

Six Leadership Lessons from 2020: How can managers support their teams in times of crisis

by [Georgios Vousinas, MSc, MBA, PhD\(c\), CICA, BCCLA](#), Senior Business Associate

2020 was the year that has been marked by the global health crisis, caused by the burst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has tested our world like few others in the recent history of mankind. The severe negative consequences of the coronavirus pandemic on all aspects of (not only) business operations have changed our way of life. People, organizations and corporations are now looking forward to putting all the problems they faced behind. As a result, the lessons learned during these unprecedented times must reflect on the future decisions of those in charge of shaping them. So, the main question that arises is the following:

- **What lessons can managers take from 2020 and how they can put them into practice to support their teams in times of crisis and achieve business goals?**

The pandemic crisis of COVID-19 has brought into surface the following six leadership lessons:

- ✓ **Get ready for and be able to adapt to increased turmoil**
The pandemic crisis made it clear, more than ever, that nothing can be taken for granted, so leaders have to reconsider their expectations about stability and normality, building resilience deep into their companies and re-evaluating their crisis management techniques. In this direction, it is crucial for managers to take a more stakeholder view, looking outside their firms. Overall, it is about time leaders step up and have their teams properly prepared for future crises.
- ✓ **Bring to the surface the joint genius of your team**
Managers rely on teamwork to achieve business goals, but under crisis this traditional relationship goes beyond the typical procedures. In times of uncertainty and constant change leaders need to be surrounded by a strong diversity of thoughts, getting the best of every team player for the benefit of the common target. It requires to shift from the myopic view of just doing what you should do to doing what you could do. Thus, leaders must unleash the joint genius of their teams, unlocking creativity and promoting innovative problem-solving.
- ✓ **Promote a culture that enables employees**
The current crisis highlighted how crucial is for managers to create an environment that enables employees to do their best both individually and cooperatively. This calls for leaders to create and actively manage a culture that supports learning and

flexibility, induces staff to use their strengths and assists the teams in successfully adapting to all situations.

✓ **Create mutual understanding via dialogue**

The sense of uncertainty negatively affects people in many ways such as in their decision-making process. It is the leaders' role to promote creative dialogue with their teams to support them in the fight against the devastating effects of insecurity. By developing a mutual understanding, team members are able to better assess information and effectively cooperate, bridging the gap among how different individuals experience the same situation and moving forward.

✓ **High quality work relationships**

In times of crisis and uncertainty establishing high quality work relationships is vital for employees to feel safe and know they have the required support by their managers. Leaders must build on these relationships to fuel their teams' desire to reach top performance standards and inspire them to be faithful to their organizational commitment.

✓ **Ensure work-life balance for employees**

The work conditions have changed dramatically this year, with remote working gaining ground, having both positive and negative effects. On one hand productivity has reached unprecedented levels and on the other personal lives have adversely affected. So, it is the leaders' duty to ensure a healthy and safe working environment that helps staff achieve a work-life balance, a prerequisite for mental well-being.



References

Leading Through COVID-19. Finding hope and opportunity in a global calamity. Available from:

<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/leading-through-covid-19/>

Being the Agile Boss. Leading through radical uncertainty means helping your team and your network create the future with you. Available from: <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/being-the-agile-boss/>

How Leading Companies Are Innovating Remotely. Available from:

<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/how-leading-companies-are-innovating-remotely/>

How to Sustain Your Organization's Culture When Everyone Is Remote. The coronavirus pandemic's office exodus risks diminishing company culture unless leaders take action to support it. Available from:

<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/how-to-sustain-your-organizations-culture-when-everyone-is-remote/>

What New Normal Should We Create? Available from: <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/what-new-normal-should-we-create/>

Disrupted and Stronger: Looking In and Looking Out. Available from:

<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/disrupted-and-stronger-looking-in-and-looking-out/>

Aegean Experts is a boutique consultancy firm specializing in Governance, Risk, Compliance and offering a wide range of services. Around the firm there are a number of business associates and partners who are subject matter experts. Aegean Experts' vision is to make Governance (inclusive of Risk Management, Regulatory Compliance and Internal Control Systems) effective as well as efficient; a change enabler. Clients rely on Aegean Experts' expertise to help them make informed risk management decisions. For more information, please visit <https://aegeanexperts.gr/>

