

CRISIS LEADERSHIP MATTERS

CAPACITY DIAGNOSTIC

Name _____

Assessment Timeframe _____

Make note of the timeframe you are assessing: the last month, the last quarter, year, or a time-frame specific to your situation.

Who are you assessing? _____

- If you are completing this diagnostic about an individual, begin each question with, “This leader...”
- If you are assessing a group, department or team, begin each question with, “This team...”
- If you are thinking about your entire business or agency, begin each question with, “This organization...”

The Diagnostic provides discussion questions about six effective crisis leadership orientations from the James+Wooten framework:

1. Believing that it is possible to emerge significantly better off after the crisis.
2. Expectation of mutual trust and respect.
3. Commitment to reflect, learn, and adapt.
4. Openness to scanning and seeking new possibilities, new experiences and acceptable risks.
5. Assumption that high-payoff outcomes are possible and can be attained.
6. Willingness to make quick and ethical decisions under pressure.

Choose the statement that most accurately reflects your capacity during the timeframe you are assessing. Descriptions don't have to be exact, choose the one that most closely resembles your level of capacity.

N = Need for increased capacity building

C = Capacity in evidence

H = High capacity in evidence

O = Over-relied upon or over-used skillset in evidence

SECTION 1: BELIEVING THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO EMERGE SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER OFF AFTER THE CRISIS.

Influence & Inspiration

- N** Focuses on process language and status quo prior to the crisis event as the goal. Cannot visualize or verbalize a different future.
- C** Is able to create an innovative vision that inspires others and propels them to action; is outcome and process focused; engenders trust.
- H** Is inspiring to the degree that others do things that are not part of the usual routine; leverages new insights not only to respond to changing conditions, but to evolve systems and processes to better deal with future crises; sets an expectation that goals can and will be achieved.
- O** Relies on symbolic language alone and does not attend to solving problems.

Optimism & Resilience

- N** Is caught in an early stage emotional reaction; cannot see opportunities in crises and is unable to be optimistic about future states of being due to crises.
- C** Is able to handle failures, difficult times, obstacles and adversities when necessary.
- H** Moves through feelings of anger, anxiety, guilt and depression to reflection and analysis, to seeing possibilities, to optimism that opportunities can be attained; easily embraces challenges; sees opportunities as attainable and in the best interest of stakeholders.
- O** Is quick to move to optimism and resilience, but is insensitive to the delayed reaction of stakeholders who have not yet moved through the emotional responses that will eventually allow them to be optimistic and resilient.

Threat and Opportunity Lenses

- N** Employs a threat lens to respond to crises; engages in cost-cutting, budget tightening, activity restrictions.
- C** Chooses to see threats and opportunities in crisis situations; considers strategic changes and is confident that decisions will bring about positive outcomes.
- H** Actively sees and talks about opportunities in crisis situations; believes that balance among stakeholders' conflicting interests can be attained; is reassuring and calming and easily explains opportunities.
- O** Seeks opportunities without considering threats or dealing with the immediate consequences of a crisis situation.

SECTION 2: EXPECTING MUTUAL TRUST AND RESPECT.

View of Failure/Bad News

- N** Assumes that talented and capable people don't make mistakes or errors in judgment; creates a culture that does not accept bad news.
- C** Faces facts openly and honestly; pursues new knowledge by learning from failures and mistakes.
- H** Assumes there will be "intelligent failures" and creates well-communicated opportunities to use them for individual, team, and organizational learning; actively promotes learning from failure as a means of preventing crises.
- O** Focuses on past failures to the point of creating fear of failure and a lack of openness to new ideas and risk taking.

Relationships and Communications

- N** Limits communications toolbox to a public relations strategy focused on avoiding negative publicity; maintains a defensive communications posture.
- C** Is able to connect emotionally and psychologically with stakeholders; is able to display vulnerability; communicates with stakeholders fairly; suspends judgment and stereotypes.
- H** Engages in active listening; articulates the ideological purpose of organizational goals while exhibiting competence in crisis management nuts and bolts; is appropriately candid about all aspects of the business; maintains a norm of open and honest communications.
- O** Prematurely articulates a plan or a vision; moves to communicate before thinking through implications across stakeholder groups.

