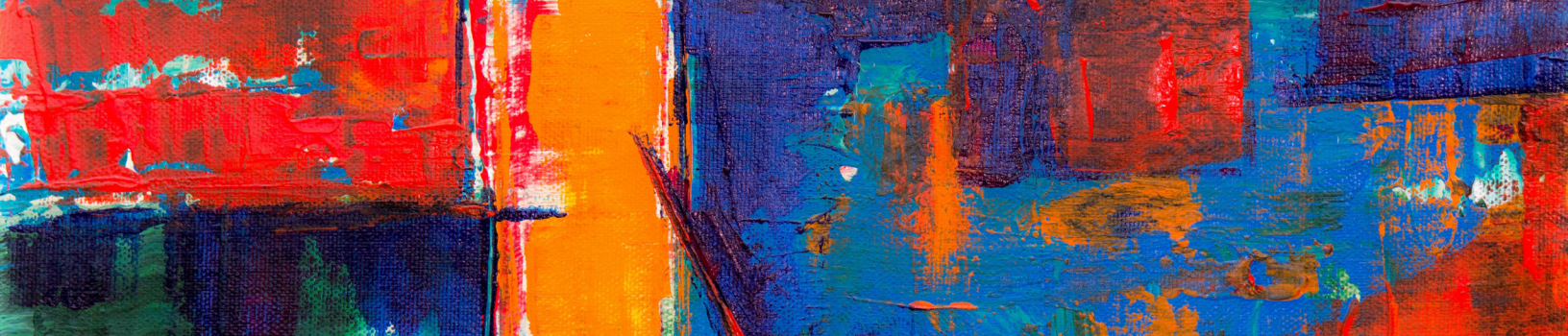
Leading employers recognize that stress resilience is a teachable skill needed for health, happiness, and career longevity. They also understand that resilient employees foster positivity, innovation, collaboration and leadership skills that enable sustainable success. Resilient organizations embrace these skills, offer programs to increase resiliency, and embed them in their culture.

The Four Factors of Resilient Employees



4) Innovation and Creativity

Many organizations have, through culture or policies and practices, discouraged non-traditional thinking and rule breaking. However, the ability to innovate and be creative is core to an organization being agile and responsive to future opportunities and challenges. Anticipating



and identifying upcoming possibilities as well as being positioned to develop a new product or service to meet future needs faster than others is something businesses strive for. By allowing employees to have untethered learning, research and development time, and the space to fail, your organization may be able to stay on top of new trends, adopt new ideas, and leapfrog the competition.

COVID-19 has forced us to find new ways to collaborate, create, and innovate. Consider what you have done in recent months in response to COVID-19 and identify elements of collaboration and innovation that you want to maintain and build upon. Examine the gaps you have uncovered and consider what your organization needs to do to catalyze increased collaboration and innovation.

5) Effective Communication Skills

The importance of effective communication at all levels cannot be overstressed. Corporate communications, whereby important information related to key strategies, goals, objectives and updates, that are shared with employees are key to establishing a strong foundation for any business. Equally important is that organizations have a strategy for managers and their teams, especially those who are dealing with issues and leading teams remotely and virtually, to develop effective:

- Listening,
- Delegation,
- Employee recognition,
- Conflict resolution, and
- Presentation skills.

Consider the current approaches you use for developing these skills and who, within your organization, receives training and resources on these topics. Emerging from COVID-19 with a transformed workplace will likely necessitate that you change what materials and

resources you use and who you provide training to. A reframed organization will require a reframed strategy.

6) Intrapreneurship

When employees take full ownership for their careers and their impact in the workplace, there is a level of passion and enthusiasm generated that exceeds traditional engagement definitions. Some organizations have defined this as “intrepreneurial spirit” or “individual leadership”, where employees take the initiative to find and implement new ideas and solutions, thinking as an owner and not waiting for instructions.

Companies that encourage employees to explore new solutions and create an environment of deep collaboration and innovation can see high levels of accountability and productivity. How do you develop an intrepreneurial spirit within your business?

- Share and reshare your personal and organizational values with employees. Allow them to see where their roles have impact,
- Rethink the competencies and skills required and add high levels of collaboration and accountability,
- Encourage employees to take initiative to pursue some of their own projects,
- Teach managers to lead through coaching and reinforcement, not through micromanagement,
- Hire employees who have demonstrated individual leadership in previous work,
- Provide opportunities for employees to lead activities, projects or colleagues earlier in their career than traditional career paths allowed for, and
- Provide training to employees on how to build stronger accountability, responsibility and ownership for success in their work.

With the shift to working remotely during COVID-19, some elements to support intrapreneurship may have been developed in your organization. Flexible and varied work hours have necessitated that performance be managed through deliverables, not micromanagement of hours worked in the office. And if you have demonstrated that your organization cares about your people during this crisis, you employees likely have increased levels of organization loyalty, which is a key component of developing and keeping intrapreneurs.

Conclusion

While the new business reality is anything but “normal”, the concepts outlined in this content series showcase that opportunities for improvement exist and provide guidance on areas to consider. Whether you decide to stay the course with the fundamentals you already have in place, reframe your workplace by simply tweaking some business practices, or dive full-on into an organization “make over”, going forward, managing and adapting to change will undoubtedly be a key aspect of your business strategy.

Did you find this leadership series insightful?

Visit the [ACEC-BC COVID-19 Resource Centre](#) where you can find similar articles and resources such as [Effective Leadership: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusiveness During a Time of Crisis](#).

