



Sustaining Through Uncertainty

-Mark Haeussler, CEO

The initial portion of reacting to a health and economic shock often comes with certainty of action, be it sanitizing efforts, leveraging the virtual space to the extent possible, changes in hours or shifts, and redirection of resources. The initial shock itself provides the impetus to take action and to feel purposeful. Leaders need to leverage this into more sustainable effort.



As the magnitude of current events becomes more evident, fear is rising – fear of death, fear of loss, fear of economic depression, and just the fear of the uncertainty – take your pick. A hundred years ago, Rudyard Kipling said, “Of all the liars in the world, sometimes the worst are your own fears.” Leaders are not dismissive of the fears people hold and how they can become overwhelming. Liars or not, the fears feel real. While addressing fears has its place, the next steps are in support of moving beyond the fear.

So, what to do next:

1. **Declaration:** Make a strong declaration to those you lead. Pick one thing that will galvanize the people you lead and declare it into existence. We do not often make clear and profound declarations, so let’s pull one from Hollywood/history. In the movie, *Apollo 13*, the true story of the stricken moon mission, the character of Gene Kranz (played by Ed Harris) declared, “Failure is not an option.” While not the exact utterance by Gene Kranz in real life, the idea that failure was unacceptable clearly was his declaration to those he led. What can be declared that reassures those you lead and providing them a direction for their efforts? Declarations do not need to be poetic, but they do need to be memorable. In addition, it is essential to have your declaration measurable or observable. You need to know if you are on track and making progress.
2. **Plan B:** Have a plan B, and continually reassess it. Even as you are completely committed to the declaration (Plan A), you should contemplate what you will do if you are falling short of the declaration. This does not undermine the declaration; it is a realistic support of it. When I head out for a lengthy day hike in the Rocky Mountains, much of what I carry in my backpack (extra food, med kit, etc.) is in support of a Plan B. Current events offer enough uncertainty that we need to simultaneously outline the next best option.
3. **Be Helpful:** Psychologists have found that those who help others in survival situations have better survival rates. Leading, planning, and taking action all keep you from falling into victim mode, and being a doer or rescuer increases your chances of survival. Being selfless not only helps others, it helps you – so helping others actually helps yourself. Identify ways each member of the team can help. In my own extensive four-wheeling experience, I have rescued plenty of stuck vehicles using tow straps or winches. I not only need to enroll the other driver into what their role is, I know that if they have a role in helping out, they will focus on that and not on the precarious situation. How will you help? How will you engage your team to be helpers?

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