

# Leadership –

## The Morning After...



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*Dr Charles du Toit*

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What happens when we return - some thoughts about leadership and the proposed staggered start up?

This Article follows a recent article - leading in the storm.

Do you remember hit movie "The Poseidon Adventure" This movie was released in 1972 and was about a massive cruise liner, hit by a tidal wave. The Oscar winning hit song from the movie was appropriately called "The Morning After" and starts with the following words....



*There's got to be a morning after  
If we can hold on through the night  
We have a chance to find the sunshine  
Let's keep on looking for the light*

We may have weathered or still be in the midst of the "lockdown" storm.

This article is about leading when we have gotten through the Covid-19 tsunami and cresting the wave.

The thing about the 'Morning After', after a storm, after a disaster, after a funeral; is that while during a crisis, the morning after is all we hope for, the "morning after" is seldom a return to what things were like before.

Morning afters are times of change, and this viral tsunami is no different. Everything has changed - financial pressure, cash flow, market demand, resource availability, work hours, digitization and how we work, to mention but a few. The morning after is not going to be easy. We all have sacrificed so much for the greater good and to make it through the storm but what now....

In a “morning after” I believe opportunity exists. Mornings after a storm can be times of new beginnings and a re-evaluation of what is important. Mornings after have the potential to reset our work practices and our business models. Morning afters can lead to a renewal of culture and if you are in any form of leadership position, mornings after can be about recalibrating how we lead and evolving our relationships.

*And how we respond should also be different. So, what is the leadership challenge when we eventually reach the “morning after” the Covid-19 lockdown?*

*First a disclaimer.*

*You may well be the modern leader this article is referring to, and you may naturally be thinking along the lines this article suggests. I would appeal to you to suspend judgement and just use this as a to reflect.*

*So, let us start a conversation. Let us share ideas with each other.*

*Do not assume because you are a grounded authentic leader, that other or subordinate leaders will naturally be able to do the same - they may well need your coaching.*

*(the tool attached could help the discussion)*

## So, what is the leadership challenge of the morning After?

Well to answer this we need to first look at leadership 2020....

We could correctly view leadership as the ability to develop a great vision for the future and a strategy and plans of how to get there. Certainly, if you are in a position of influence, now is a time for vision and strategy and plans. But vision, strategy, and plans, without the commitment of our people, are in danger of falling into the category of being “just good ideas.”



So how do we as leaders get the commitment of our people?

*Essentially there are two broad methods... Positional Power or Leadership.*

Because we have a title; be it Supervisor, Manager, or CEO; we have the authority to give the people we manage and “pay,” instructions, and they will do as they are told. They will comply with what we tell them because if they do not, we can apply pressure.

Pressure based on fear.

Fear that they will be embarrassed by you. Fear that they will lose opportunity or fear of even more extreme consequence.

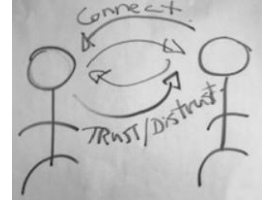
This approach is what we call “*Command Management*”. Management without leadership. Management based on *Positional Power*.

This “morning after” will need more, much more than just smart plans from our managers and the robotic compliance from our followers.

Without question, this “morning after” will need exceptional leaders.

*Leaders who have followers that trust them and consequently, leaders whose followers are totally engaged. These leaders can actively influence results.*

We call this **Connected Leadership**. Leadership where the leader takes the time to deliberately build the leader-follower relationship.



While there has been a debate raging for years in my field around whether leaders born or made – I have come to believe that while both born and made leadership are possible, **true leadership is ultimately a choice**. When we take responsibility for people, we can choose to lead or choose to use our positional power and at best, manage people.

We have seen that authentic leaders choose to lead. They are consciously thinking about leading. They deliberately take accountability for building the leadership relationship. Research shows that with this type of leadership, great plans and exceptional results become possible. With this type of leadership, a morning after we will be proud of is possible.

