

# ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAMS RE-ENERGISING AND FOCUSING YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM FOR GREATER IMPACT



*In the current environment, leadership teams are using different tactics, some are waiting and others are creatively embracing the 'new normal.' And as [Sharon Daniels](#), CEO of Arria NLG recently said, "Let's focus on where the opportunities are, and let's envision coming out of this almost like it accelerated us forward... This crisis is like a reset if you take the opportunity."*

Unlike business crises of old, the pace, global scale and profoundly human nature of the pandemic has meant there is no leadership playbook to reference. As we explored in our previous [white paper](#), drawing on past experiences and assumptions to resolve the current challenges is almost impossible for leadership teams. Many now recognise the need to have tough conversations about how they are going to innovate to stay ahead.

## THE NEW JOURNEY IS NOT THE OLD JOURNEY

With uncertainty set to be the norm (and with many organisations facing the final quarter of 2020 in a different place to how they began the year), there is a growing appetite to re-evaluate the impact and value the leadership team is bringing.

Whilst most leadership attention has been dominated by fast-paced risk mitigation, operational and transactional-focused decision-making, more strategic considerations are emerging. So how do you reset and recalibrate the team for the next 'new normal'? From our conversations with leaders and leadership teams, here are some of their key areas of focus.

## HAS THE TEAM GOT WHAT WE NEED FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD?

The crisis put into sharp focus people's strengths and their weaknesses. It highlighted those who stepped up, as well as those who retreated into comfort zones. Leadership teams built on traditional strengths configurations may have struggled to lead effectively and deliver the value needed.



[Bill McDermott](#) of ServiceNow said, "A crisis also forces you to reflect on big-picture questions, such as, "What are we? Who are we? What are we really good at?" Don't focus in a crisis on all the things that you need to figure out. Focus on the things that you know you're really good at, and amplify, illuminate and drive those."

### Key considerations leadership teams are reviewing:

- *What is the natural talent mix in the team?*
- *What skills, capabilities and strengths have we developed, or could we learn?*
- *What skills, capabilities and strengths would be more effective for us to bring in from outside the team?*

## UNDERSTANDING STRENGTHS AND ABILITIES

Identifying the strengths and capabilities of a leadership team and reflecting on the mix needed to achieve the organisations strategic goals, should be a priority for the leader. Strengths and capability assessment tools such as Extraordinary Leader, Strengthsfinder and Barrett LVA can help to provide unbiased observations on the current leadership team dynamic and identify any gaps.

From our discussions with leaders, some leadership team talents and abilities are at a premium given the current challenges. These include:

- A strategic focus - discerning patterns to identify obstacles and then process those patterns to circumnavigate them and achieve success.

### Key questions to consider for your own team make-up

- How have we changed individually and as a collective over the past 6 months?
- What skills and capabilities have we most relied on in our team?
- What will we need over the next 6 months? Year?



- The ability to connect ideas that other people cannot, to create new perspectives and uncover new opportunities.
- Not losing sight of the goal or getting distracted in its implementation – having a natural focus and the ability to follow things through to a successful outcome.



Whilst a focus on individual strengths is good, it's also important to look at how these translate in the team as a collective. Diversity of thinking, skills and capabilities all focused on the overall effectiveness of the team can create a powerful and positive impact within an organisation.

In a recent interview [Pedro Pizarro](#), CEO of Edison International, who leads one of the most diverse boards in the S&P 500 said, "You need diversity of thought to look at problems from different angles and to have different answers and solutions."

## THE LEADER'S SELF-AWARENESS

The survival and risk mitigation activities of many organisations found that 'top down' leadership approaches weren't always best placed to unleash the agility suddenly required. In contrast to traditional control and argument-led cultures, building the following created quicker and better results:

- Greater inclusivity
- Deeper relationship bonds
- Emotional agreement amongst teams

Merryck's President and Head of Services, Americas, [Harry Feuerstein](#), firmly believes that it's important for leaders to pivot (not panic) in order to find opportunities in the current environment. He stressed, "this absolutely is the time when you've got to rely on your people for solutions."



[John Donahoe](#), CEO of ServiceNow believes leaders are more successful when "you have self-awareness about your strengths and weaknesses. Where do I need to improve? How do I compensate for areas that are not my particular strengths with my team?... It's in adversity that self-awareness really makes a difference." To deliver value, he also emphasises the importance for leaders to have a constant thirst for learning – questioning, probing and being curious.

## BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF TRUST

Trust within the team is paramount for sustainable success, particularly when the team faces adversity and change as many do now. It can take time to build, but it is worth the investment. It enables robust challenge and makes team members more comfortable to tackle the tougher conversations that are needed.

With trust in place the team mindset switches from the individual to the collective – a shared purpose and commitment to the success of the organisation. At Merryck, we use various tools to foster greater trust within leadership teams. In doing so, we explore key drivers such as an individual's capabilities, their reliability, their familiarity and the emotional connection others have to them. Without investing time to understand colleagues' needs and motivations, it is hard to build respect let alone trust.

### *Key questions to consider for your own team*

- What level of trust do we have in our team?
- How could we deepen trust amongst the team?
- How often do we work as a collective rather than as individuals?
- Is our time focused on collective accountability or turf wars?
- In the new digital environment and with the different social dynamic it brings, how can we strengthen trust amongst the team?



[Pedro Pizarro](#), CEO of Edison International, also said about his leadership team, “We need to be grounded in mutual trust that we’re here for each other and the company and the broader objectives.”

## SUMMARY

High performance will be influenced by the sum of a leadership team’s parts coming together well and effectively. Working as a collective helps teams successfully accelerate strategy, mitigate risk, increase scale, achieve results and deliver value to all their stakeholders. Unlocking thinking and energy is important here, and this happens when you build trust within the team.

With trust at its core, effective leadership teams can:

1. Create greater clarity and focus around the purpose and outcomes the team and business needs to achieve
2. Build cohesion and engagement amongst the team and with critical stakeholders.
3. Foster agility and innovation to enable speedy execution and innovation.

Over the coming weeks we’ll explore each of these 3 points in series of blogs. In the meantime, here are some questions to prompt discussion in your own organisation.

- How can we turn the crisis to our organisation’s advantage?
- What collective value is created by our leadership team?
- Do we have the right skills and capabilities in our leadership team, for the journey ahead?

### **About Merryck & Co.**

*Because leadership is the “How” of strategy®, Merryck & Co. helps businesses accelerate the impact of leadership. We are a global executive coaching & mentoring firm made up of experienced CEOs and top business leaders who bring an operator’s lens to leadership development and effectiveness.*

*After a period where leadership teams have been operating at speed and at scale virtually, and as teams regroup and consider their organisation’s purpose in the months and years ahead, Merryck is helping them deliver greater impact and value.*

*Merryck Mentors partner with you and act as catalysts for Transformation, bringing the unspoken into the room, helping you identify insight and have the courage to challenge your status quo. We meet you where you are and guide your team where you need to go.*

### **To arrange a conversation contact Merryck & Co.**

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