

HOW TO ROLL THROUGH THE CRISIS LIKE A *Leader* BOSS



LEADERSHIP DURING TIMES OF CRISIS.
DISCOVER THE LESSONS FROM THE LEADERS OF TOMTOM,
GREAT PLACE TO WORK, USG PEOPLE, CORENDON &
BRANDEDU



BRANDED / U.



Leadership in times of crisis. It's all about trust.

2020 is the year that is marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the world there was a wave of insecurity, fear, new ways of working and lockdowns. Even now, COVID-19 has a huge impact on society, organizations and individuals. The insecurity is still here, the mental health cases are rising and people are seeking perspective.

2020 is the year that separates the great leaders, who are capable to keep their people together, from those who did not. Your leadership style makes the difference in how you roll through this crisis.

2020 is the year that showcases that the focus on trust, empathy and equality is fundamental to sustain a healthy organization, and in fact a healthy world.

2020 has shown that if you want to keep your organization successful you need great leaders. They need to be visible. They need to have a vision. They need to provide structure.

They need to care.

In this white paper we share the personal stories of leaders from organizations on which the COVID-19 pandemic has a huge impact. Discover the stories of location technology specialist TomTom, of research and consultancy firm Great Place To Work, of employment agency USG People and of travel organization Corendon. On the final page of this white paper we share the 3 main lessons learned.

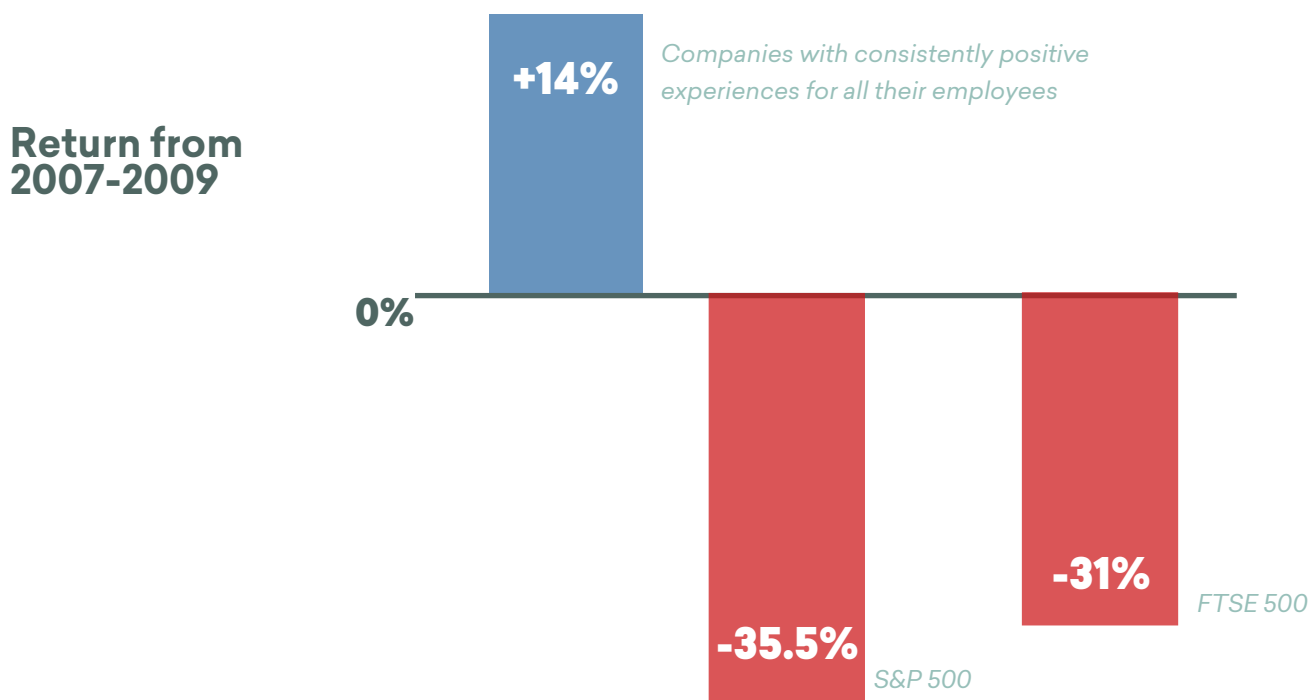
This paper is written by Anouk Minnes of Great Place To Work in collaboration with Nancy Poleon of BrandedU. Great Place To Work helps organizations to establish a foundation of trust, where everyone's potential can be maximized. BrandedU is a personal branding institute built for the acceleration of women in business.

