



The Strategic Approach of a Leader During an Organizational Crisis Situation

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Abstract

This study was conducted to explore how strategic leadership can be developed to enhance organizational capacity in effectively addressing a diverse range of potential crises. Effective leadership is essential for ensuring that employees remain focused and maintain morale during challenging times. Managers must complement their efforts with strategic leadership that acknowledges the inherent difficulties of crisis situations. Leadership roles are characterized by the need to strategically navigate ambiguity. Drawing on a global, cross-sector research base encompassing natural disasters, industrial accidents, economic downturns, political scandals, heightened social tensions, terrorist incidents, and major policy failures, the study aimed to promote active learning among leaders through various activities such as role-playing, peer feedback, and interactions with expert witnesses from both public and private sectors. It aims to provide insights into different crisis scenarios and the unique leadership challenges associated with each. The study aims to understand leaders' strategic approaches to crisis management and identify key pitfalls to avoid. It also emphasizes the importance of anticipating and effectively operating during the post-acute phase of crisis management. A fundamental principle of leadership highlighted is the need for a strong set of beliefs and a clear understanding of the organization's goals to inspire subordinates toward achieving the organization's objectives.

Keywords: *strategic approaches, leadership, crisis movements and active learning of leaders*

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Introduction

Leadership is not merely a position or title; it is an active decision to inspire, motivate, and encourage others to move forward. Effective leaders do not rely solely on their positional power but rather on their personal influence and strategic abilities. In the business world, leadership involves harnessing the collective energy and efforts of a group to elevate their perspective from ordinary to extraordinary. This entails projecting expertise in a manner that instills confidence in others. Ultimately, leadership is about building trust, where confidence in the leader inspires alignment of vision and commitment for the betterment of the organization. Leadership is a process through which individuals influence others to achieve objectives and guide the organization toward greater cohesion and coherence. It is a skill that can be cultivated over time, requiring

continuous self-study, education, training, and practical experience. Humor can serve as an effective tool, particularly in challenging times, to achieve desired outcomes while maintaining focus.

In today's business environment, strategic leadership is essential. With limited resources, it is crucial to allocate them wisely and appropriately. Strategic leaders develop a vision for the organization that enables it to adapt and remain competitive amid changing economic and technological landscapes. They use this vision to motivate employees and departments, fostering unity and direction to implement necessary changes within the organization.

The main objectives of strategic leadership are to streamline processes, boost strategic productivity, promote innovation and cultivate an environment that encourages employees to be productive, independent and to push forward their own ideas. Strategic leaders sometimes make use of reward or incentive programs to encourage employees and help them reach their goals. Strategic leadership can also be defined as utilizing strategy in the management of employees. It is the potential to influence organizational members and to execute organizational change. Strategic leaders create organizational structure, allocate resources and express strategic vision. Strategic leaders work in an ambiguous environment on very difficult issues that influence and are influenced by occasions and organizations external to their own.

Role played by the Strategic Leader

The most essential strategic leadership skill is the importance of creating healthy environments in which the people feel comfortable in the way of safe, creative, productive and appreciated. It is not necessary to have brand, no matter how good the products, services or messaging it represents but ultimately should succeed in the processes of leadership. The captain of a ship is a quintessential leader. The captain has to do many things. But what is the primary thing a captain has to decide before anybody else on the ship can do anything? The captain has to decide on the destination. The captain has to decide, "Where we want to go". If the captain can't decide, nobody else can contribute because they don't know what they are doing. Hence, leaders at all levels are put under a significant strategic role for getting done major events. In situations where the response is poor, ineffective leadership at senior levels is often evident. An analyzing the recurring lessons for strategic leaders in times of crisis we know that there are three things leaders at the strategic level must do when facing a major, unpredictable situation. First, leaders need to be able to think in a way that helps them to understand the situation which might be different to the norm. That is the leader must 'frame' the event differently to his or her past experiences. Second, the leader must be prepared to intervene directly and early to provide strategic level guidance to operational teams, allowing them to act in a coordinated way. This guidance should be in the form of what needs to be done and not how it is to be done. Third, the leaders need to understand the personal behaviors and actions that will support a successful response to the crisis.

During the time of crisis, an effective leader must do the following:

- He/she should listen, summarize and makes things clear
- Encourage subordinates to develop skills
- Must facilitate to set goals, make decisions, select directions and evaluate time to time progress.
- Helps subordinates in maximum utilization of talents and interests towards achieving organizational goals
- Leader will initiate things moving
- Leader helps to resolve the differences
- Connects people with people and people with ideas to move the project forward.
- Leader solves problems and suggests solutions to get things done.
- Visionary sees creative solutions, new directions and possibilities

Leaders areas of Focus in an Organization

Early intervention by leaders is also needed in outlining what outcomes are desired from a large-scale response and what resources are to be allocated to different areas. Major disasters are too big sometimes for leaders to control in detail. Indeed, to do so would demonstrate a lack of confidence in subordinate incident controllers. However, Incident controllers must know their part in the overall response. The leader should do this strategically by specifying the outcomes to be achieved and allocating the resources for the job. The leader must make considered resource allocations, since resources will not sufficiently cover all requirements. Without such allocations, incident controllers will waste time chasing unavailable resources. A strategic leader should also anticipate resource requirements, preparing them in early stages. This last point is a major lesson as there are too many examples of jurisdictions refusing to ask others for assistance when it is patently obvious that it will be required. The result is delayed assistance and greater damage.

