

Post Covid-19: Towards Human Leadership and New Work Modalities

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Abstract:

Covid-19 took us by surprise, sending us home to do home office; it forced companies, with no option to reply, to adapt and take action on a vital issue for the existence of life on our planet: To transform themselves into human and conscious companies. Emerging as a consequence, the need for a new type of leadership; so, companies are now at the centre of a paradigm shift that leaves them very vulnerable. If they focus only on facing the challenges, running the risk of not seeing the great opportunities -that the situation due to Covid-19 has revealed - that they will allow them to evolve and innovate from the management of human talent, developing innovative work methods that could substantially increase their productivity. Businesses are facing great challenges to survive, some are emerging victorious, but a large number of them have not been able to adapt and respond quickly enough. The key factors that are making the difference between a company that is getting ahead and another that is not, are its leaders. They are the ones that will determine the survival, growth or extinction of companies in the immediate future. This business context in which leaders play a starring role, opens up a range of work modalities.

Keywords

new leadership; post Covid-19; humanistic leadership; new working modalities; post covid-19 leadership challenges, new ways of working post covid-19, innovative working model, anywhere office

Paper type: Viewpoint

New leadership is in the making during the Covid-19 situation, and with it, challenges and opportunities are emerging to develop new and innovative human-centered work models. *Are you ready to change paradigms and become part of a generation of new leaders?*

The situation generated by Covid-19 took us by surprise, sending us to our homes to do home office; and it forced companies, with no option to reply, to adapt and take measures in a vital matter for the existence of life on our planet: Progressively transforming themselves into human and conscious companies.

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COVID-19 confinement has forced large, medium and small companies around the world to migrate in record time to work from home (WFH) and to take urgent measures to adapt to a new, and for many, unknown and disconcerting work environment. They have had to face great challenges to survive, some are emerging victorious, but sadly, a large number of them, failed to adapt and respond quickly enough, at the pace that the situation demanded.

What do all these companies have in common? People.

True, it is nothing new, of course every company is conformed of people, we know this; however, confinement came to challenge our capacities for vision, flexibility and adaptation to change -among others-, putting not only on the table, but also under the spotlight, the strategic role and vital importance of a LEADER. The key factors that are making the difference between a company that is getting ahead and another that is not, are its leaders. They are the ones that will determine the survival, growth or extinction of companies in the immediate future.

During the last few months, we have had to learn something hard: The only thing that does not change is continuous change, which is essential in business development, evolution and survival. Which we have seen during the last few months in which we have had to learn something hard: The only thing that does not change is continuous change, which is essential in the development, evolution and survival of a company.

Those who have postponed or resisted innovating, implementing Information Technology (IT) and investing in people within the company, betting on a different vision of productivity and efficiency - more humane and warm, directly proportional to the welfare of the people-; are the ones who find themselves staggering on the tightrope, and at forced marches putting all the wood on the spit, in order to survive or accelerate their evolution; and thus, not to be extinguished in a market that is demanding for yesterday, the changes that they postponed or resisted when there was time. Today more than ever we are verifying that to a large extent, the growth, expansion, contraction or survival of a company depends directly on its leaders and indirectly on its teams.

A leader before being a leader, is a human being

Given the uncertainty, fragility and vulnerability to which we have been exposed by the situations caused by Covid-19; in general, leaders have become more aware, discovering and accepting their weaknesses, strengths, fears, uncertainties, courage, determination, needs, aspirations and dreams.;

They now are reconsidering -some of them for the first time- the values that are really important in their lives, and according to them, defining with greater awareness and determination, what they really want to work on. They too are defining; the time they want to dedicate to their work. Given the flexibility, mobility and freedom gained by working from home or anywhere -thanks to the forced lockdown-, it has opened the eyes of the leaders to discover the challenging opportunities that open up in the face of new work modalities; trying to fit all of the above into their newfound life priorities.

Empower the human being and you will be empowering the leader

A leader within a company -like anyone-, among other things, works to access a standard of living that allows him to enjoy well-being for himself and his family. Thus, rediscovering himself, rediscovering his personal power, feeling satisfied, full and happy, plays a decisive role in his leadership, becoming an inspiring leader. A happy and fulfilling leader -humanly and professionally speaking- is a committed leader who will give everything, who will deliver 110% to his company at critical moments. He will not give up. He will do whatever it takes to get his company afloat. Not only will he be wearing the colours, but he will have it tattooed, and thus cascading, his team will be committed in the same way.