Being better for people is better for business, especially in times of crisis.

The last time our global economy shook this hard was the Great Recession. That downturn resulted in a loss of more than \$2 trillion in global economic growth. What can we learn from the Great Recession to navigate today's challenges? Great Place To Work studied its database from 2007 to 2009 to see what employee experiences could predict about a company's success during economic downturns.

The research uncovered a hopeful finding: organizations that were people-first, for all their people, soared during the last recession. Companies with consistently positive experiences for all their employees—including people from historically marginalized groups—posted a remarkable 14.4% gain during 2007-2009, the same period that the S&P 500 lost 35.5% and the FTSE 100 lost 31%. In short, more humane companies proved more resilient and ultimately more profitable.

And we're seeing the start of that story again...





Corinne Vigreux Co-founder TomTom

We spoke to Corinne about the importance of trust, the six lessons for leaders during times of crisis and how young female talent can be empowered (by men). [Page 5](#)



Michael C. Bush Global CEO Great Place To Work

We spoke to Michael about finding your purpose, putting people first and the art of listening. Discover 3 insights on how you can improve your own leadership style. [Page 10](#)



Marion van Happen COO USG People

We spoke to Marion about how COVID affected her style of leadership. Discover tips to improve your leadership style and how you can stay connected in an online world. [Page 19](#)



Atilay Uslu Owner Corendon

We spoke to Atilay about entrepreneurship in times of crisis, the importance of having a network outside your own network and his view on female leadership. [Page 25](#)



Nancy Poleon Owner BrandedU

We spoke to Nancy about inspirational female leaders and the importance of visibility. Discover what we can learn from Andrew Cuomo, Stacey Abrams and Jacinda Adern. [Page 29](#)

CORINNE VIGREUX

CO-FOUNDER
TOMTOM



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You need to put people on the
agenda”

“It’s all about trust. The culture that TomTom has created over the past years, makes them strong during this pandemic. The way we were working, the trust we give to the people, turns out to be the best foundation to keep going throughout this crisis”. We talked with Corinne Vigreux (co-founder of TomTom) about the importance of trust, the six lessons for leaders during times of crisis and how young female talent can be empowered (by men).

When the pandemic started, it was like testing a marriage. If you have a strong base, you are going to come out of a crisis stronger. If the base is a bit shaky and the trust is not there, then it is going to be a problem. TomTom’s culture was already based on trust. We empower. We trust our people to do their job. I suppose it was reinforced during this pandemic. And on the whole, colleagues really appreciated the fact that we were very visible throughout the crisis. The engagement of all of our employees was and remains very high, the highest we have ever had. Trust is so important in these times.

Corinne shares 6 lessons about leadership during a crisis:

1. Leaders: it’s not about you

As a leader: it is not about you. You need to be a facilitator. I like leaders who, like Angela Merkel, are working for the greater good and not for herself. This kind of leaders are not putting themselves first. They are putting the cause first. As a leader, you need to take people with you. And you can only take people with you, if they believe in what you do.

2. Have empathy and go back to the humanity of things

Show empathy and understand what people are going through, and pay attention to people's different circumstances. We have, for instance, 1,000 people in India, many of whom had poor internet connections at home. We also know that for some of our younger employees it is not easy to find a quiet place to work from home, as they may live in a shared house.

