

BEING THE AGILE BOSS

The 3 Imperatives for leading through the pandemic

An invitation-only roundtable with Harvard Business School Professor/Researcher/Author

DR. LINDA HILL

hosted **01.27.21** by **Advantage Performance Group** with **22** leaders representing **16** industries

FOOD AND BEVERAGE - HEALTHCARE - SHIPPING/LOGISTICS - HOSPITALITY - RETAIL - HIGHER EDUCATION - FINANCE - GOVERNMENT - MANUFACTURING - MEDICAL DEVICES - AGRI-FOOD - TECHNOLOGY - MECHANICAL CONTRACTOR - STAFFING - FOOD MANUFACTURING - PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



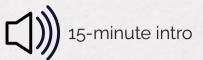


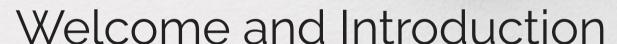
DR. LINDA HILL

Linda A. Hill is the Wallace Brett Donham Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School and chair of the Leadership Initiative. She is regarded as one of the world's top experts on leadership and innovation. Author of the management classic *Being the Boss* and highly acclaimed *Collective Genius*, she is also co-founder of Paradox Strategies, an Advantage Performance Group thought leader partner.











Richard Hodge introduces Harvard Business School professor, author, and researcher **Dr. Linda Hill**, who provides background and leads our roundtable discussion on The 3 Imperatives for leading through the pandemic.

Developer of a mobile learning journey for *Being the Boss*. Richard is an early founder and strategic advisor for Advantage Performance Group. He is also a member of the 1st90 product and strategy team, and co-founder of the Cultivating Leaders Center of Excellence, researching high-potential leadership best practices among top companies around the globe.

THE 3 IMPERATIVES

MANAGING YOURSELF

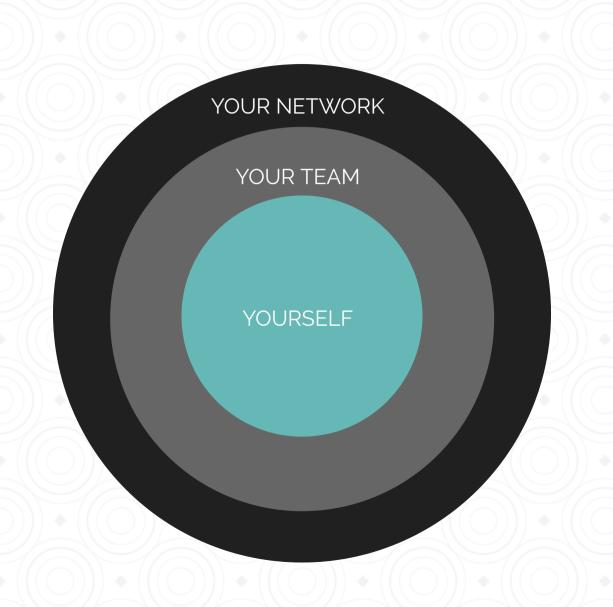
Using yourself as an instrument to get things done

MANAGING YOUR NETWORK

Looking outward, forging ties



Focusing on purpose and learning





"Leadership is always about an **emotional** connection. It's a very important piece of the puzzle. We always want to be thinking about 2 questions: **How are people experiencing me**, and **how are people experiencing themselves** when they're with me?"



CASE STUDY:

CLEVELAND CLINIC ABU DHABI

Dr. Rakesh M. SuriCEO, Chief of Thoracic & Cardiovascular Surgery

Building an agile organization, leading through the fog of a pandemic

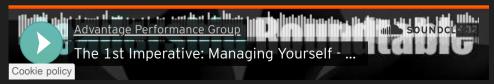




IMPERATIVE: MANAGE YOURSELF

Can people trust you?

CHARACTER + COMPETENCE = TRUST





Traps that very achievement-oriented leaders tend to fall into:

- Micromanage or struggle with delegation
- Provide little positive feedback & minimal direction
- Focus on goals & outcomes rather than people or process
- Command & coerce rather than coach
- Minimize socializing
- Cut corners
- Stifle creativity
- Abandon the leadership role and become the superstar producer





"**Dr. Suri** decided he had to tell the team, the whole organization in a town hall, 'I'm scared.' So he's like one of the top cardiac surgeons in the world. For him to realize that he needed to say that and also, as he said, acknowledge *to himself* that he was scared, wasn't easy...

"But he felt it was important to say, but he quickly said, 'I'm scared and I trust you.' And that combination, he felt was really important because he said he needed to know what people's state of mind was, what was going on in their hearts as they were doing their jobs, because that would so impact their judgment and they were going to have to be using their judgment so much in a very difficult situation."



