



Adjust in a Crisis

Are You Leading in Hand Wringing, or Hand Washing?

“Leadership is needed more in a crisis than at any other time.”
-Dr. John Maxwell

Panic Attack

2020 has thrown terrible punches to the world. Quietly in early January, the Western world heard of a virus spreading in China that within weeks would affect everyone. Known as the Coronavirus, or COVID-19, the virus has impacted health and economies throughout the globe. And the first thing people did when it started spreading in the US was... buy up all the toilet paper!?

Leaders know that fear is contagious. It spreads faster than any virus!

In 1938 a small radio show broadcast the H.G. Wells classic story “War of the Worlds.” Although they told everyone at the outset that it was a fictional drama, many who tuned in late thought the world was being attacked by Martians. In an interview with the late actress Agnes Moorehead (Endora on “Bewitched”) who was part of the broadcast, she told of a woman who called in frantically swearing she saw little green men in her backyard!

“There’s always an Arquillian Battle Cruiser, or a Corillian Death Ray, or an intergalactic plague that is about to wipe out all life on this miserable little planet and the only way these people can get in with their happy lives is they DO NOT KNOW ABOUT IT!”
-Tommy Lee Jones, “Men in Black”

This isn’t the first crisis the world has faced, nor will it be the last. There have been numerous “world-ending” crises in my lifetime... the atomic bomb threat, Cuban Missile Crisis, Cold War with the Soviet Union, stock market crash of 1987, 9-11 attacks, ISIS, Enron scandal and the effects it had on corporations, Internet Bubble crash of 2001 and the Great Recession in 2007. Epidemics have been numerous, as well... Polio, Ebola, H1N1, MERS, SARS, Swine Flu, Bird Flu, Hong Kong Flu, AIDS, etc. And when this crisis has ended there will be another one.

Ironically the Martians in H.G. Wells' classic were not defeated by humans, but by microbes. This year, the microbes seemed to come for us!

Control

We have learned that we are basically fragile. We reassure ourselves that we and our leaders are in control and have a "handle" on everything. The slightest hint that things aren't "normal" can set off a multitude in panic. When we hear some bad news, we tend to take it to the extremes in groups. Tommy Lee Jones' character in the movie, "Men in Black" says, "A person is smart. People are dumb, panicky dangerous animals and you know it."

People aren't "dumb," but we do fall apart when we aren't fully in control. We lose our perspective. Great leaders rise up when others are panicking and add value to their people.

In school I remember reading the poem, "If," by Rudyard Kipling.

*"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you..."*

An unknown author recently said, "Notice how fast the whole world can fall apart. In the blink of an eye, we are out of toilet paper. In the blink of an eye, college campuses close, and no more NBA. In the blink of an eye, it will be impossible to travel by plane. In the blink of an eye, you'll be shuttered in your house. In the blink of an eye every nation trembles. Mankind is frail and a tiny little invisible virus has disrupted so much."

***Make a list of the things you can control now and a list of the things you can NOT control.
And leave the second list alone!***

Adapt and Adjust

In the blink of an eye, we have undergone massive disruptions in our lives recently. Those changes include (but are not limited to):

- Your complacency about what happens in one part of the world not effecting you.
- Your belief that we are fully prepared for an epidemic or biological attack. Did you know that Wuhan, China was making news on December 31, 2019?
- Your shopping habits. Did you hoard or encounter others who did?
- Your "rainy day" money plans. Do you have a 6-month reserve in savings?
- Your trust that your job CAN'T be terminated because you are essential...unless you are in the medical, pharmaceutical, stocking or life-saving professions).
- Your trust in leaders who don't reveal what they know is coming your way. Were you a part of the conspiracy crowd?
- The invincible belief in ourselves and humanity. Did you think we were immortal on this planet?

What is still the same? Many things haven't changed... like people. They still will work together when they realize everyone is facing the same crisis. We are stronger together and every good leader works on behalf of people – not themselves.

Essentials are perceived, not absolute... we always thought that clean air, water, a roof over our heads and freedom were our only essentials. We discovered that you can add toilet paper, canned goods, sanitary wipes and hand washing to that list.

We still need to sell, market and buy things and services from PEOPLE... a computer cannot virtually repair your car, build your next construction project, solve a crime, hand you the keys to a new car, or fill your propane tank. It takes salespeople interacting with you in person.

We still need to be treated respectfully by others in customer service. It takes someone who hears you, understands your problem and brings you a timely resolution. Just because there is a panic doesn't mean you can treat people rudely. In fact, the crisis brings more out of a leader than any other time. You will find what your people are made of as they respond in crisis mode to others.

We still need people to lead us, manage us, direct us and inspire us to greatness. It takes skilled management with "people skills." John Maxwell says, "Leaders put people first."

Leadership requires experiences that test you to see what your mettle is in future crises. Maxwell also says, "Choices make us; crises reveal us." What has the crisis revealed about your leadership? Are you keeping your cool while those about you panic? Are you the person others can turn to for support and encouragement?

What will change? Vaccines, work from home, churches and other large gatherings, people-to-people contact, governmental programs will change. Small group sessions may become more important than large, long meetings. Virtual skills will be in high demand as will the ability to multi-meet from remote locations.

The only winners seemed to have been suppliers, truckers, railroads, warehouse stockers, sanitary engineers, health/medical/bio workers, "essentials" industries. I expect increased scanning for biohazards and diseases may be added to flights. Early warnings in disease will be necessary to prevent a repeat of "Pandemic 2020." I anticipate governments will initiate programs "for our benefit" that will encroach upon personal lives. This is inevitable in any crisis.

"Today is an unusual day. People are 'hunkered down'. Street traffic is light. Grocery store shelves are empty. The school and workplace are closed and lights are out. It kind of feels like waiting for a big snowy blizzard to blow through. Watching who and where the Coronavirus will hit next is like watching a storm.

But if you think about it, you have been through storms before. What did you do then? You prepared. You prayed. You persevered. With vigilance, you watched and waited until the storm passed by. My friend, this too shall pass."

-Babbie Mason

Hopefully YOU have changed... Like before, this won't be the last crisis we face; it's just the *next* one. This will either make you or break you. It is your *choice* to allow one of those outcomes. How well can you adapt in a crisis? In Superbowl LI the New England Patriots found themselves

down 28-3 to the Atlanta Falcons midway in the third quarter. But Tom Brady led the Patriots to regroup, adjust and adapt to win the game, scoring 25 unanswered points!

Can you adjust to victory?

How can you regroup, adjust and adapt to a new world during and post-pandemic in your situation? I guarantee that the new “normal” won’t be like it was just two months ago. Today, the world has changed; have you?

*On a personal note, I promise to be here for you and offer value assistance as we see this through together!

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