

5 priorities for CEOs to manage during a crisis

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March 16,
2020



When it comes to **crisis management** — whether it's the Dow dropping 1,000 points or a work stoppage decimating your supply chain — the only way to handle it is by embracing the chaos.

“When you have the courage to take action, you not only see what you’re capable of, you see what is possible, and you continue to get stronger and more innovative.” —Corinne Hancock, Vistage Speaker

Chaos is what happens when your reality differs from your expectations. If you look at it in that way, it gives you a place to work from. You’re not a victim of it. You’re actually in a place where you can take action.

And while that disruption can range from an inconvenience to a potential company-killer, it can also spark innovation and lead the way to greater success down the line. It’s just a matter of accepting that chaos comes with the territory.

You are never going to be chaos-proof, but you can be chaos-ready. There are certain things within our organizations and as CEOs that we can do to prepare for the chaos.

Here five crisis management priorities CEOs and business owners should focus on if — and when — they face a crisis based on Hancock's "*Chaos Model*" system.

1. Find clarity of mission.

First, figure out how your company is going to respond to this crisis. Start working with your team to find solutions to the immediate issue and put off trying to guess how this will affect your long-term plans.

It's not about the big picture anymore, it's bringing that big picture and vision and our big goals into this moment, this next day, this next week.

2. Assess and evaluate.

Executives need to quickly assess the impact the crisis is causing, evaluate the resources they have to work with, and determine what they'll need to accomplish their mission.

You have to do the research and find out what's actually real and what impact this crisis is actually having, not the perceived, potential fears of what could.

3. Get creative.

This is also an opportunity for executives to get creative in their problem-solving and test out new ideas and the crisis gives executives a chance to block out unnecessary distractions and hone in on the specific challenge.

It's the time when we create some of our most innovative solutions. We come up with new processes when people are pushed to try new things they've never tried before.

4. Get alignment versus agreement.

Once they've found a possible solution, executives should focus on getting their team on board. Some team members may not agree on whether it will be successful, and their participation is key to implementing.

You're never going to get your whole team to agree, especially in the midst of chaos, but you can align on the best solution for this moment to fulfill the mission, to solve the problem at hand.

5. Take action.

While implementing the plan seems simple and obvious, many executives hesitate, delaying their response to mull over other possibilities or attempt to project whether their solution will work.

You don't have time to keep talking about it. Stop wasting time and just do it. Everyone needs to stay focused on the solution rather than the problem.

By following these steps, executives can not only figure a way out of their crisis but come up with some new innovations that can revitalize their businesses.

Chaos truly makes you stronger. When you have the courage to take action, you not only see what you're capable of, you see what is possible, and you continue to get stronger and more innovative.

Corinne Hancock is an international aid worker who founded The Curiosity Project, which provides health and entrepreneurial opportunities in countries with limited resources.



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