Reputation

- N** Does not have an existing foundation of trust with internal and external stakeholders so that when a crisis affects reputation there is nothing to provide the benefit of the doubt.
- C** Is able to quickly limit reputational, financial, and other threats to firm survival.
- H** Understands the factors responsible for the organization's success and reputation; pursues creative means of attaining future success and enhanced reputation; manifests opportunities from crisis; understands the added complications of reputation management when the stakes are high and the crisis is being managed publicly.
- O** Believes that one's reputation is unassailable and will be unaffected by a crisis situation.

SECTION 3: COMMITMENT TO LEARN, REFLECT AND ADAPT

Learning Mindset

- N** When confronted by a crisis, creates an action bias leaving no room to learn, reflect, and adapt.
- C** When confronted by a crisis, acknowledges the need for learning, reflection and adapting to changing circumstances.
- H** When confronted by a crisis, recognizes that times of crises motivate leaders and organizations to learn, change, adapt and innovate more than any other time.
- O** When confronted by a crisis, values and promotes learning to the detriment of performance and damage control; loses balance between learning and performance.

Openness to Diverse Learning Sources

- N** Focuses on a learning system of a small group of experts.
- C** Is open to external expertise from non-obvious sources.
- H** Pro-actively tests ideas, logic, and strategy with a variety of sources.
- O** Actively engages in benchmarking, focusing on exact replication of best practices instead of considering context and applicability to the current situation.

Root Causes

- N** Focuses on addressing symptoms of problems.
- C** Actively searches for the root cause of the problem and why a crisis occurs.
- H** Willingness to see the underlying organizational factors that contribute to the crisis as a strategically important opportunity to learn and adapt; refrains from public blame.
- O** Overly focused on causality and forgets that an element of crisis situations is their rarity and that there may be one-off or unusual circumstances.

Adapting

- N** Works hard to contain and control crises and return to the status quo.
- C** During all phases of a crisis, retains some competencies, but also adapts to changing conditions by adding new competencies and skills.
- H** Continuously and pro-actively adapts to an ever-changing environment by drawing from a rich pool of robust organizational knowledge fed by new skills, systems and networks; includes an understanding of short- and long-term needs.
- O** Adapts quickly and easily to short-term changes, but doesn't accurately anticipate long-term issues.

SECTION 4: OPENNESS TO SCANNING AND SEEKING POSSIBILITIES, NEW EXPERIENCES AND ACCEPTABLE RISKS

Using a Scan of the Environment as a Basis for Action

- N** Fails to take in information; ignores or denies warning signs; thinks bad things happen to other people and organizations.
- C** Is able to accurately assess the status quo and not have it overly influence decision-making during crisis.
- H** Actively acquires, interprets, disseminates, and acts on information during all phases of a crisis.
- O** Can't get enough environmental scanning to make a decision; seeks more and more data regardless of time pressures to take action.

Perspective-Taking

- N** Acts without questioning viewpoints or assessments of the crisis situation.
- C** Has the ability to see both threats and opportunities in a crisis situation; encourages information-sharing; fosters a culture where perspectives flow up to management and are used in decision-making.
- H** Encourages discussion of alternative theories, opinions, and viewpoints; seeks a devils' advocate; includes multiple stakeholders in scanning and sense-making activities, including those who cross internal and external boundaries; considers cross-cultural implications.
- O** Can take multiple perspectives, but is unable to process them such that they add value to the decision-making process; overly engages in the activity of perspective taking, always asking for one more opinion or needing to check with one more resource.

Sense-Making

- N** Stays in the realm of generality and hopes for the best.
- C** Draws obvious conclusions using rules of thumb and experience; outlines concrete steps; invests time and resources into making sense of information during all phases of a crisis.
- H** Effectively interprets scanning information; includes multiple perspectives in connecting the dots; makes sense at both the tactical and strategic level; accurately assesses organizational responsibility during all phases of a crisis.
- O** Needs all incoming and incomplete data, opinion and expertise to make sense and connect; can't accept or absorb outlier information; unable to process occasions where organizations are victims of events outside their control that don't make sense.

