



# Choice

Thoughts on leadership  
by Karl Pister



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We are still in the clutches of the global pandemic which is causing not only a panic of health, but also of fear. It is a perfect storm in so many ways. The lack of solid scientific understanding, combined with varied global responses to the similiar threats, has resulted in an incredible fear response.

However, as leaders, the more you can promote the approach of "We may not like what is happening to us, but we can choose what's happening inside of us", the more your people will have the opportunity to thrive in adversity. Remember, calm is contagious?





Does that sound a bit trite? A little too positive and sunny? I have had that response from people. So let me put a historical context to the phrase.

First a quote: Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.

Those words come from Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist, Jewish by birth, who spent four years in the Nazi death camps. He wrote the book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. The first half of the book is titled: *Lessons from the Death Camp*.

It was Frankl who decided to climb onto the roof of the dispensary at sunset and look east onto sunlight on the Bavarian hills in the springtime. Looking west would have been looking at the smokestacks of the incinerators of the death chambers.



It was Frankl who, on the forced marches in the brutal winters to go work on the railroads with ill-fitting shoes, no gloves, and abusive guards, chose to look at the purple-pink colors of the sunrise to keep a perspective.

It was Frankl who described 'the angels of the camps'. Those that went about giving to others in spite of their dire affliction.

His book was noted by the Library of Congress as one of the ten most influential books of the last century.

When you have that level of context, it is hard to call such choices trite and sunny positivity.

So the questions:

- Did he ever deny the reality of his situation?
- Did he succumb to fear?
- Did he join the voices of doom?



'No' to all of the above. And those 'no' responses allowed for thoughts and feelings that not only allowed him to survive, but that also formed a base for incredible influence after his personal afflictions had passed.

So yes, another retreat to history to teach us what works! Let your voice be the voice of reason, reality, and leadership. Again, "if your voice is the same as the crowd's, you are not the leader".

This is not to be cavalier about the current situation. It is to promote your courage for proactive choice that allows your people to have hope that this crisis will pass and that they can rely on you to have a leadership insight and hope that boosts them now and will be foundational for their next steps as they, and you, move into the post-Corona period.

To close: The people you are leading in crisis will be those who will be following you after the crisis passes. They will remember how your leadership was. Was it from the front and inspiring?...or was it not.

**Your choice.**



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