BREAKOUT QUESTION 1

How have you helped leaders in your organization build emotional connections and demonstrate empathy and compassion during the pandemic? What approaches have been successful?

BREAKOUT RESPONSES





"It's finding ways to **create opportunities for leaders to be vulnerable**, not just with their teams but also to tap into their own personal vulnerability. **It's a time when you can't have answers.** It's a time when telling the truth, actually, is something that people don't want to hear. And **creating safe spaces** where people could explore that together and keep that element of character alive, but not have to do it and practice it in front of their teams, was a common theme."

Increasing communication and providing opportunities for employees, clients, customers to share their stories were common themes in the breakout sessions, with many leaders saying they had set up listening sessions, or increased the frequency and transparency of their communication to keep in touch and find out how everyone is doing.





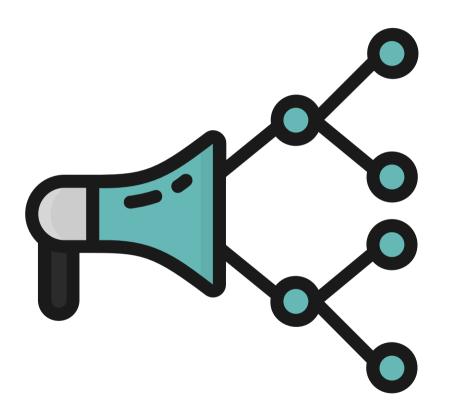
Other themes: Empathy for employees and customers, the importance of self-care and wellness, checking in often, modeling behaviors, leading with grace, giving people space when needed, being flexible, providing people with resources for resilience.

Importance is being placed on creating intentional moments to replace unintentional moments that would normally occur at the office. Small talk is big talk.

HR Leader/Global Logistics - I was stationed in Hong Kong in January 2020 so we were at the "tip of the spear" for the pandemic. Luckily we already started a campaign (EQ-related) to help leaders show more vulnerability and authenticity, so this really amped up in the shift to uncertainty/virtual.

Program Manager, Accelerated
Leadership Development / Healthcare We were slow to start (denial) but it really
shifted positively once the most senior
leaders in the organization became more
transparent in their actions and words.
Really focused on truth-telling.

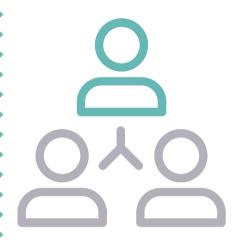




Overall more comments were about character rather than competence when it came to unique challenges in building trust during COVID times.

Approaches that have worked:

- Laser focus on only 3 things across the organization: Care for people, be there for people, focus on customers
- Carving out a really safe place for senior leaders to be vulnerable themselves.
- Communication and interaction methodologies increased and expanded (town halls, huddles, one-on-ones, etc.)



Head of Talent/Food & Beverage - Our teams were not used to working remotely, so we had a big gap to fill. We established Microsoft teams quickly and started weekly CEO meetings.

Our plants stayed in production and we all appreciated them taking the risk. We had a senior leader who chose to go into the office in support for the plants and to those essential. It's interesting to consider how this could have been misinterpreted - not as support necessarily but a signal to others that they should come in, too. Certainly not the intention and demonstrates how important it is to increase the frequency of communication during this time.





"Managing yourself is about recognizing that each and every one of us, when we're trying to lead, we're using ourselves as an instrument to try to get things done. We're trying to match our intent with our impact, and we all know that's not easy."



Senior OD/Healthcare - We started town halls immediately. We started discussing ways to demonstrate EQ and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) to assist people with stress, anxiety, depression, and pain. We also encouraged everyone to ask great questions to better understand issues. We opened a warehouse to support remote learning. We also recognized a need to create intentional moments to replace those unintentional moments that happened at the office.

VP, L&D/Hospitality - The **daily meetings** are here to stay. They helped provide a quick dose of information and connection.

CFO/Mechanical Contractor - The company closed the field operation and had to gather the leaders to discuss how decisions are being made and how they're managing their employee processes. The message we are sharing is "put yourself in someone else's shoes." We also had to get together to review the dynamics on IT security and review the need for physical office space.





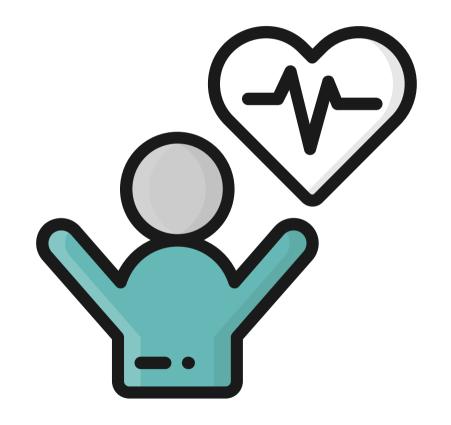
SVP, Relationship Manager/Finance - We are sharing the message, "remind people what other people are facing." Since we do not have the water cooler, we encourage people to stay connected and make an effort to maintain the relationships.

