

Leading Through A Crisis: Communication and Decision-Making

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Best tips from Dave Wilson - Leadership in crisis.

- Keep yourself calm – and create calm. People want certainty, look as if you have it in control.
- Keep in touch with the people - give regular updates
- Stick to facts. Don't create or respond to rumours.
- You will be saying the same things many times. Get used to that idea. People do not hear it the first time.

Relationship between communication and decision making.

People need to understand decisions. They may not necessarily agree with them, but they need to know that you went through a process to make the decision, i.e. the context of the decision.

Consider communication in light of the intended audience, varying the message accordingly. The full nitty gritty of the detail only needs to be known by the leadership team.

Use the experience of the leadership team or the Board. Not for the purpose of consensus or collaboration, but as a source of advice; use them as your sounding board. Test that they can understand what you are communicating; if they can't understand, then others won't. Adjust.

Transparency in decision making, bringing people along with you, and developing people.

Being transparent in decision making brings people along with you, develops leadership in people and gives greater understanding of the how and why.

Develop other people/build leaders during the crisis. Build capacity in people to understand the decision-making process; the risk assessment. Make these situations a learning opportunity for others. Learning this develops them for when they become leaders and experience crises.

When people understand how you made the decision, they understand better. They deliver the message back to their teams/class of students with greater clarity and commitment.

Specific to the leadership team:

While you make the decision, always inform your leadership team. Let them read your press releases, bring them on your journey, have them know the context. Decisions need to be made at pace but be sure to let them understand the process so they can articulate the decision, the what and why, and so that they know why you dismissed other options.

The leadership team more than anyone else need to know your decision-making process and what you dismissed. They will communicate decisions with more belief, and this grows their confidence in your decision making.

Additional tips from Dave Wilson

Take the time to ask people how they are. Also, ask after their family. This helps remind people of the things that are important. It also shows you care and helps to build a team.