



# FIVE TIPS FOR LEADING TEAMS THROUGH CRISIS





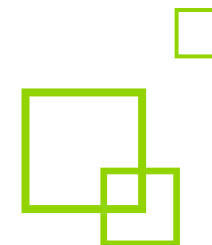
## INTRODUCTION

### Five Tips for Leading Teams Through Crisis

Leaders have great responsibility – to inspire and motivate teams to work toward a common purpose in good times and bad. In times of uncertainty, the importance of leadership is elevated to an even higher level.

As organizations across the globe face the unprecedented challenges brought upon by the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19), it is important to remember to lead first and foremost with compassion and empathy. While each of us is experiencing the COVID-19 crisis differently, we are all in this together as it relates to the uncertainty and fear we face.

In this ebook, we'll highlight five helpful tips for leaders as they face this crisis together with their teams. We'll provide you with some concrete strategies to lead confidently and humbly, while instilling hope and inspiration in your teams during this unprecedented time.



## TIP #1 – LEAD BY PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Now, more than ever, people must come first. Good leaders focus on what their teams need to be successful. Right now, needs have shifted in dramatic ways, as has the definition of success. As leaders, we need to empathize with those needs and quickly adjust how we respond.

In the case of COVID-19 or a similar public health crisis, it is important to be intentional about putting people first in two main ways.

### **Provide leadership that safeguards people.**

Because COVID-19 threatens the basic human need for safety, this is the most obvious and immediate need and it requires decisive leadership. Quick action is necessary to keep employees and clients safe and to keep businesses running during an extreme crisis. Even when we don't yet have all the facts or understand the long-term outcome, we must make the best decisions possible given what is known about the situation.

### **Lead with empathy.**

As a leader addressing a rapidly unfolding crisis, this can certainly be difficult to remember to deliberately do. But by endeavoring to understand the variety of ways people are experiencing a crisis – both directly and indirectly – you can more effectively communicate and lead.

These are unprecedented times and people are facing tremendous fear. Fear for their health and the health of their loved ones. Fear of the unknown. Fear of the economic impact. Fear because their job – in the case of first and second responders – puts them at elevated risk.

This fear is also magnified by new stresses, like working from home for the first time, which we are all facing in different ways in day-to-day life. To be effective, you must seek to understand the variety of unique fears and stresses being experienced and provide the necessary leadership to best meet people where they are.







## TIP #2 – ASPIRE TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

### What is servant leadership?

Through servant leadership, the good of the team and understanding the experience of the team is always central. So, grounding yourself on those tenets is important and helpful when facing any crisis – especially one of this magnitude.

There are a few servant leadership principals that are highly applicable to leading through a crisis, such as:

- Seeking to understand by listening
- Being aware of people's feelings
- Striving to empathize

As we face this unprecedented situation, where uncertainty reigns, it is our responsibility as leaders to lead by example and with integrity, humility and an unwavering commitment to treating people the right way. This is essential, because during crisis it is easy to allow emotions and the need for rapid decision making to distract from the necessity of putting people first.



## TIP #3 – COMMUNICATE FREQUENTLY AND TRANSPARENTLY

Access to information for employees is critical during a crisis, and even if you think you're communicating enough, you probably aren't. During crisis, it is crucial that leaders practice transparency and visibility with their teams.

### Transparency

In times of uncertainty and instability, the quality of the message is paramount. Employees will be hyper-focused on every message you share and need to know you are being transparent and authentic.

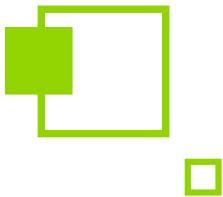
They need to trust you are telling them what you know, as well as what you don't know, that you are sharing honest information on the decisions being made and the actions being taken.

Sometimes we are afraid to be transparent, which can cause us to lose the trust of our people. Balance can be difficult during crisis, so we must stay focused on being honest, but optimistic. We need to believe we will get through this, without minimizing the pain in the journey.

### Visibility

It is also important for leaders to be visible. Given the scale of the crisis, it is easy to go into bunker mode as you and the crisis team home in on the response and the most pressing concerns. While that focus is critical to business stability and keeping people safe, it is also important that leaders are visible to their teams and the broader organization.