System VP, L&D/Healthcare -

Be *mindful* of what people are going through, people have different **timetables** (working at home, homeschooling, sick relatives, etc.)

VP-Talent/Medical devices (heart valves) - CEO did a series of videos for around the globe showing what people are going through. Called our "dose of goodness" – every week we would interview a patient, have them tell their story, and share their story with the employees. To be able to hear from them about their life, not their illness, that served as a huge motivation and a constant reminder of the emotional connection we have.

We are focusing on connecting with people. The company policy has shifted to the **manager's discretion** on what is "the right thing to do." When people ask, "What is the policy for work from home, time off, etc.?" we tell them, "The policy is now your manager". We also strive to help and support managers **emotionally.**





Director of Leadership
Development/Federal technology
contracting - We held 150 listening sessions
touching 10,000 people that were very well
received. People were hungry for that
emotional compassion.

Head of Global L&D/Agri-Food - We tapped into the values-based & mission-driven strength of People First—gave CEO and executives opportunities to model. We're experiencing a constant battle of driving the organization's priorities and taking care of people. Tactical action: brought mental health to the forefront, CFO sponsored mental health sessions for all leaders.





CHRO/Healthcare - We have a leader who is very fact-based and doesn't want to hear emotional issues but is championing what others are doing and what's working. One of our leaders created a new way to manage working parents, so we put a spotlight on that so others could learn from it.



Leaders need to find a sparring partner or a sounding board or someone they can turn to, someone they trust, that they can be vulnerable with. Who are you turning to to help you deal with the emotional burdens and questions, the ethical questions, that are coming up as well as the leadership and management challenges?

Reminders for managing yourself:

- Are you creating a sense of mutual trust and caring?
- Do you have a sounding board, sparring partner or personal board of directors?
- Do you need coaching on your digital presence?
- Are you taking care of yourself?
- Have you done succession planning?

IMPERATIVE: MANAGE YOUR TEAM

Democratize innovation by encouraging everyone to be **value creators** and **game changers** charged with figuring out not only what you **should** be doing but also what you **could** be doing.



CASE STUDY:

PFIZER, INC.

Michael Ku, PhD, Vice President, Global Clinical Supply

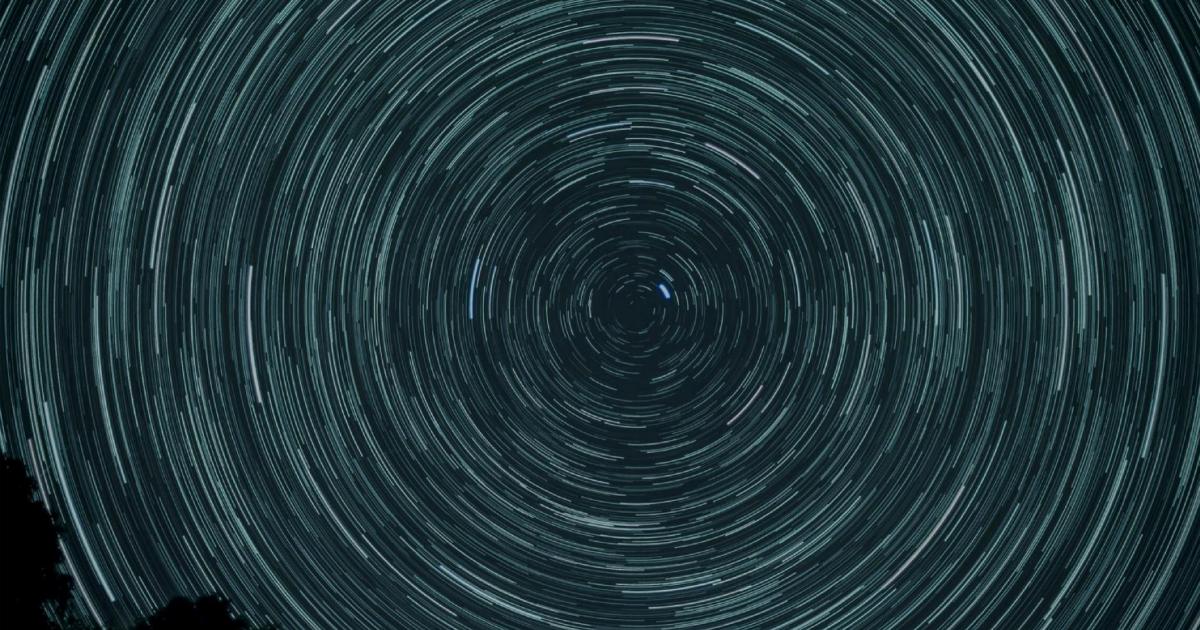
Democratizing innovation, leading the trials for the Pfizer vaccine





BREAKOUT QUESTION 2

Given that the pandemic has pushed leaders to focus on the "next normal" or "new normal," what have you done to help your organization cope with continuous change?





