



**CAMPBELL
INSTITUTE**

LEADING WHILE EMBRACING CHANGE

A decorative graphic on the right side of the page. It features a diagonal band in shades of blue and grey. Overlaid on this band are several geometric shapes: a large white circle, a smaller white circle, a yellow circle, a light blue circle, and a white hexagon, all connected by thin white lines. The shapes are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, suggesting a network or a process flow.

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LEADING WHILE EMBRACING CHANGE

2020 was a year that brought enormous change.

The impact COVID-19 has had on our daily lives has been front and center for more than a year. We have had no choice but to adapt, whether that means wearing PPE, working from home, or managing a team from a distance. As leaders, our role must be to support our teams as we navigate this new way of working together.

Almost overnight, many of us moved from reporting to an office every day to setting up ad-hoc offices at home, a situation made even more challenging as other family members also shifted to working or learning from the kitchen table. Participating on a video meeting while your kindergartner joins her class in singing the ABCs on a Zoom call across the table is now commonplace for many of our employees. Balancing the demands of our professional and personal lives in a COVID-19 environment can be trying, frustrating and even overwhelming for many. As leaders, it is our job to know when to be flexible, empathetic or demanding, but also to know how to help our teams embrace and deal with these changes.

During a time of crisis, transparent communication is critical. Being open and honest with our teams, and sharing information as appropriate builds trust and loyalty. When explaining a new set of operating guidelines or realigning expectations, the key to greater understanding and acceptance is to explain the “why” behind the decision. By providing context, there is less of a chance of creating and spreading rumors or misinformation. The new vision that change has brought needs to be acknowledged and utilized to motivate our teams and ourselves.



Equally as important to successfully managing change is providing a forum for open discussion and listening to other people’s perspectives. When our co-workers can openly share their thoughts, it shows that we value them and what they bring to the team. When done respectfully, sharing points of view can help the team move forward and create a path to the newly declared vision.

Because workplaces have varied during the pandemic – from a home office to basement card tables to skeleton manufacturing crews – my teams set up more frequent “touchpoint” meetings. These meetings replace the “water cooler” conversations that used to take place in the office, and provide opportunities to discuss what we are working on and where we may need help. I’ve found that more frequent communication allows me to better connect with my team members and make valuable contributions to the work.

As leaders, it is important to appreciate our own resilience and strength as we deal with these tough circumstances. Recognizing the need to change, working through it and finding our purpose not only makes us feel a sense of accomplishment, but will be noticed by those around us as well. Having discussions “up” your reporting lines or with those you view as mentors provides perspective that is important to coach your team while also developing yourself.

Most importantly, in times of great change, leaders should remember to be sympathetic. If someone has virtual schooling happening in their home and it can be heard in the background, be understanding about the juggling that is probably happening behind the scenes and realize that these days the professional and personal worlds may collide. Be respectful of your co-workers' time and remember, we are all people, working toward a unified goal, regardless of our new normal.