



Conscious leadership

A leadership manual for an unpredictable time

Conscious leadership

- will get you through this unpredictable time

There is no doubt that the corona pandemic – and the accompanying economic crisis – is one of the great upheavals of our time. It creates major challenges for the world community, the business community and not least for the individual. It is a landmark event that will characterize our future, self-understanding and awareness – yes – in all likelihood even defining a BEFORE and AFTER. One of the important factors for how we can optimally get through this transformation is our ability to understand the deeper dynamics of the transformation process we have just embarked on. It is – and will be – a difficult time for many to get through. The usual security is gone and a strange invisible "enemy" has turned the known existence upside down. We are in unfamiliar terrain and must try to find the balance between the capacity of hospitals, the infection pressure and the herd immunity weighed against the economic consequences and human deprivation of the constraints we decide. The central element of this balancing act is management. And whether at government level, in companies or as a single individual.

I have been working with management and organizational development for more than 30 years and the current health / financial crisis is the fourth significant transformation process I have advised and assisted leaders, decision makers and companies to get through optimally. So we have tried it before. That does not mean that I – or anyone else – have a fit and ready action plan for how you and your organization are going to get well out on the other side – because no one does – maybe just with the exception of Trump. But it does mean that we know a lot of the mechanisms that come into play in transformation processes. We thus have a comprehensive and nuanced experience catalog of "Do's and Dont's" in relation to the – often unconscious – dynamics that come into force in times of great upheaval. When we compare this historical insight with the latest knowledge in both brain research and positive psychology, we get a good starting point for dealing with even complex adjustments. It's about getting as much data / information as possible, but without being paralyzed. As an advisor, it is my job to help managers, businesses and decision makers sort out the essentials in an often overwhelming amount of information – and then generate a gallery of the most likely scenarios – which in turn form the basis for the concrete decisions and action plans.

Storm P said: "It's hard to predict – especially about the future" and he is still right – but today we have access to BIG DATA, a historical experience catalog and a much deeper insight into our human nature. This means that we are – or rather could be – far better equipped to predict the unpredictable. Not that we can thereby prevent crises from hitting us – because they always will – but we will be able to avoid having our hair in the mailbox when it happens. I have chosen to gather some of the most important insights and tools in this concise manual and hope it can help you as a leader, as well as your organization, optimally through this crisis / transition process.

For the sake of clarity, I have divided this manual into five parts:

Part 1 Be authentic and honest in your communication

Part 2 Put on the oxygen mask yourself first and make sure it is not "smoke" you get

Part 3 Understand your employees' need for leadership in an unpredictable time

Part 4 You're wrong if you think we're in a process of change – we're in the process of transformation

Part 5 The story has a way of repeating itself – just always with a twist

Part 1 Be authentic and honest in your communication

We know that it is neither wise to intimidate or underestimate the extent of a challenge. Honesty is the key to building the all-encompassing confidence that we humans can / will rely on the information and directions we receive. And here I would like to acknowledge the government and the authorities' communications, and in particular Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's top professional, calm and businesslike appearance and rhetoric. Much has been gained by having a skilled leader – regardless of political affiliation – at the helm – especially in times of crisis. Just look at the difference with the leadership effects of an Angela Merkel, a Justin Trudeau or a Jacinda Ardern – and the utterly outrageous drama a leader like Trump manages to create. The differences are not only striking, but directly frightening. It's about leadership and a lack of the same.

Many of the leaders and decision makers I advise would like to have a secure ground under their feet before communicating – which is also wise because it wears on one's habitus if one is often disproved. But what can you as a leader confidently announce right now without having to withdraw it later? Only the fact that we are in unfamiliar terrain and that we must constantly observe the feedback / input we receive and then adapt our behavior to the actual conditions. Only with honesty about the facts can you – as a leader – be on secure ground when communicating. It is and will be an uncertain time we are facing and therefore it is also important that you as a leader manage to support your employees and help them process their situation. It is your job as a manager to keep up the courage of your employees in the vacuum we are in. It requires that you understand that your employees have different needs and therefore need different forms of management – which I elaborate on in part 3.

Part 2 Put on the oxygen mask yourself first and make sure it is not "smoke" you get

My first piece of advice is that, as a leader, you immediately dismiss the "super-hero syndrome", otherwise I can assure you that things are going wrong – both for you and your organization. I have experienced several top executives who have believed that they – as another one-man army – could / should handle it all – and that has always gone wrong, of course. It's both expensive and dangerous when a leader suffers from grandeur – just look at Trump. The combination of facts resistance and megalomania is not only embarrassing, but also deeply scary.