In the face of ongoing change, one thing remains constant: Who are we really and who do we serve? And that's what we have to hold onto. That's the North Star, that's the true North – that sense of shared purpose.





Build for agility & resilience

- Are you united around a shared purpose?
- How are you making decisions and acting with velocity (purpose + speed)?
- How are you delegating authority?
- How are you gathering intelligence?
- How are you helping your team cope with continuous change?
- How are you communicating (why, what & how)?
- How are you **measuring** progress?
- How are you preparing for the next normal?
- Have you developed rules of engagement for working virtually?

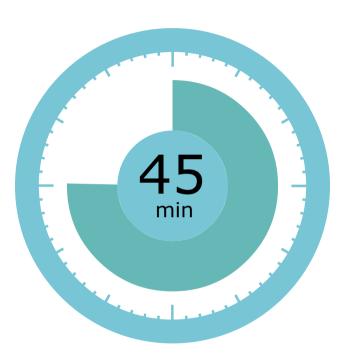


BREAKOUT RESPONSES

How do you integrate tools that are provided around **resiliency** and **support** into the life and work of people who are already working 24/7? One company built a set of readily available "**habit nuggets**" and actually pushed them out so that people would have a desire and some time they can spend to tap into them.

Another organization has a discernment process with guideposts: one, being aggressive with change and 2) formatting plans to get to yes. Others discussed how to identify, top down, what they could **stop doing** in order to make space for **emerging priorities**.





45 is the new 60

There were a couple of topics that came up in terms of **communication**, not just about the changes happening but the **speed** of how change is happening. One of the topics was **reducing meeting time**. One organization set an example by sending a message that **45** is the new **60**. So now their meetings have to be less than 60 minutes, and we're going to go for 45 and if we can, maybe even less.



Another predominate topic is around real estate now focusing on if people want to work remotely and can work remotely, then maybe they should work remotely. We're not going to worry anymore about how much we need to grow our office space and real estate footprint.

However, how do we keep in communication, how do we keep a **meeting cadence** that's appropriate? How do we possibly go forward with events or situations where we need to actually meet **in person**?

We also talked about **presenting virtually** and how to communicate while you're presenting virtually. There are **differences culturally** in how we prepare people to be presenting themselves on Zoom. Also, people are **using social tools** like WhatsApp or chat for work now because they have this need to stay in touch while we're working remotely.







"The issue of **cadence** of meetings, we're seeing lots of. Companies are rethinking which meetings should happen in what order so that people don't have to wait so long. If something does need to be escalated, then it happens fast. And you're not waiting for another whole week before that team gets together who you have to escalate to. So we do see a realignment of when meetings are happening, if in fact, you are empowering people so that you can have that impact."



The need for resiliency is not going to go away, the need for **resiliency** and **quick changes**. In hospital and restaurant settings, they're finding out what had to happen that *day*. So it's immediate change, not something that takes 2 months. **There is no time to plan**.

The restaurant people are coming in, the servers are coming in, to find out how they're going to serve that day. Are we indoors? Are we outdoors? Are we curbside? They have no idea.

We used to pretend how we never brought our **whole self** to work. We used to put on **a work face**, but now people bring their whole self to work whether they want to or not because there's just too much **emotion**.

Also, organizations are switching from a **VUCA** focus (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) **to intention** and **purpose**, to stretch out our minds to think **longer term**. If our purpose is front and center, some of the VUCA stuff gets to be less of an issue. The VUCA is happening for us to get to our purpose.





Our group had a really interesting discussion around how change is affecting organizations **in different ways** and how **varied** their experiences are.

One company based in **Florida** has people coming to the office and the **rhythms** are very much closer to the way things were **before COVID**.

Other organizations are still trying to decide **when** they can come back, or they're not certain what the long-term *next* normal will be. Some are focusing on **the** *next step* and being very deliberate about communicating that.

There was also this discussion around the **parallel paths** of the **personal** part, which is just stressful for people right now, but also the business changes, like what's the new normal for continuous change to the core of the business in process.

One organization had to ramp up new technology in a matter of months instead of 2 years, and what that meant to help the **business** deal with change but the implications to **people** being very very real.

So I think that really reflects that **wide range of context** and how it varies so much from organization to organization.





