

6 Strategies for Successful Crisis Leadership

Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia-Executive Leadership Institute (PUC-ELI) rationalizes that the ultimate gauge of leadership capacity has to do with crisis management. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the issue of crisis leadership frontally and centrally. Compared to most crises, which are usually at the regional or national levels, this is broader global crisis. It truly presents a leadership challenge.

A frontal and central issue is how should crisis leadership be applied to leadership in a global pandemic. PUC-ELI's shares that a leader has critical mandates to realize in a crisis (as anchored in Mintoff's "Best Practices in Leadership Crisis"), namely:

1. Restore a Sense of Well-Being:

Crises can be devastating events for members of the nation or organization. Crisis leaders need to exhibit self-discipline, presenting a calm and confident attitude. They need to be positive yet realistic in their outlook, which is so critical for helping restore a sense of psychological safety in followers. It is also important that the leader demonstrates empathy with victims in a crisis.

2. Preparation:

This is the single most important task of leading in a crisis. Leaders should prepare beforehand for all possible crises that might occur and that they should have well-developed action plans. Importantly, leaders should receive training in crisis leadership, which includes managing emotions, review of communication channels and technology, assembling crisis management task forces, etc.

3. Consult with Experts:

A crisis leader needs to consult widely anyone who has valuable knowledge that can help in dealing with the crisis. This should include loyal advisors, but also diverse experts with different opinions, perspectives, and alliances, in order to consider all possible courses of action.

4. Communicate Clearly:

In a crisis, fast, efficient, and accurate communication is essential. The leader needs to be a "focal point person," who facilitates or coordinates the messages being sent to followers/constituents, handing over the advising role to knowledgeable experts in the administration or organization to hear their authoritative information or opinions. Authentic, open, and honest communication is the key to gain the trust of followers.

5. Facilitate Collaboration:

The leader needs to solve the crisis at all costs. In order to do this, it often requires persuading competing parties to work together for the common good. The leader needs to help all parties arrive at a shared understanding of the process and focus on the shared purpose of bringing the crisis to an end.

6. Empower Leaders at Lower Levels:

Too much centralization of authority can work against solving a crisis. General strategies may not apply to certain entities and locations, so a leader should empower lower-level leaders to take initiative and apply innovative solutions.

(by Dr. Fil with Nget Sokla)