It is always wise for you as a manager to surround yourself with competent employees and advisors who are not afraid to straight talk and show you where you are wrong – but in times of crisis it is crucial. Personal vanity just can't be afforded and it is essential that you are not afraid to realize your own blind spots. I know well that I – as a counselor – are known for (someone might say notorious) saying things very clearly. But I actually take that as a compliment. Too many managers – and especially top executives – have the habit of surrounding themselves with employees and advisers who are not entirely clear in their views, but act strategically – which in my opinion is completely far out. As a leader, you must and should be able to rely on the counterplay you get, otherwise you will have to switch out your staff until you are in clean waters again. All managers need a safe space, where there is an opportunity to process and think through the various scenarios – and this requires an authentic communication environment. As an external advisor, I see it as one of my key tasks to ensure just that, as well as adding concrete tools to deal with the unique challenges that their business is facing.

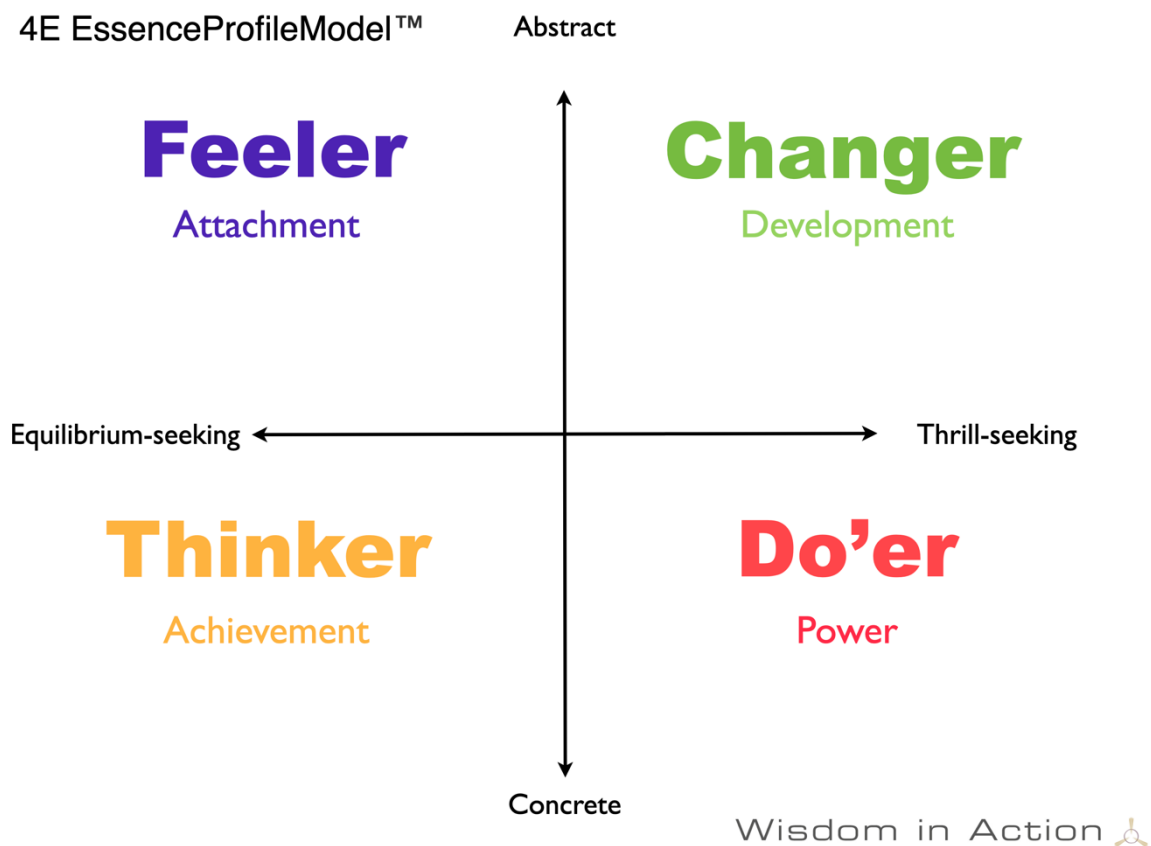
One of the key challenges of the current crisis is the high degree of unpredictability. No one can – for sure – say when this crisis is over and that is one of the most difficult things for many people to deal with. Unpredictability is exhausting for our psychological well-being – especially when its long-lasting. Also for managers. It is therefore central to build and maintain a regime of self-care strategies. It's actually very simple and we've all heard it many times – back when we used to flew around the world. "First put on the oxygen mask yourself before helping your fellow passengers". Therefore, my network and I also facilitate

both individual and manager-team processes where they can oxygenate their own personal concerns and thereby avoid burning out themselves.