"Some companies are **growing unbelievably** and having to scale and onboard tons of people. Others are letting people go, in our sample of who we're studying as well. So I think that we do have that variation, but the thing that's not varied is it feels not just like change but **transformation**, frankly **really disruptive** kinds of change happening."



You mentioned words like grace and discernment, and one that came up in our conversations was **flexibility** as well, that notion that as leaders we need to be flexible. It's almost the evolution of what we used to refer to as work/life balance. but now we're talking about wellness. That's not a semantics shift, that's a significant shift in how we're actually having to support our teams.



One organization engaged their **colleagues** to try to understand what they needed to do to support their well-being. The answers came from them. They created **communities of practice**:

"It was really interesting to see how much talent was out there that we didn't even know. We had yoga teachers volunteering to provide yoga classes for stretching in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon. We had parents that were really good in drawing and they were teaching the kids during a certain period of time to relieve the parents because they were home schooling. So, we had that. We had virtual cooking classes for people who loved cooking.





"That helped us a lot in terms of the **well being** and getting people concentrating on the day-to-day, because things get really mixed up right now. We are working at the same time that we are caring for our families, and that was really important that the ideas not only came from us, it came directly from them."

"Our Yammer, which is our platform here, went crazy because all of these communities of practice were happening with a speed that we would never have been able to create. So it came from the employees, from our colleagues, and it was really really well received."







"Unbelievable **talent** is being unleashed. People are volunteering to do all kinds of stuff... So it is **a time of discovery** for people, from you of other people and for those people to discover who they are as well."

- Linda Hill

IMPERATIVE: MANAGE YOUR NETWORK

- Becoming collaborative-ready
- Listening & sharing **across** industries & silos

Managing your network

- Who are your key internal & external stakeholders?
- What can you do to proactively build out & support your ecosystem?
- Do you need to coordinate with your "traditional competitors"?
- How are you serving your community?
- Is your team collaborative-ready?

BREAKOUT QUESTION 3

How have you helped your organization maintain an external focus and grow and adapt their external networks?

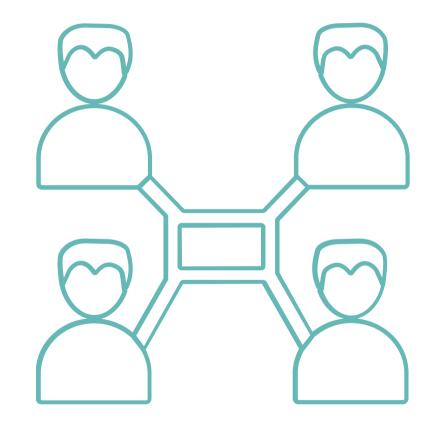
BREAKOUT RESPONSES

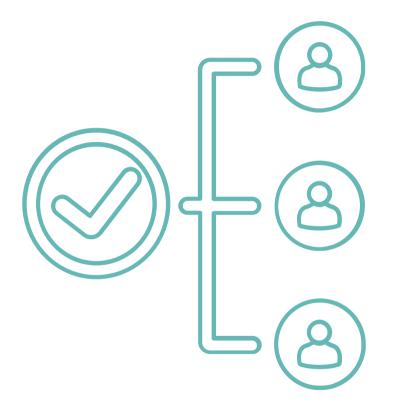
Everybody now knows what a **super spreader** is. In our group, we had a bunch of **super connectors**. I mean, it was a group of people that have rules. It's like, oh, I have just always looked up and I really put it up higher. Now, can you connect with this one and we are suggesting people connect with outside groups and panels and just really **encouraging people to connect in other ways** to external networks to know how to respond with speed quickly and to come up with new ideas.

We also talked about more formal things, like **benchmarking** with other L&D groups. And there was this real **high energy for sharing early on**. Everybody really was open to sharing and connecting in new ways. Some of that has **dropped off a little bit** because *people are tired*. Those bandwidths seem to have closed down a bit there.

And then there was this discussion of having people connect **across silos** in an organization, which is a version of an external type of connection in addition to outside the organization.

One last comment was about outside of the L&D and HR in our organization, what is the rest of the business doing to build external connections? One organization has gotten really deliberate about spending time **connecting with customers** to see what has this meant for them and how they can respond in different ways as a partner.





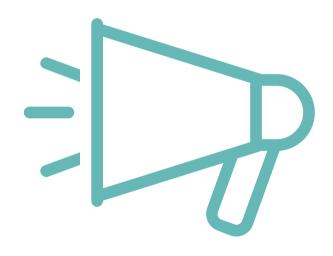
One organization shared that they are primarily a shipping company but with a hopeful vision to be an **integrator** in the logistics space. This is definitely shining a light on their need to move to that role as integrator. And as part of that, they've found that they've gotten a lot closer to the work as they've driven **innovation**.