So, let us get practical, how do we build a “morning after?”

You may think, “Ok, but what will this mean in practice”? In this time, we need everyone to be focused, but it is hard to focus when the world has shifted, when we are worried or afraid.

We need creative thinking and problem solving, but we typically do not do this well under pressure. These dynamics will test the quality of our leadership.

Starting up after a lockdown, presents a wide range of challenges or opportunities. Each of these opportunities are **Leadership Moments**. Moments in which what we do will significantly impact the trust quota that our people have in us.

(attached please find a list of potential leadership moments to consider.)



*How we respond to these Leadership Moments will determine whether we create a great “morning after” or just a less effective back to “business as usual”*

## Leadership Moment – The Morning After.



|     | Activity - Leadership moments in the morning after.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Personal reflections – is this an area of focus. |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1.  | First - Leading ourselves. We need to guard what we say, our body language and our demeanour. Leaders are agents hope, reliance and optimism. Our people look to us for these things.                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                  |
| 2.  | Amongst the pressure to get things started, there is a danger that we lose sight of the leadership challenge. We cannot afford this. We need to be deliberate about leadership. We may need to be setting up personal time to consider our leadership relationships and our impact.                                                                                      |                                                  |
| 3.  | Get your departmental meetings going Immediately. We suggest that if you do not have a daily meeting set up, maybe this is the time to do that now. The Agile movement has this wonderful idea of a stand-up meeting. A stand-up meeting is a quick catchup – a round robin of what I did yesterday, what I will do today and what help I need. (with or without coffee) |                                                  |
| 4.  | When your team gets feedback from a more senior level - check understanding at your team level.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                  |
| 5.  | Be real when you talk to your people - we do not know what the epidemic means for our futures – do not be afraid to say I don't know. Honesty and vulnerability build trust.                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                  |
| 6.  | Create structures for current status updates, so that people will know when they will get information. This will help them to focus on what they need to do in the interim. People will worry more if they do not have information than if news is not so rosy.                                                                                                          |                                                  |
| 7.  | Connected leaders communicate well - take your time, plan what you want to say. Communicate clearly, concisely, and often. Really often, try and do this more than what you did pre lockdown.                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                  |
| 8.  | Your company has Values. These values we identified and developed in a different time. Our Values will be placed under the microscope. Let's dust them off and make sure that they are part of our communication.                                                                                                                                                        |                                                  |
| 9.  | The world is upside down now, our people's lives have shifted. We need to check in with them. Quick and informal. If you find a need, offer an open door.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                  |
| 10. | From day one, as leaders, we need to demonstrate our personal commitment to the PPE and the rules of the gradual start-up and return to work - if the decision is to wear masks - no compromise. Starting with ourselves. Our personal commitment to our people's safety is a demonstration of our respect for the individual.                                           |                                                  |
| 11. | In industry we talk about a GEMBA. "Getting to the floor". Getting out of the office and into the work environment. Our presence will build confidence. We will need to do this a lot if we are going to build great relationships.                                                                                                                                      |                                                  |



|     | Activity - Leadership moments in the morning after.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Personal reflections – is this an area of focus. |
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| 12. | We know that in crisis we should focus on what we control or influence rather than that which is not in our control. Start discussions with your people using this principle. “what do you think we could / should be doing?”                                                                                                                                                        |                                                  |
| 13. | Admit that this is a new world and that we all have a lot to learn, and then begin learning together.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                  |
| 14. | Be careful of rumours – expose the dangerous of the “first person who knows” competition Our people, and we ourselves can get caught up in this. Talk about rumours openly and encourage your people to be open about the talk at the water fountain.                                                                                                                                |                                                  |
| 15. | Your peoples' stress is real. Their world has shifted. Each person will respond differently based on their personality. Some will be able to be cope and some will struggle. Each experience is authentic to the person. We need to manage our own stress and not defer it to our people. We also need to acknowledge our people's stress. Listening is often the best tool we have. |                                                  |