It is time for leaders to make sure that everybody is ok. We quickly set people up with computers at home, and they could pick up things like chairs from the office. We made sure that everybody was looked after. In our meetings we also paid extra attention to the more vulnerable people. We just kept an eye on everyone.

3. Be visible

You need to be visible. You need to show that you are there and you are in the same situation (working from home). There also was a lot of anxiety about job security. TomTom was lucky enough to go into the crisis well capitalized, which means we had no real worries in terms of cash flow. We kept investing, recruiting and onboarding people, particularly in technical roles.

4. Put People as an agenda item

The level of anxiety and insecurity at this time in the year is affecting people a lot more than during the first phase of the lockdown. I think in March it was kind of new and the days were getting longer, it was sunny.

For this reason, "People" is an agenda item for every meeting: is everybody feeling ok? And do we have anybody with issues that we feel we need to pay special attention to? This is becoming a bigger part of conversations than it was before.

5. Pay attention to newcomers

We decided to give people the opportunity to go to the office if they really want to. Not because the management wants them to be there, but because they can see someone else. We have onboarded young people continually from March, including from abroad. They do not have a network or their family with them. Seeing another human being in the office is a valuable thing. We have an office of 1,200 people, maybe 10 of them are going to the office. It is corona proof.

6. Make priorities clear

Your leadership style needs to be very precise. Big vision is fine, but you want to give defined guidelines. The priorities need to be really clear. As leaders we need to take anxieties and problems away. Try to limit the level of ambiguity and be predictable. I think as a leader, you do not want to surprise people, you want to stay positive.

“It is time for leaders to make sure that everybody is ok.”

Corinne Vigreux



About female leadership

Make men mentors for women

If you want to have an impact, you need to be at the top of the tree. TomTom is trying to identify young female talents and coach them. In my opinion women should be mentored by men. If they do, the men will want them to succeed and they will be their best advocates. Young women need to find a man in the organization who believes in her potential, who has her back and who is going to be a sponsor for her.

In this way we can give them a stage. As an example, we recently had one of our women, from the engineering team, speak in front of 3,000 people. Now she is known for who she is. You need to help them to give them a voice, give them a platform and give them credibility as well.

We need to keep going

We are all in the same boat, but some of us have a bigger boat than others. Let's face it. I have a house where I can move around, and I can buy food. At the same time, I'm very concerned by what is happening and very concerned about inequality, because that's what I am busy with in my spare time.

Don't lose sight of the bigger picture I try to keep all the plates spinning and the people at TomTom, my team and the strategy going. I do not want to get too distracted. If I do that in a good way, I can preserve jobs for everyone. We keep recruiting talent and we keep motivating our team, keep showing that together we can get out of this crisis and that we need to keep honoring our customer contracts. We are working on really cool stuff. We need to keep that going. That's the best way to protect yourself against a crisis.

**It is a time to reflect. A time to lead.
And a time to stand up to your responsibility.**

MICHAEL C. BUSH



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People are only going to follow
leaders that they trust”

What does a 15-minute talk of Barack Obama reveal about true leadership? Join our conversation with Michael C. Bush (global CEO of Great Place To Work) about finding your purpose, putting people first and the art of listening. A personal story with three insights on how you can improve your own leadership style.

Barack Obama & the act of true leadership

“One day, while being on a business task force, I got to watch Barack Obama at the White House doing his every Monday 15-minute meeting with everyone outside on the loading dock. Presidents in the US usually do that for about 2 or 3 months and then they stop. He did it through both terms.

On this day, he walks out on the dock and he says: “Hello everyone. I got a few things to say. All of you have phones that the people are paying for. One of you sent a text last night saying: “Meet me at the bar, there are going to be lot of women there”. The people did not send us here for this, to be using their devices to “meet women”. We need to talk about our purpose, the nation, what we are here to do and our mandate. We need to stay focused on those things and do not use the tools that the people gave us for your personal matters.”