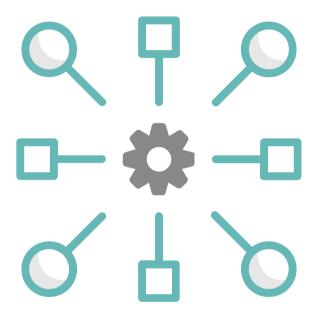
Who better to understand what external benefits we can derive than the people who are on the ground in the locations, serving the customers, working with the shippers and the suppliers and the customs agents and those things? So really embracing those connections. It's not an ivory tower set of external decisions that are made. It's actually involving the entire team.

Another organization described a big shift in their business when their senior-most leader decided that he was going to **up the volume** on the amount of information he was sharing.

He started doing daily briefings from the most mundane to the most strategic, inviting external partners, highlighting doctors and their healthcare system. And the stories that became part of this allowed other people to see that they had opportunities to be working in different ways and innovating and partnering with people they never knew they could before.

That **volume of information** drove a big **transformation** for them.





There's almost a little bit of **irony** involved that the fact we've moved to a Zoom and live virtual space. It's allowed us to embrace **a lot more resources** and **different people**. Now we don't have to wait 3 months to get on their calendar for a face-to-face and fly. It's like, 'Hey, we've got a half-hour meeting coming up. Let's explore this idea together and let's talk about it.'

It's allowed us to **cast a wider net** and open the aperture on the lens as to who we could be involving from an external perspective.



"One of the things we're seeing a lot, because as I said, I study globalization, is that many people are finding that if you're not at headquarters because of COVID and now because of Zoom, you can know a lot more than you used to because you can go to the meetings. I'd have to be up in the middle of the night, but you can be there to hear and have your voice heard. So that is actually helping with the diversity challenge and the **globalization** challenge that we're seeing out there, for sure"

The leader of a fundraising arm for higher education shared that they are reaching out to potential donors or current donors, but rather than at the end of a conversation making an ask, they are doing more **caregiving**. They're just really **nurturing** the **individual** and nurturing the **relationship** in their wonderful, authentic way.

That resonated with the other team members as well, that even as we are supporting internal colleagues, as we're having meetings, rather than making an ask of them in a routine way, we're doing more nurturing and supporting.





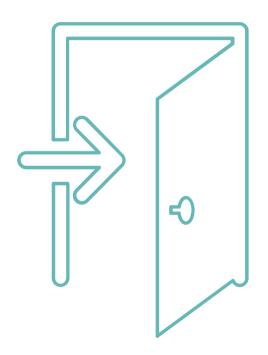
A healthcare organization established a **an incident management response team** across the care sites and parts of the corporate organization. All of the functional senior leaders came together and took roles so that they're part of these **active conversations**. What's going on across all the care sites? What are people needing for support?

And everyone steps forward in support of that. And part of that **external reach** also was the president of the hospital system reaching out to other leaders across their multiple-state footprint and **setting aside competition**. So it was all about how you are **sharing ideas** and **working together**.

A manufacturer talked about having strong **listening conversations**, opening a conversation with a brief agenda and then just sitting back and being a great listener -- gaining insights on what people are dealing with and what's going on in the business as a result of that, but also just creating **a forum** for people to share concerns and ideas.

So they're giving them a forum and **helping to gather resources** for them in a creative way, now that they can can jump on Zoom and even provide Zoom training for people.



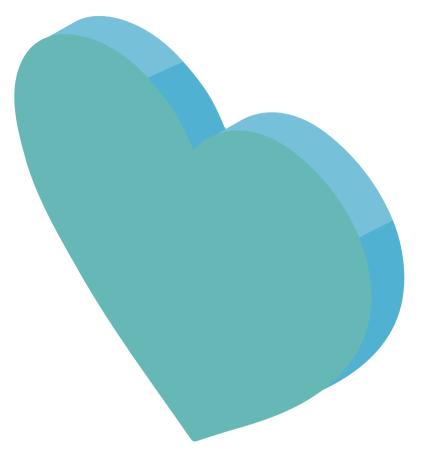


And then also there was a mention of this issue that we have in our world today, that people are **exiting** the organization without a framework for gathering **institutional knowledge**. They're becoming part of our external network too quickly in some cases before we gather all that knowledge.

We're not so used to going out there and sharing what we're doing. Now we want to share and we want to hear what other people are doing. So everybody agreed on our team that this was something really important at this time.

And we had 2 other fantastic examples of how to connect the WHY to the changes and the speed of change. One is from a healthcare organization whose culture is **patients first**. They have a large pool of very talented, critical care nurses focused on clinical trials and they're encouraging them to **go out in the community** and help however they they can, outside of their day-to day-clinical trial work. So several of them are going into the community and helping.



