



Calm (Part 2)

Thoughts on leadership
by Karl Pister



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This week I have spoken to thirteen clients. Seven at the senior/C-suite level, two physicians, and six surgeons. A common theme, especially at the senior level, is a pervasive concern on the impact of the current Covid surge on the morale of their staff, especially due to the anxiety that uncertainty causes. It brought to mind the initial wave of anxiety Covid produced last spring.

Since learning research indicates about a 75% reduction in retention of ideas over a six month period, I thought I would send along, again, some thoughts shared seven months ago.





Calm is Contagious

It is so easy right now to just focus on getting through the daily barrage of new restrictions, sobering predictions, and sobering statistics. That is what most people are focusing on. Natural occurrence, due to what we discussed recently regarding Maslow.

I go again to history for a perspective. Again, the words of Churchill, a paragon of walk-the-talk wisdom about human reactions during war, which we will rephrase today as 'crisis'.

You have to run risks. There are no certainties in crisis. There is a precipice on either side of you -- a precipice of caution and a precipice of overdaring.

During crisis, the tendency is to hunker down and focus on survival. Good counsel...to a point. However, too much 'hunkering down' does not keep people sharp. It keeps them fearful, which does not allow the brain to be creative or prepared for a return to a normal world.



Now I hear quite a bit about *'we will not return to normal!! Our world is forever changed'*. Quite true. But the same applied to a world coming out of a 1918 pandemic, a decade long depression, and a world war that took an estimated 50-75 million lives.

A CMO I work with did a video for her team and company. Short and on target. At no time did she minimize the crisis, but she was also declarative in stating that they would get through the current storm and survive...and survive it well! It was a video I wish could have much more exposure since it is exactly what is needed at this time. I can't imagine the boost it must have been for her company to hear their respected leader address them compassionately, but firmly as to the path they needed to take.

She personified the phrase "calm is contagious".

Another CEO wrote a lengthy email to his entire team. The first paragraph was a straightforward discussion of what they were facing. The rest was a detailed recounting of the amazing work they were doing in the face of some withering odds.



So as you come into the end of another week, how aware will you be of the precipice of caution, and of over-daring?

Where do you tend to err?

What voice will you be to your people who so need you to be the leader that, as noted in the last writing, points the people to the light at the end of the tunnel?

That light might be as simple as a good turn of events on something completely unrelated to Corona. It could be a re-focus on needed results, something that can get lost through all the current negativity.

So how will they hear your voice? Keep in mind that the voice they hear now will be the one they decide to follow or leave once the crisis passes.

Some don't resonate with historical references. To me, they show a path of resilience in times that were, in comparison, far more frightening than our current challenge.



At the time of this quote, in 1943, there was still quite a bit of uncertainty as to which way WWII would go. Nevertheless, the following statement from Churchill rings true for us right now:

I have no fear of the future. Let us go forward into its mysteries, let us tear aside the veils which hide it from our eyes and let us move forward with confidence and courage.

I challenge you to be this type of leader. Not just to inspire your people, but to help them have the mindset that will allow them, and your organization, to fully capitalize on what will occur once the current situation passes, which it will!

Remember -- calm is contagious!





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Karl Pister, PCC

Leadership Coach

karl@coachinggroupinc.com

(503) 381-8705

