

Do the Next Right Thing

Description

There is a song, made famous by the Disney movie *Frozen II*, that talks about doing the next right thing. The song basically says that things are dark, and when you don't know what to do, it's really easy to get overwhelmed. All we can do is focus on the next right thing. All we can do is take one small step at a time and hope for the best.

This is a message that resonates greatly right now. We are living in unprecedented times, and none of us knows what the future looks like. If you're a leader, you might feel that you're lost in the darkness and don't know what to do. In "normal" times, there is a fair amount of long-range planning you can do. Maybe you can still do a little of that. But in situations like this, you will be making many decisions by the minute.

Working this way is definitely not easy for many leaders! We leaders tend to be personality types that want to be in control, to manage the world around us, and to know with reasonable certainty what will happen next. Not being able to is uncomfortable, to say the least. Yet breaking things down into small, manageable steps is a smart leadership practice even in the best of times.

When we focus on doing the next right thing in the moment, over time, we usually find that the culmination of small good decisions serves us well. Most big success is really a series of many small decisions to do the next right thing.

This is not to say that you won't make some missteps. You will hit some bumps (just like always). And there are no easy answers in many cases.

The most powerful thing you can do is to stay focused on a hopeful future. If you aren't careful, the uncertainty and anxiety around what "could" happen may consume you and impact your decision-making capacity. Right now, more than ever, businesses and communities need thoughtful, clear-headed leaders.

Also, hope and positivity are contagious, just like fear. When you model this kind of behavior for employees, you help them overcome fear and do their best work as well. This will make it more likely that your business will weather this challenge and be well positioned to thrive once this crisis has passed and things open back up. A few tips:

- Share your "next right thing" strategy with your team. Narrate that things are changing quickly so there is no long-term plan to follow. You (and they) will be taking things day by day for a while.
- Communicate daily with people. This is always important, but in times like these, it is even more crucial. What you told them last week may not be true this week! Make sure that you're keeping them in the loop on what the next right thing is, right now.
- Empower employees to make decisions. Things need to happen faster now, so (within reason) suspend the need for people to ask permission. This is especially true for customer-facing people. How

your company treats customers really matters now. Ask them to also focus on just doing the next right thing when making decisions.

- Be kind to yourself and others. We're all struggling in various ways. People will forever remember how you made them feel.

Though it looks different at the moment, life goes on. We must go on too, one foot after the other, one right thing after the other.

Hard times show us who we are. When we're forced out of our comfort zone—when we're unsettled—is when the greatest personal growth happens. This too shall pass—and when it does, we can emerge stronger and wiser than before.

Date Created

April 6, 2020

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