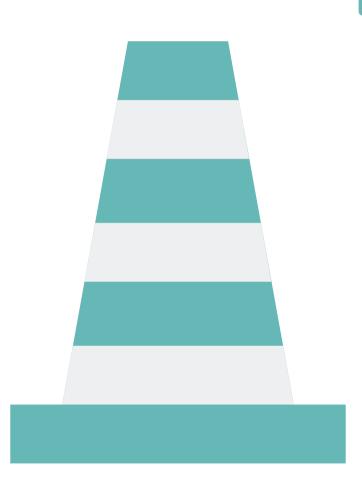


Another organization's purpose is to help people live well. They are directly producing Facebook town halls, and the CEO participates in these educational events about the current situation. The employees are going out into the community, especially underserved or underprivileged areas, to share information, provide education and help in any way they can.

One leader in our group brought up that she has a great network, but her *team* was much less networked, so she has been setting up **crossfunctional conversations** with other L&D teams **outside of her industry**. It might be a team from Korea that she happens to know that her team doesn't.

So they're sharing ideas and projects of what's working, what's not working. And her team is learning an awful lot and **getting inspired by what they're hearing**.







A participant told this story about an article they saw about **Chick-fil-A**. The vaccine distribution center in this town was having a difficult time with traffic and handling the volume. So the mayor called the Chick-fil-A manager and asked him to come over, and he solved the problem for them. So talk about 2 separate industries combining to benefit the community. I think that's really the spirit and nature of what we're talking about.





"There's actually colliding pandemics happening here. We've been talking about the health and we've been talking about the economic part. But there's also the racial piece of the puzzle and equity piece of the puzzle...



This is front and center and **leaders are at a loss**, many of them, to know how to address these promises that have been made, etc. ... But how you actually build that **inclusive environment** where in fact you are dealing with what's going on out there, **the outside world has come in ...** It's very important to **show you care** and to deal with issues that are happening around the world about **equity**."



- Linda Hill







"We're a healthcare organization, so it was about making sure we educated those underserved and underprivileged communities. We did Facebook town halls for our community, connected with our faith partners because we know they have influence over those communities in particular. We did it in **Spanish**, not just in English, trying to make sure that we reached all of our audiences, and then specifically around the vaccination, doing a very targeted campaign..."

- Dayla Randolph, Advocate Aurora Health Helping people live well



CASE STUDY:

NOURISHING AFRICA

Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli, creator of agri-business platform, Cofounder of Sahel Consulting Agriculture & Nutrition and AACE Food Processing & Distribution