One of the peculiar features of this crisis is that there is an extremely large difference in how it affects. A few companies are extremely busy while many others are paused indefinitely. This means that the few are overloaded while the many are seated on the bench and just have to wait. Hotels, restaurants, aviation, the travel industry, festivals and many more have to fight to keep going. The relief packages are of great benefit, but they are not magic – and many leaders have already had to take the consequences and shut down completely or partially. From many of the leaders I advise, I know how difficult it is for them when they have to say goodbye to good and faithful leadership colleagues and employees. As one of them put it: “I’m fine with having to say goodbye to employees who don’t perform or to cut into the organization if our competitors are better than us, but this seems so unfair because everything was running smoothly – and then a full stop – just like that out of the blue.”

Part 3 Understand your employees' need for leadership in an unpredictable time

It is now more than 25 years ago that I developed the EssenceProfileModel™ based on evolutionary psychology – and it remains the one I base on when teaching and advising in leadership, communication and collaboration. Throughout evolution, the four basic personality types have developed different intelligences / talents and are motivated / driven by four different needs. Not that we don't all have these needs and intelligence – we just have them to a greater or lesser extent. And the reason is simple. It is smart for the survival of the species that we have different predispositions and talents. And it still is. Some people have a much greater need for excitement than others – who instead need balance, clarity and recognizability. That is why their experience of the current situation is very different. In addition, some people have greater dispositions for the concrete and the logical while others are best at the abstract and intuitive – and thus the four Essence Types that are also presented in the following diagram emerge.



In short, the Changers, who are thrill-seeking and abstract-thinking, are much easier at dealing with the current situation, than especially the Feelers, who want to maintain equilibrium and need to be included in social contexts. They miss their colleagues and customers a lot and have a hard time not being able to hug. The Thinkers do not have this challenge at all because they are often more introverted and only need very little social contact – which they easily get covered by the very closest. I could spend a lot more time explaining the four types, but in this text I want to focus on the four different management needs of the four types that employees have. This theory and model has far greater complexity than I unfold here, so bear with me in this simplification. Here follows an ultra-brief review of the four types and associated management recommendations.

How to manage the Feelers

The Feelers, as mentioned, need socializing and preferably with those they are comfortable with. This unpredictability we are currently experiencing is very difficult for this particular type to handle. They are – if I may say so – built to provide security – and that is exactly what no one can give them now. If you, as a manager, have many of these types of employees, then it is wise to create spaces and opportunities for them to be in contact with their colleagues – and preferably physically. They may hold virtual meetings, but that does not cover their basic needs. In the companies where you have chosen to divide into some who stay at home and some who meet physically at work, it is clearly best to let the Feelers get to work and let the Thinkers – who enjoy sitting for themselves and immersing themselves – stay at home. If you are a Do'er yourself and therefore cannot "stand" talking so much about how difficult it is – then find someone who can – because that's what the Feelers need. You can't go completely in to hiding because the Feelers also need to feel that you – as their manager – care about them.

You will typically find many Feelers among humanists, service and care workers, as well as pedagogues and other jobs where being empathic, inclusive and understanding is important.

How to manage the Thinkers

If you have many Thinkers, I would recommend that you only "meet" with them when there is something to meet about. And whether physical or virtual. Remember that they need an agenda prior to the meeting and that they have difficulty with changes without explanation. For them, the scientific and sensible argument is crucial and they may well accept even difficult decisions if only they can see the reason in them. If you are a Do'er yourself then be very careful that you do not just say BECAUSE – you should be able to reason. Several of the companies I work with have employed very large groups of Thinkers and have not been able to find relevant tasks for all their Thinkers, so my advice has been to give Thinkers the opportunity to take professional courses online, spend time getting things filed and document their projects and tasks – and they love it. They experience this time as a welcome opportunity to get to the bottom and immerse themselves in details that are not normally time for. If you, as a leader, give the Changers the same opportunity / message, they would immediately resign.

You will typically find many Thinkers among engineers, accountants, scientists and doctors and other jobs where being methodical, analytical and scientific is important.

