



Part 4:
STEPPING OUTSIDE
YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Demonstrating Resilience
as a Leader During
Challenging Times

CLARITY^{VP}

PART 3: STEPPING OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Adapting to the new normal

Leading teams can be challenging at the best of times, but the current environment is certainly putting our management skills to the test.

We are all getting used to the 'new normal'. Working from home, communicating with our teams through different technologies and working with clients in innovative ways takes time to adapt to. And it takes effort. It can be difficult not to get sidetracked by pressing issues like income, fees and invoicing. We are all being pushed out of our comfort zone.

I've been reflecting on this over the last few days, and a powerful quote I once heard keeps coming to mind:

Adversity has a way of introducing you to yourself.

When we are introduced to ourselves we can take one of two approaches. The first is to close in and contract. We revert to negative thoughts of inadequacy and helplessness, or we just tread water and do the bare minimum. The other approach is to turn adversity into opportunity. By reacting to the situation and relying on our strength and resilience to get us through, we can bring about more positive outcomes and open up new opportunities for our businesses and our teams.

The importance of perspective

That said, a reactive approach requires energy, focus and the correct frame of mind, and forcing yourself into this mindset at the wrong time can be counterproductive. As American philosopher and psychologist William James wisely commented:

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.

It takes a lot of work to filter out negative thoughts but, when you do, it can pay dividends. With perspective and a positive outlook, you will be better much prepared to take that first step.

Safe harbour or the open seas?

A useful analogy to examine how we make this choice is the Safe Harbour of the Known or SHOK. Imagine yourself on a boat in a harbour. A strong anchor and easy access to all the things you might need on land give you peace of mind and reassurance about the future. But a storm comes in and your boat is blown out to sea – you can no longer see where you are going. You feel out of your depth, afraid and vulnerable.

Once the storm passes, you are left with two choices. You can direct the boat back to the safe harbour or you can choose to sail into new waters. Faced with a decision like this, most of us revert to type and pick the harbour. It's where we feel secure. We know the environment and we are confident in our role and our abilities (many of us can do our job with our eyes closed).

But, by choosing to sail into new waters, we can create possibilities for growth. From my own professional experience and from working with some of the top business leaders in Dublin, I have come to understand that it is only when we push out into that unknown ocean that we really open ourselves up to learn.

And this is happening to us all right now. The new world we are living in is calling our individual comfort zones into question and demanding that we make that choice: safe harbour or the open seas?

Getting on with it

We can use this situation to show our strengths by choosing the path less taken. I call this the GOWI or 'Getting on With It' phase. Movement, traction, engagement, relentless communication with your team and action-planning with your clients – all the while remaining calm and respectful to those around you – really demonstrate your resilience as a leader!

You can get on with it by using this opportunity to grow personally and professionally:

- Seek out new ways to lead.
- Build your bravery.
- Develop more creative techniques to connect with clients.

You can also get on with it by harnessing this situation to nurture your team:

- Create a new vision for your team.
- Encourage them to collaborate more innovatively and to create new products or services.
- Form leaders within your team.

An interesting outcome of times like these is that you will most likely see sides to members of your team that you may never have seen before. There will be some who rise to the challenge, others will demonstrate more creativity, some will lead without formal authority and others will help to boost morale. It is a great time for teams to shine, to grow together and get even stronger. But remember, a strong team needs strong leadership, and it is your resilience that will power you through.

Make a difference

I hope we can all be leaders who deliver positive change in these challenging times.

In line with Robin Sharma's 'The 4 Interior Empires of History-Makers', I believe that we all have the capacity to make a difference. There are times in life when we see the door of success swinging outwards – but Sharma asserts that it swings inwards first. He describes the four empires as:

1. Mindset – Psychological

Positive thinking and looking at the possibilities. Using perspective: 'How can I leverage this to get even better at what I do?' Counting the good things in your life.

2. Heartset – Emotional

Meditating, journaling, practising affirmation and forgiveness, and letting go.

3. Healthset – Physical

Managing your energy, fitness, vitality and longevity – not sacrificing health for wealth. Releasing the dopamine within your brain.

4. Soulset – Spiritual

Valuing the simplicity of life all around you and the humanity people. Cherishing the planet and acknowledging the world as bigger than ourselves – turning down the ego.

Through working, developing and growing our inner empires in a compassionate way, we can have an even bigger impact on the world around us. Getting on with it is a necessity. But, if shaped in the right way, pushing yourself outside your comfort zone, especially at the moment, can be good for the brain . . . and good for the soul.

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