Technology

- N** Does not value technology as enhancing scanning and sense making skills.
- C** Builds and uses technology to recognize warning signs and see the big picture.
- H** Values technology's role in managing all phases of a crisis; sees the usefulness of technology in a global environment; sees technology as aiding existing and innovative solutions; invests in adapting technology to prepare for future crisis events.
- O** Overly-reliant on technology and loses important high-touch skills during times of crisis.

SECTION 5: ASSUMPTION THAT HIGH-PAYOFF OUTCOMES ARE POSSIBLE AND CAN BE ATTAINED

Short- and Long-Term Perspective

- N** Takes shortcuts, engages in cover-ups and deceptions that undermine credibility and trust.
 - C** Is able to quickly develop a set of short- and long-term initiatives designed to return the business to “normal” operations; thinks about short-term crisis resolution and long-term crisis prevention.
 - H** Is intentional about decision-making being above reproach; makes morally acceptable decisions; aspires to inflict the least harm possible on stakeholders; effectively manages the unexpected thinking strategically about short- and long-term implications.
 - O** Is hyper-vigilant about the short-term and overly committed to keeping the long term how things have always been done.
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Collaboration

- N** Has a silo mentality; does not see a value in cross-functional or cross-organizational collaboration.
 - C** Exhibits cross-boundary capabilities; shows agility; engenders “swift trust.”
 - H** Collaborates with a diversity of stakeholders (across public and private sectors) to increase resources, expedite resolution and mount a swift response.
 - O** Seeks the opinions and approval of partners to a point that it is out of balance with organizational goals and aspirations.
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Confidence

- N** Exhibits concern about ability to meet the demands of a crisis.
 - C** Shows confidence in self and in the abilities of those committed to handling the crisis.
 - H** Highlights already achieved successful outcomes and builds on them; uses networks and mega-communities to enhance skills and build confidence in the ability to attain goals.
 - O** Is over confident and blind to potential deficiencies in skillsets; does not expand the network to pick up needed skills.
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SECTION 6: WILLINGNESS TO MAKE QUICK AND ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING UNDER PRESSURE

Acceptance of Data

- N** When data highlights what isn't working, punish the messenger and find a way to place blame; reactive and defensive posture that doesn't accept or recognize risk.
- C** Recognizes risks inherent in chronic situations and dysfunctional routines, as well as in crisis events.
- H** Cultivates organizational knowledge and data memory; values short- and long-term data.
- O** Overly focused on data to the point of paralysis and inability to take action.

Complex Information

- N** Is overwhelmed by complex information; can't connect the dots effectively; strongly prefers the tactical to the strategic.
- C** Copes effectively with complex information during times of increased time pressure and public scrutiny.
- H** Takes the independent and objective expertise of many and puts it into the broader context of the whole; connects the dots; simultaneously sees the forest and the trees.
- O** Over-complicates information to be seen as credible; over analyzes information as a coping mechanism for dealing with time pressures and public scrutiny during crises.

Problem-Solving

- N** Exhibits concern about ability to meet the demands of a crisis.
- C** Shows confidence in self and in the abilities of those committed to handling the crisis.
- H** Highlights already achieved successful outcomes and builds on them; uses networks and mega-communities to enhance skills and build confidence in the ability to attain goals.
- O** Is over confident and blind to potential deficiencies in skillsets; does not expand the network to pick up needed skills.

Ethical Decision-Making

- N** Has difficulty accurately judging ethical and crisis situations where outcomes are unclear.
- C** Accurately judges crisis situations and can respond accordingly. Manages decision-making biases.
- H** Highly attuned to the framing of crisis situations and able to quickly and ethically make effective decisions that both manage the crisis and leverage the opportunities implicit in the crisis.
- O** Is extremely focused on a single view of crisis situations. And while able to make decisions quickly, is not open to considering the moral and ethical frames of others in making decisions that affect many.