Collaborative teams bridging the present and the future

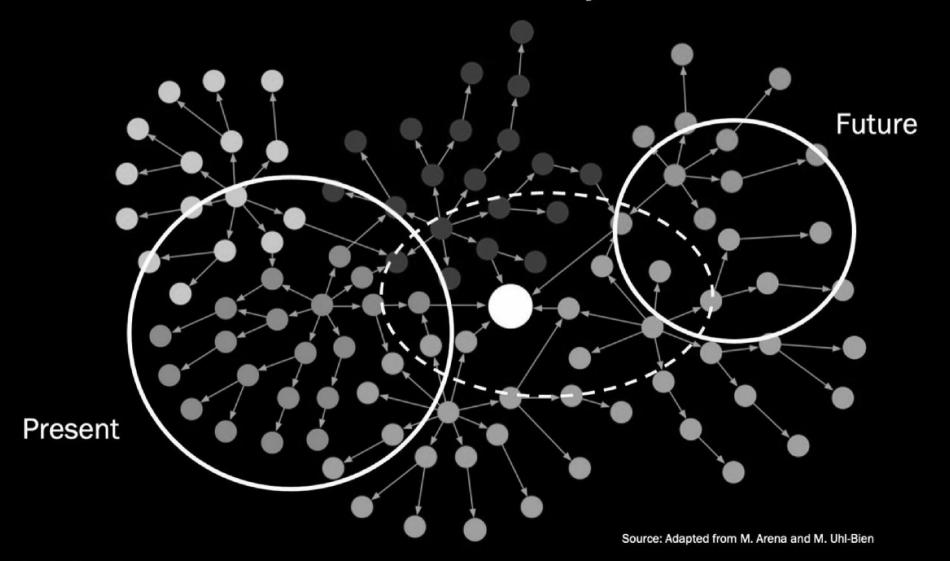


AgriPr**o**tein



NINAYO

Build Out the Ecosystem



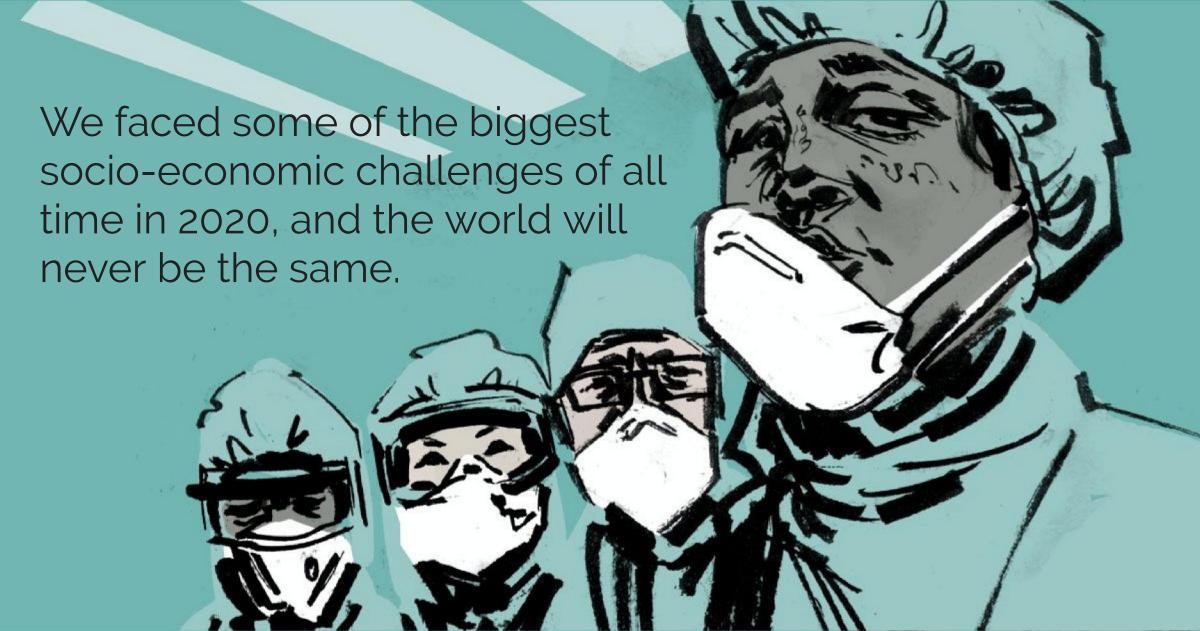


"It's not about selling. It's about **serving** and having a **real human touch ...** because **that's what people need from us at this moment** even if, in fact, we can't do face to face. We're doing it by Zoom.

"It's not the survey. It's the conversation, as many of you actually said when you were just talking about and giving examples to each other. And the focus truly is on this **agility** and **resilience** piece of the puzzle."

The next normal

- What have you discovered about your leadership?
- What have you discovered about your leadership team?
- What have you discovered about your culture & capabilities?
- Have you unleashed nascent leadership?
- Do you have trusting relationships with key stakeholders in your ecosystem?
- Do you have the right people on your "Next Normal Task Force?"
- How can you accelerate digital transformation?
- What are you doing to make sure you stay agile & resilient?



WHAT WAS YOUR

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

or **SUCCESS** in 2020?

"Budget"

"Getting 10k people to work remotely for the first time"

"Starting a new job during a pandemic"

"Motivation being remote"

"Embracing strengths of being deliberate, creative and empathic to lead through uncertainty"

"Engaging leaders to help them engage their team"

"Turnover and working remotely"

"Employee engagement/focus"

"Reinventing how HR and leaders should and could lead and engage the organization"

"Keeping up with everything COVID-related"

"Leading a sales (fundraising) force during remote work"

"Successfully supporting the business in being agile and innovative through challenging times"

"Responsibility of the corporation in social unrest issues"

"Survival :-)"

"Actually the biggest challenge and success was agility as there was no constant and a series of significant and sweeping challenges with limited historical or patterned insights."

"Disrupting myself!"

"Building connection and resilience in an unpredictable climate."

"Being effective in a virtual world in a very relationship-based business"

"Staying on focus (COVID, DEI, election)"

"Managing the anxiety of my team"

"Leading others through ambiguity while trying to manage it yourself"

"Finding balance for myself and others both the biggest challenge and biggest success"

"Expanding work while adapting to virtual world"

"Completing initial deployment of a new type of leadership development strategy" "Helping leaders create a psychologically safe environment for themselves and their associates in the face of COVID-19 and increasing social and political unrest"

"Keeping my team engaged to make a remarkable 2020"

"Success using virtual tools to collaborate and get things done"

"I want you all to feel hopeful.

I really feel that this is a time for us to reach back across the generations. There's so much to be learned in both directions, the **wisdom** of those of us who are a little older, but the **freshness** of the thinking of those who we're really building the future for."

- Linda Hill

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