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# Leaders have nowhere to hide in this time of crisis

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Great leaders have the ability to know themselves and their employees

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From the perspective of leadership in work organisations, Covid-19 presents massive challenges. Firstly, we are seeing a dramatic change in working practices due to remote working, virtual engagement/communication processes and an absence of the usual social experiences and structure which the work environment normally provides.

Add to that the impact on many employees due to issues resulting from domestic tensions that will have arisen over the last few weeks, and indeed, that may well persist. This will, of course, have a dramatic impact on many of the things we take for granted in the usual working environment and the impact not only on motivation and performance but also the overall well-being of employees.

Secondly, we will be witnessing a huge impact on the economic viability of many organisations with the inevitable job losses and redundancies which will occur, and in this situation, employees will need support and help in order to get their lives back on track. Also, there will be huge pressure for many companies to find new ways of making their business models work from both an economic and social perspective and clearly the need for new ideas and innovations from employees will be vital.

Thirdly, against a background for the need to change and offer something different, employees will be experiencing a dramatic reduction in their clarity and confidence about the future and uncertainties which lie ahead. Indeed, at a time when employees will need to be at the top of their game, we will see a significant threat to their motivation and sense of well-being.

In this context, the quality of leadership in organisations becomes vital, but in our experience, in terms of what we might describe as “normal times”, the quality of most leadership we see is mediocre at the best of times. Often, the prevailing style of leadership tends to be coercive or “my way or the highway”. On other occasions we see leaders failing to really address issues, be open with staff and provide clarity and direction, they can often be more motivated to be popular and not really address the difficult issues. On other occasions we see leaders failing to provide any direction or input at all together with a complete lack of engagement with their staff.

In “normal times”, you could probably get away with this, particularly when most other organisations are pretty much the same. However, in the Covid-19 context, there really is no place to hide and those organisations that can provide effective and successful leadership input will be the ones that will survive and prosper.

That is why we have joined **CeeD**, as we recognise the Peer-to-Peer nature of best practice sharing is an important ingredient to doing it right. The manufacturing and engineering community also provide a great community of functional and management leadership roles, heavily community-based and increasingly, a strong focus on positive impact to societal change.

We have seen great leadership in our work and what characterises that above all, is the ability of leaders to know themselves together with knowing their employees. These successful leaders are effective in delivering the behaviour that is required by the situation and so they are able to manage both their strengths and their weaknesses in a way which lands effectively when they engage with their employees.

Successful leadership, in a nutshell, is the ability to simultaneously deliver behaviour which provides direction and focus for employees together with a capacity to show an interest and a commitment which makes employees feel engaged, involved, and motivated.

Effective leadership which provides direction for employees together with helping them feel engaged creates an environment or climate in the organisation which is motivational for the employee and helps provide clarity of direction and a real sense of involvement.

Indeed, we see the impact of that leadership truly driving both the motivation and performance of employees together with their well-being, in fact, we have observed that the quality of the relationship that employees have with the leader not only drives performance and well-being in a general sense but also can have a massive impact on both physical and mental health itself – leadership matters. In a Covid-19 context, aside from promoting greater well-being for employees, this will also provide the right type of environment in which those employees will have a chance of contributing at the top of their game.

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