



Strong leadership and virtual training essential coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic

With Covid-19 impacting our work and personal lives in unimaginable ways, businesses have had to shift rapidly to help people adjust to the new normal of remote work. As companies attempt to recover from the past 12 months, the role of leadership needs to be re-evaluated as their influence is increasingly responsible for achieving business outcomes. To ensure that management is adequately equipped to engage employees in a post-pandemic, socially distanced business world, there are many options for organisations to consider when it comes to development of their leaders. With so many virtual platforms to choose from and leaders pressed for time, choosing an accredited training provider is a smart step to ensuring that leaders are receiving the necessary training and development to step up and deliver.

Leadership reset required

In the face of uncertainty, it is human instinct for leadership to delay action and downplay the threat until the situation becomes clearer. This is usually for fear of taking the wrong steps and causing people to panic unnecessarily. However, this approach isn't going to work during a crisis on pandemic proportions. Instead, leaders needed to act in an urgent, transparent, and iterative manner that recognises that mistakes are inevitable but prioritises corrective action over assigning blame. Today, leadership requires courage and compassion like never before. It is about allowing people inside the organisation to influence the way forward. This will mean setting aside metrics that are no longer relevant.

New level of emotional intelligence

Without strategy, change becomes substitution instead of an evolution toward something better. This pandemic has forced many people to evaluate their priorities and decide that they have no desire to return to the way things were before the first Coronavirus case. This is the ideal time for companies around the world to reinvent themselves, by building support systems that focus on inclusion to leverage the power of individual capacity. As more people return to the office with lockdown restrictions easing, leaders will have to figure out how to balance their on-site teams with those who continue to Work from Home (WFH). This means leaders will need to have the temerity to break down barriers and give people the space and support to create previously inconceivable opportunities to enhance their own capacity and that of the organisation.

Strong leadership is required to rebuild company culture, to help people deal with the hidden stresses and heal from the fallout of the pandemic. People are not likely to be returning to work with a spring in their step, instead they're likely to be burned out or filled with reservations and anxiety. They'll need to be motivated, they'll need to be listened to and they'll need support and healing to return to productivity and regain balance in their lives again. It's going to take a greatly enhanced skill set to deal with the emotions, stresses and conflicts that are likely to arise under such strained conditions. As an organisation, it will be critical to ensure leadership is adequately geared to deal with the Covid aftermath. This requires strong, clear engagement through experiential learning to set them up to manage their own emotions, while allowing them to manage the emotions and stresses of the people they oversee.

While there are a variety of virtual leadership development platforms available internationally, it is important for South African companies to choose a local training provider to ensure relevance. Our circumstances are not the same globally but as human beings, our emotional needs are similar. Through emotional intelligence development, it is possible for companies to equip their leadership with the toolset necessary to smooth the transition and set people on the road to healing. This is an opportunity for organisations to redirect the budget spent usually on things like Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) scorecard compliance and spend it in a meaningful way, to develop leadership and reignite their enthusiasm and their passion for the future. This will require leadership with updated skills and a renewed focus on the purpose of the company (instead of the business model). The construction of a strong foundation on which to rebuild company culture, facilitate inclusion and create significant new growth.