The lack of visibility of key leaders and any perceived silence on topics that are creating stress in the business breeds rumors and anxiety. So, it is critical to get out there and avoid the tendency towards introverted leadership that naturally arises in times of crisis.



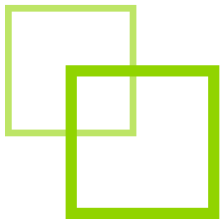


## TIP #4 - EMPOWER YOUR TEAMS

As a leader, you must be highly engaged in the response, but you must also empower your teams to make decisions quickly by making it clear that you support them and that they won't be second guessed. A few select leaders will not have the capacity or expertise to manage all aspects of the crisis response, so it's important to give your teams the ability to make decisions independently.

### Leverage Diverse Talent

As we've seen with the pace of the COVID-19 crisis, the situation is evolving quickly, so it's essential to create a crisis management function that can keep up. Cross-functional teams should be created with members from across the organization to address the evolving situation from a variety of perspectives.





## TIP #5 – PRACTICE INFORMED OPTIMISM

From a personal leadership style, leaders must balance optimism with realistic thinking and act based on a realistic assessment of how the crisis will unfold. Take care not to give in to doomsday thinking – which is easy to do in this cycle of bad news and scary headlines.

Conversely, it is important for leaders not to take an overly optimistic stance. Through COVID-19 and other crisis situations, make it your goal to provide informed optimism – to avoid eroding trust and future back peddling.

### Focus on Resilience

The resilience you demonstrate and your daily intent to be your best self through crisis will motivate others to do the same – to believe in your leadership and to stay engaged even when things are difficult. It is our role as leaders to provide level-headed, calm leadership that enables employees to have confidence that we are taking the most thoughtful approach possible given the situation. This will allow them to be their best selves through adversity.

### Remember to Practice Self-Care

Self-management is also critical during a prolonged crisis. If you don't maintain your health, balance and perspective you can't be level-headed and exercise good judgment. In order to care for and successfully lead others, it's critical to care for yourself first. Although it's easy to skip in favor of one more call or email, prioritize taking breaks to relax and process the events of the day.







## CONCLUSION

### Looking Beyond the Crisis

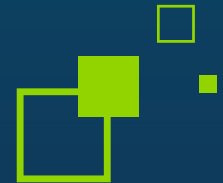
While leading through uncertainty can be difficult – especially in the case of a public crisis that threatens employee safety – you must look for and examine the long-term opportunities that are created by the change.

The world will change permanently as a result of COVID-19, and those who harness innovative, long-term thinking through the crisis will find new ways to operate and will create solutions to meet new client needs. This sort of thinking will allow you to identify opportunities to optimize how you operate, communicate, manage and deliver services, and create ways to be more responsive, scalable and flexible.

It will be through effective leadership that these opportunities will be identified and acted upon, rather than allowing the crisis at hand to blind you from them. As a leader, intentionally looking for silver linings will help maintain balanced and informed optimism and good long-term decision making.

To learn more about ways employers can respond to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, visit our [Resource Center](#).





## ABOUT PEOPLESCOUT

PeopleScout, a TrueBlue company, is the world's largest RPO provider managing talent solutions that span the global economy, with end-to-end MSP and talent advisory capabilities supporting total workforce needs. PeopleScout boasts 97% client retention managing the most complex programs in the industry. The company's thousands of forward-looking talent professionals provide clients with the edge in the people business by consistently delivering now while anticipating what's next. Affinix™, PeopleScout's proprietary talent acquisition platform, empowers faster engagement with the best talent through an AI-driven, consumer-like candidate experience with one-point ATS and VMS integration and single sign-on. Leveraging the power of data gleaned from engaging millions of candidates and contingent associates every year, PeopleScout enhances talent intelligence for clients across more than 70 countries with headquarters in Chicago, London and Sydney and global delivery centers in Charlotte, Toronto, Montreal, Bristol, Krakow, Gurgaon and Bangalore.

For more information, please visit [www.peoplescout.com](http://www.peoplescout.com).

