

## Learning Leadership Practices

Insights from Tom Hershberger, CEO, Cross Financial, 2020

Leaders and managers of all experience levels have been thrust into unknown circumstances in the last two months, giving us an opportunity to learn about new solutions, new business practices and new ways of leading our organizations. What resources have helped you expand your leadership knowledgebase? While the crisis journey is still a daily development, it is the perfect time to test new practices. Here are a few things I have added to my work routine.

### **Start an electronic file for crisis management information.**

Fill your file with every email, article and post you can find regarding leadership and management during a crisis. Look for information about how to lead, business continuity plans, customer communications, employee engagement, shareholder messaging, delivery channels, and general management practices.

Load it up with anything that will help expand your perspective for current activities. Not every lesson will be learned from one industry. Examine what companies in other industries are doing and ask yourself, "Why did they do that?" I suspect the vast majority of the information we collect will also apply to a future event, even if it isn't connected to a worldwide virus.

### **Plan for and conduct better meetings.**

Learn from every in-person and virtual meeting you conduct during the crisis. Make notes as a leader and participant. Identify what needs to change about your meetings and then actually change your meetings! Create a detailed agenda in advance of each meeting, including personal time for discussions and catching up. Try to stick to the agenda as close as possible.

### **Study communications.**

Examine every communication you send or receive with a critical eye about intent, execution and results. We're quickly learning the value of concise messaging. What needs to change about our current styles or methods that will enhance future communications. Constantly analyze the timing of your communications. Are we having too many that could be consolidated? Or, maybe we aren't sending enough, and our staff, and maybe even customers, are losing hope or feeling neglected.

### **Embrace technology.**

Even if it isn't your favorite subject or pastime, jump into the technology pool. Try new apps. Follow social media stories and identify what's hot. Become familiar with those apps and platforms. If you want to communicate effectively with employees, customers, and prospects, go to where they are. Don't expect them to find you. We have the time to discover, test and utilize new things during this downtime, let's use it to learn something new that will help us become more efficient when we get back to the new normal.

### **Connect with your customers and offer assistance.**

Spend time staying in touch with your customers. Not to sell a product, but to discuss their situation and how they are holding up in a stressful time. We need our business partners more than ever when our time and attention is focused on daily survival. Offer assistance, no matter how small. Everything matters when finances, jobs, businesses, and relationships are hanging in the balance.

### **Value your time.**

Having more time available doesn't mean we can waste it. In our current working environment, we need to be diligent in regard to time management. Done right you can accomplish a lot in a short amount of time. Done incorrectly, and a few distractions later, you may have lost an hour, maybe an entire day.

*Learning Leadership Practices, continued*

**Stay proactive.**

Reacting is not the best course of action. We need to be proactive with solutions, communications and solutions for our employees and customers. Strategize what they may want or need and offer it to them even before they ask for it, or think they may need or want it.

**Write down your insights.**

However you like to keep notes, (using pen and paper or electronically on your computer or mobile device) write down as much as possible. Whichever you prefer to utilize, both will create an archive of thoughts and ideas. One of those insights might be the next big idea for you or your organization. Not only will it be fun to read through them down the road, you can utilize them now and into the future for your own development as a leader.

**Ask other leaders and managers about their challenges.**

Let's learn from each other. Share as many ideas as you can with other leaders. Not just within your own industry, but across industry lines and with managers inside other companies. Or, business professionals with valuable experience. Something someone else did might be the next stepping-stone for your own leadership development. Someone's good idea today might also be the next best thing for your organization.

**What leadership practices are you introducing or improving? Share your insights and together we will build a best practices checklist for financial institution leaders.**

We'd like to hear from you. Send your feedback and thoughts to [tom@crossfinancial.com](mailto:tom@crossfinancial.com).

Use this space to write down your ideas and insights. Consider making this an exercise with your team or workgroup.