The key implications for strategic leadership are around selection, preparation and training of leaders and their teams. It is challenging to select leaders for any organization. The process becomes complex when trying to find people who can demonstrate effective leading and managing skills during an *out of scale* event. However, the cost of not doing so is likely to be far greater than that of improving the process. Leaders face a myriad of daily challenges and ensuring that they are prepared to handle an unpredictable event will take effort and thought. Consequently, the development programs for leaders will need to allow the opportunity to enhance existing professional skills and relationships, as well as building their personal skills and attributes. Given the differences in agencies, positions and individuals, there is no 'one size fits all' development program. As with selection, this is not simple and will require effort by agencies and leadership teams. It is well understood that the effective response to any event is a team effort. As noted previously, training is often focused on the lower levels of agencies and usually for common events. Seldom is training all-encompassing and testing of those involved. There is a need to regularly practice and test leadership teams. These activities need to be realistic, challenging and thoroughly debriefed. Most importantly, the performance of leaders should be closely scrutinized during these activities. All participants need to learn from training activities and for this to be an intrinsic part of agency's continuous improvement. Leader should firstly identify the core assets of the organization that are potentially at risk. Leader should have ability to deliver goods or services be significantly undisturbed. Secondly, identify all stakeholder individuals and groups who are harmed real or perceived. Do best to address their needs and concerns. And third, anticipate the potential progression of events and reactions by stakeholders.

Leader at the time of crisis

The conflicting information is common along with major information gaps. Leaders need to pick up faint signals that things might not be as they first appear or that conflicting information requires attention, not discarding. Many leaders rely on the past experience to interpret signals and therefore make the signals fit their experience, neglecting to flag a difference. Initiating standard, pre-planned responses is expected of junior leaders, not those charged with strategic leadership. Finally, leaders must anticipate extraordinary events. Leaders also need highly developed collaboration skills to frame an emerging event. These skills must be developed well before any crisis unfolds. The leaders need to be personally involved with the potentially long list of collaborators. Collaboration cannot be left to leaders alone, senior leaders must put their personal skill in the play. The leader needs to understand the requirement and continued with business as usual. Leaders are relied on subordinates to undertake the response and confident of a good result. The planning is delegated to subordinates and they get approval from the leaders. All leaders, including politicians need to commit more time to understanding how the various emergency response plans are developed and implemented. Importantly, leaders need to understand what assumptions and data sit beneath plans, since an unfolding disaster will call for quick adaptations. If the leadership lacks an in-depth understanding of the plan's foundations, they cannot adapt it quickly and sensibly. Planning is learning and this is how flexible operational responses are generated. Crisis Leadership involves high-leverage skills that are vital to corporate recovery in the midst of a disaster. Crisis leadership skills are needed that define the crisis as beyond the obvious, forecast the intended and unintended consequences of decisions, anticipate the effects of the crisis on impacted stakeholders, assess the impact of the crisis on core assets and follow the values and guiding principles of the organization and your own ethical standards that may be tested to the limit. The crisis leadership is more about who you are than what you know. No learned crisis leadership skill will overcome a lack of character, ethics or integrity. An effective crisis leader must act deliberately, quickly and effectively with honesty, high moral values and ethical standards. In order to help assure their leaders will act with good character in a caring manner when crises hit, crisis prepared organizations develop overarching response guidelines for their crisis managers to follow. The previous study has provided the five guiding principles for managing crises, they are-

1. Concentrating on the well-being of the people first and then caring them and showing compassion
2. Taking appropriate responsibility
3. Address needs of all stakeholders in a timely manner
4. All decisions and actions should on the basis of honesty and ethical guidelines
5. Leader should available, visible at all the time and should have open communication with all impacted parties.

The present economic downturn has led to one of the most difficult job markets in over fifty years. Layoffs, salary freezes, furloughs, and hiring restrictions have contributed to a pervasive atmosphere of fear and anxiety among both job seekers and those who remain employed across various industries and

workplaces. Moreover, widespread company and industry budget cuts and resource reductions have significantly altered work dynamics and employees' perceptions of their jobs. In this challenging landscape, managers seeking to enhance their effectiveness as leaders during tough economic conditions are more crucial than ever.

Conclusion

Strategic leadership entails the ability to effectively navigate crisis situations, requiring crisis management skills and expertise to tactically address the various elements involved in resolving a crisis scenario. Therefore, to succeed as a crisis leader, one must possess the necessary capabilities to handle such situations adeptly. Consequently, organizations should prioritize the development of leadership skills and identify top communicators who demonstrate effectiveness in crisis management. Rather than solely preparing for managing crises reactively, organizations should concentrate on cultivating these leadership competencies and integrating them into their planning and ongoing crisis management initiatives. By identifying and enlisting individuals with the requisite skills and expertise, organizations can better equip themselves to effectively manage and mitigate the impact of crises as they arise.

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