In this way, it seems that life is firmly leading us to adopt a different approach (one more humane, gentler and empathetic) than a company where employees enjoy their work could be. It would be great if companies' reflectors were directed towards the deep care and wellbeing of their leaders (employers and employees), and through them, taking deep care of the well-being of all collaborators and people, zooming in on their personal and professional needs with the firm intention of supporting them to grow which implies be at peace with themselves, and develop their talents and empowerment.

The above poses a challenge to the company: Rethink its mission, vision, values and philosophy, with a true and authentic sense of humanity and loyalty to life. If companies take care of and empower their leaders, considering the levels of wellbeing and satisfaction as productivity metrics; it is to be expected that they, in turn, will genuinely care about and empower their teams, with the natural consequence of a substantial increase in productivity. Thus, this company context would open a range of freer and more flexible work modalities: Working in the office, working from home or anywhere, hybrid, etc. The key ingredients in a leader for this to work are kindness, integrity, compassion, flexibility, resilience, empathy, appreciation, gratitude and above all, fair treatment in both ways: Employers and employees should treat each other fairly, without abuse, analysing their particular situation with honesty, balance and empathy.

For both, any modality brings great challenges and benefits in every way. It seems to me that personal integrity is the fundamental key in this process of going "towards new work modalities", where employers and employees honestly define the benefits / responsibilities of their particular employment relationship in this WFO (work from office), WFH (work from home), WFA (work from anywhere) or hybrid modalities.

Again it seems to me that we are at a juncture of industry's history; that our honest and proactive participation can achieve spectacular changes and design work environments with flexible modalities that benefit both, reaching higher levels of productivity. So, this business context in which leaders, whether they are owners, entrepreneurs, employers or employees, play a leading role, opens up a range of work modalities as flexible as the creativity and enthusiasm of the collaborative group allow.

Are we experiencing a historic opportunity to define a new working environment model?

And if so, the situation demands too much of leaders, since it not only asks them to be emotionally healthy, stable and balanced; but practically that they become super leaders, with super powers and soft skills that lead them to make the right decisions in these times of crisis, and, as if that were not enough, to take care of themselves, their families and friends, and also, that they take care of the people under their charge. With all this in mind, what is around the corner for 2021? Almost nothing, the rebuilding of our world, starting with our personal world, which we cannot avoid or postpone and for which we need to heal emotionally to achieve that balance, empathy, flexibility, etc. which we referred to a moment ago as key ingredients of a leader.

Only in this way we can truly and authentically have the human leadership that is needed to cope with the great challenges that Covid-19 has brought us, those that are forcing us to rebuild our companies, economy, society; our world. We require brave human beings, super leaders, who lead us by building new paths as they advance; that they appreciate through a clear and deep vision, the value of each human being, the true purpose of work, and the wise and balanced use of the only non-renewable resource we have: Time.

Conclusion

Covid-19 came to strongly shake the foundations of all humanity by stopping all activity and sending it home to do home office. Thus leading man to reflect on the use of his time, his very existence and his reason for Being. Helping him to review his values, principles and root concepts with a magnifying glass; as well as to rethink the efficiency and effectiveness of all social structures, economic, labour, governmental, educational, etc. that it has built and that should provide well-being for all. Covid-19 put on the table the opportunity to make a stop in our personal life, to resume our personal values and as humanity, and bring back with it the basic priorities of human life. Within all the pain and suffering that it has brought with it, we are discovering that it also brought something invaluable within our reach, I believe that a very important gift for humanity: The real possibility of FREEDOM and HAPPINESS.

Today, at the end of 2020, we have in our hands a historic opportunity to design / innovate / develop new models of both work environments and work modalities, in which the success of companies is sculpted by the well-being, happiness and humanity of their leaders. Today we have in our hands the great opportunity to heal and rebuild our world, from our homes, from our workplaces, with a new leadership concept, because today we are recovering the vision of what it means to live.

Will we have the courage to do it?

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Prof. Liliana Lorna Villanueva, Founder of Espacio Solar México Company, Founder of Unité Vie, Founder and Director of the 90-day Prosperity Challenge and Prosperity Boot Camp México social projects. She is an experienced teacher, author, lecturer, science and meditation workshops instructor and human wellbeing consultant for business and professionals.

She holds a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara, MX., a master's degree in Theoretical Physics from the Universidad de Guadalajara, MX. and she has taken courses in Business, Innovation, Technology Entrepreneurship and Design Thinking among others, at Stanford University, U.S. Currently Professor Liliana Lorna Villanueva is working on shaping the vision and approach to the Industry 6.0 and Industry 1.0, which she describes in her book 2020: The great revelation is Love.

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