How to manage the Changers

Changers thrive on excitement and challenges and they actually think it's an interesting time now that everything is up in the air. If you, as a manager, are not good at offering new opportunities, they can be hard to get to stay. I am sure that one of the side effects of this crisis will be a number of start-ups especially in the IT sector. Your job as manager of Changers is to always give them room to get out of the box – and especially right now. I would recommend that you hold brief and preferably spontaneous meetings with them where they can vent their ideas with you and other Changers. Create an idea catalog

where you get the Changers to give a brief description of their ideas. Don't ask for extensive documentation. Especially if you are a Do'er it is important that you do not shoot everything down just because it is out there. It is important that you give them an open space where they can release their talent – otherwise they just quit. Also without any safety net – because they have a distinct confidence in the future and that they will probably land on their feet again. Where possible, give them co-ownership of the ideas they come up with, because it helps in their degree of affiliation.

You will typically find many Changers among developers, owner / inventor managers, solo self-employed and other jobs where being visionary and innovative is important.

How to manage Do'ers

If you have many Do'ers among your employees then this is a difficult time for them. They – naturally – like to get something done. They thrive well at a high pace and do not like anyone or anything trying to limit their possibilities of unfolding. They have a very hard time being forced what to do. I find that this type has the most difficult time being put on pause indefinitely. If you, yourself as a manager, are a Do'er, please be aware that you do not claim all the decisions that need to be made. Involve your Do'ers as much as possible so that they feel they are helping to decide – even just a little. If you have been thinking about why I have only described "If you as a manager are a Do'er " then the answer is simple. As a leader – especially in times of crisis – you have to be a Do'er – or at least draw on the Do'er you have in you. For there must be actions and decisions made – even though no one knows how tomorrow will look like.

You will typically find many Do'ers among managers, salespeople, sergeants, and other jobs where having influence and making an impact is important.

Part 4 You're wrong if you think we're in a process of change – we're in the process of transformation

It is important for me to point out that this health / economic crisis we have only just begun is not a change but a process of transformation. In my theory, I have chosen to divide transitions processes into three levels namely: Renewal, change and transformation – and it is vital that you as a leader know the difference between them.

There is even a very big difference in the tension field that a transformation creates and therefore also what it demands from us. Some transformations slip into our everyday life virtually unnoticed, while others feel as if one's entire foundation of life is falling apart. Some, we have taken the initiative to ourselves, while others are due to changes in the surroundings. From the latest research in positive psychology, we know that it is of vital importance whether we experience having an influence on what happens in our lives and that we are not controlled by circumstances. This is a result that is completely in line with what was revealed in the study of the ten well-being needs, which I have described in detail in my first book "The Inner Leadership". This may indicate that the transformations that we ourselves are initiating are passing through more quickly and more "painlessly" than those applied from outside sources. In what follows, I refer to what you have direct influence on as the A sphere – and what you are interested in, but have no influence on, as the B sphere. What makes this pandemic so difficult for many – and especially executives – is that the A sphere is suddenly significantly reduced. Others – in this case the authorities – decide what we must and must not do. That leaves many in a state of powerlessness – which is the worst thing that can happen. I advise everyone – and especially leaders – to stay focused on what they have influence on. In other words, spend 90% of the time on A and 10% on keeping yourself informed about B.

From extensive meta-surveys, we also know that one can train, expand or raise one's consciousness, and thereby achieve a special kind of inner calm – a meditative balance – so that even hectic, violent and demanding transformations are experienced only as ripples on the surface. That is why the Mindfulness

techniques have also been an integral part of the leadership training and teaching I have provided since I started over 30 years ago. In other words, one can train one's impulse control and thereby ensure that neither instinct nor worries will overshadow the ability to think cognitively. To those leaders for whom this is new knowledge and would like to achieve this kind of self-restraint, I should just mention that it typically takes years of practice to get to the stage of centered inner calm, so it is not a quick fix for here and now.

As a human being, be it on the job or in personal life, it is therefore important to create an overview of what type of transformation you are heading into, in order to be able to prepare as best as possible. As mentioned, I have had the opportunity, through my work, to intensively study the psychology of transformation and have chosen to define the three different fields of tension by strength – listed below with the smallest first:

Step:	Sphere of influence	Time	Effect
Renewal	A is larger than B	Days/weeks	Small
Change	A is equal to B	Months/Years	Medium
Transformation	B is much larger than A	Instantaneous	Total

The three levels in transformational processes

The energy consumption it takes to implement the three different steps is increased for each level.

