

Strategic Leadership in a Time of Crisis

Leadership Engagement during COVID 19

Non-profit organisations are faced with the plight of making existential decisions during this unprecedented time. Leaders in this sector are stressed and struggling with today's climate and trying to make sense of the uncertainty that prevails globally. Many leaders are faced with the tough challenge of communicating the reality of today's complex situation to their organizations Strategic Leadership, Staff and partners. The effect of Covid-19 on our society should not be under-estimated, as a matter of fact the effect is already being felt in many quarters of the non-profit sector.

My heart goes out to the leaders of various organisations during this unprecedented moment in our world. The advent of the novel corona virus (COVID-19) has in less than four (4) months changed the world we have become accustomed to. I am of the view that even post this pandemic our world will likely never be the same again.

The pressure on the leaders in all capacities irrespective of the sector be it; economic, political or religious is enormous, many are at a crossroads and are perplexed as to the way forward. Unfortunately, many as a result of the ever-mounting pressure and the reality of the crisis we face have begun to make irrational decisions such as; laying off staff members, cutting down programs, or even planning on shutting down operations for good without fully considering all the options available. However, being fully cognisant of the situation that prevails, coupled with a lack of an adequate support structure around some leaders during this time, irrational decisions are bound to be made.

COVID-19 has created a global crisis, which is affecting every sphere of our existence. In the realm of organisational leadership, this crisis has exposed the weaknesses of some organisations. However, this presents an opportunity to make adjustments in view of doing things differently, working on weaknesses that have come to light and making the necessary change to become more effective. The critical aspect to be focused on by leaders of organisations at this point in time relates to picturing what our world will look like post COVID-19 and the role their organisations will play in reshaping our world.

It is during turbulent times such as these that the Board of Directors of organisations, Church Councils, and other key role players need to take initiative and seek to play a vital role in

moving their respective organisations forward. This is definitely not the time for Executive Directors, Senior Pastors etc. to be jittering or making irrational decisions. The focus should be on moving forward.

Of no doubt the future looks bleak and unpredictable. Economically things are going to be tight and job losses may rise; health wise the implications are far reaching and cannot easily be quantified; the mismanagement of resources may cause political turmoil.

At this juncture, here are a few steps to consider as an Executive Director or Senior Pastor:

1. Crucial Conversations at the Leadership Level - called this Strategic Leadership Engagement (Board/ Council Members, Executive Director/Senior Pastor). The role and impact of an organisations strategic leadership needs to be seen and felt now more than ever. Strategic leaders of any organisation plays three major roles and these roles are actioned out in what is referred to as Organisational Strategic Leadership, Three Roles and Ten Responsibilities. A brief discussion on the three roles follows:

- (a) **Provide Direction:** Executive Directors or Senior Pastors need the help of their Strategic Leadership to make decisions that will impact the organization now and in the future. Friends, the future is very uncertain at the moment, but with intentional engagement by the Strategic Leadership we can navigate the current and forge ahead for the future.
- (b) **Provide Resources:** The major challenge any organization will face from now onward relates to financial resources and it is going to be a major crisis in months and years to come. Recently, I was listening to economists on the BBC, one said, and I quote, "It took the world almost 8 years to recover from the 2008 Economic Recession, the current Economic Recession will take longer." When he was asked why he holds such a view, he responded as follows, "The unity and will to address the 2008 Recession then isn't there today." Therefore, the Strategic Leaders of organisations must put their thoughts and minds together and address the current and future financial state of their organization.
- (c) **Provide Oversight:** This is an area plagued with contention in many organisation, this is as a result of a lack of good understanding regarding the difference between governance and management. The Strategic Leadership of an organisation providing oversight does not mean they are taking over the work of management, rather, it involves working together for the common goal, as well as the vision and mission of the organisation.

2. Crucial Conversation at the Management Level (Executive Director/Senior Pastor, Management/Staff). On the part of management, there is a need to do what I call operational adjustment. This requires setting the priorities of the organisation as well as conducting a comprehensive SWOT Analysis of the organisation. The aforementioned will ultimately result in an organisation becoming more effective and efficient.

However, all being said and being very aware of the dilemma some organizations have when it comes to their Strategic Leadership commonly referred to as the Board leadership or Council. It comes as no surprise that Board leadership development is gaining popularity in many institutions. Yet, only a few Boards and strategic management structures are effective and impactful while the majority remain ineffective.

Many Board members join an organization's board with dreams, vision, excitement and a sincere desire to make a difference. Unfortunately, in many cases this positive energy is

wasted and misguided because of misconceptions of what a Board is and how it should function. This is further exacerbated by the confusion and misunderstandings that exist on the difference between governance and management and their roles in an organisation.

Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) has solutions to this multifaceted puzzle that leaders of many organisations struggle with. We at LDI specialize in helping organisations create a Board of Directors or transform existing dysfunctional Boards of Directors into highly effective and result orientated teams that perform at optimum level.

LDI's program is designed to provide sound leadership training for leaders of organizations which adequately and effectively equip them with the necessary knowledge and practical skills in their various endeavors or engagement. LDI tailors its program content based on the needs of an organization.

Don't struggle alone, we would be available to journey with you and your organization at this difficult and challenging time. Reach out to us and we will offer our help in whatever way we can to help you and your organization to resolve your challenges.

As nations have adopted different policies on travel coupled with LDI's internal policy to help reduce the spread of the corona virus, all engagement by LDI with organisations will be conducted virtually through Skype, Zoom or any other virtual communication platform available for the immediate future.



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