1. An example of renewal could be when a company acquires a new IT system. All users need to be retrained and it can be a bit of a hassle the first time until everyone has gotten used to the new features.
2. A change could be, for example, when the company for which you have worked for a long time is acquired by the competitor. Without even wishing for it, you suddenly get new manager, colleagues and a whole new business method to act by. This type of change requires a lot of – often mentally – energy surplus before you can settle into the new things or find a new job.
3. The most powerful field of tension in transitions is transformation, which means that EVERYTHING changes. This type belongs to the rarities and is experienced as a crossroad from which everything is new. Transformational processes can be experienced as life-threatening events and they often fundamentally alter previous basic perceptions. A man who has never taken the time to be with his family suddenly experiences being in lockdown or when it becomes clear how much the earth has benefited from just a few months of greatly reduced pollution.

Part 5 The story has a way of repeating itself – just always with a twist

In order to understand the transition process the world is heading into, it is wise to use history as a backdrop. There have been plenty of transition processes over the years ranging from the invention of languages over industrialization to world wars and pandemics. We have seen a lot, from a "new" Europe gathering in one community, to an energy crisis with the associated potato cure. And although there is a great difference between all these changes, there are also many common features and experiences to draw on. As mentioned, I have personally advised during four significant processes.

The first major transition process I had the opportunity to work with was the Y2K crisis. Today, in the clear light of hindsight, it may seem strange – but back in the day there were many – including professionals – who were very afraid of how IT systems would handle the turn of the year 1999/2000. The fear was that virtually all IT systems and computers would crash on 31/12/99 at 23.59 because the systems were not prepared for the number 2000 as the year. A lot of resources were spent on preparing countless scenarios for how to handle the total collapse. But that did not happen. There were very limited effects of the new year and in most systems it was not noticed at all. The unique thing about the Y2K crisis was that it could be predicted very accurately.

With the financial crisis of the 10's, which became my second major advisory task, it turned out to be quite the opposite. It came – to many – as a lightning bolt from a clear sky and had radical consequences. Not that there were no experts trying to alarm – because there was – but it all went SO well that most people chose to ignore the warning signals. Even the biggest financial companies and institutions were hit deeply and when the dust was far away the whole sector had to go through a profound self-examination – for the main cause of the crisis was exorbitant greed and extreme lack of ethics in its own ranks. And that there is still a long way to go, the money laundering scandals and dividend tax drama have with all clarity made visible.

IT and the accompanying increased digitalization and now AI transition – was / are the third profound process of change I have completely under my skin. The unique thing about it is that it – in the beginning – happened almost unnoticed. Little by little, the computing capacity was increased and today IT has taken over a number of functions that were unthinkable just a few years ago. What is unique about this process is that it has only just begun to gain momentum. The exponential "hockey stick" development – is just gaining momentum and AI has only just begun to move. The very interesting thing about this process is that it is man-made. The disturbing thing about it is that it is controlled almost without democratic influence. Not to understand that it is not attempted – because it is – as, for example, when the EU legislates on GDPR and distributes billions of fines – but that it is and will be very difficult to have hands-on influence on extremely wealthy privately owned companies.

And now we are in the first pandemic of our generation. The unique thing about it is that it was predicted by all the leading experts around the world, but that – unlike Y2K – it did not have an exact starting date. There have been many – including Obama – who have voiced the need to begin building a preparedness to deal with a global pandemic. So why were we still so unprepared when covid-19 hit us? The answer is quite simple. Because it for many – and perhaps especially for heads of state that are to be re-elected – is very difficult to make costly preventative decisions without a concrete visible challenge. Even though it is basic psychology, it is nevertheless crazy – because it is always much more expensive to put out a wild bush fire rather than to get rid of the first sparks quickly and efficiently.

What if we have had a global pandemic strategy, the resources needed to deal with it, and the ability to act as one unified global entity? When that wasn't the case, then let's at least make sure we get it in place for next time. Because YES. A new pandemic is definitely coming – we just don't know when. And if it is not a pandemic we will have to – globally – work together on, then it will be climate change or a solar storm, or something else entirely.

I hope that one day we can look back and say that corona helped to raise our awareness and the collective responsibility for each other in the world we live in.

I am, of course, available if you or your organization needs counseling and sparring in your unique situation. Feel free to contact me at: mail@sebastiannybo.dk



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