He left and I was so moved by his teaching: holding people accountable, but he did not call anyone out, and talking about purpose. It turned out that on that day, he was about to launch the strike to get Osama Bin Laden. This is a man who was involved in taking the biggest risk in his presidency. The thing that would get him another term or not. And he took 15 minutes to come out and talk to people about purpose.

I know a lot of busy people. No one’s busier than he was at that time. It would have been easy to say “Hey, I have got something really important to do. I’ll see you next Monday”.

He did not do it.

He put the people first.

This was the strongest act of leadership I had ever seen.”

What can we learn from this kind of leadership?

Michael shares three insights.

1. A purpose that almost seems like fantasy

A great leader is inspiring. The reason why they are inspiring is because when you hear their life's purpose, you are moved emotionally and attracted to it. A purpose driven leader is trying to achieve a purpose which almost seems like a fantasy because they are trying to achieve something that does not exist today.

Their purpose does not appeal to everyone, but they are not really worried about that because they know what's important to them. When that vision becomes reality, it's going to be better for the world. It's going to be better for everyone, including those who don't agree with the vision.

Everyone is going to be lifted by this purpose, not just some people. It's going to be a purpose that is a for all purpose. The inspiration has to be such that others are willing to follow.

For the most time of your life, you do not know your purpose

I believe that everybody is a leader. That is why it is important to try figure out what your purpose is. In my experience purpose is something that, for most of your life, you do not know what it is. You think you know, but you don't. What you can do is pay attention to it. It's almost like get outside of yourself and look at yourself.

I have a purpose, that is making organizations great places to work for all and throughout my life that has been the purpose. I have been on a mission around equity and inclusion as a very young person. I think that people who interact with me know and feel that I have that sense of purpose. My closest friends in my life are five guys that I've known since I was eight years old. They know my purpose. When they talk about me, I learn about myself because they're on the outside looking.

When you're in your 20s and you're certain of your life's purpose. I'd say you're probably wrong. Self-discovery is required. Quiet moments are required. Self-reflection is required.

2. Build Trust by Listening

People are only going to follow people that they trust. A leader has to move in a way, has to speak in a way and has to listen in a way that builds trust. This starts from day one. The first impression is (often) a physical one. But once the mouth opens something else happens and trust is beginning to be built by the first words that you say. When you to work together it continues: Are you building trust while you are listening? Are you building trust when you are developing someone? And do people feel cared for?

Why it is important to know someone's pets name

In terms of leadership behaviors, I have worked really hard at listening to people and being in a conversation. As a leader I am trying to be more vulnerable through these virtual experiences than I was six months ago. And show that this is deteriorating my mental health like anyone else's. I share what I am trying to do about that and also learn from other people.

We have a meeting in the US every other Monday at the launch pad (we use this rocket ship metaphor about going to where no one's ever gone before). I always ask at the end of the meetings: Are you doing your meditation? Are you getting out for your walks? Are you wearing a mask? And what are you doing to take care of yourself? These are not suggestions. These are requirements. And sometimes we can say these things that are actually suggestions to ourselves.

I'm now writing notes to people: "Thank you very much for this", "I really like the way that you handled that" or "Thanks for your preparation on that call". These means ten times more than they did in the old world before COVID.

Let's talk about family

I have a list of all my employees and their addresses. I am doing my best not only on anniversaries and birthdays, but beyond that to try and touch everybody. The other thing that I'm doing since COVID is accelerating the number of conversations with people about their families. I want to know: what does family mean to you and how are you going to get through the next couple of months? What is it like not being able to see your mom for six months? And what can we do?

I now know the names of the pets of people. My chief of staff has a pet cat, Peppercorn, and she could not go to the vet for like two months. I know this now. I wouldn't have known this before.



**“A leader
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Michael C. Bush

Women are great listeners, because men are used to talking all the time

I believe that the foundation of being a great leader is being a great listener. Women in organizations are really great listeners because most of them have been in male dominated environments and men talk all the time. Their experience has helped women because they have been forced to. They have developed this ability to listen, to observe and to know who they are dealing with and still find a way to navigate, to get to success.

There's a small percentage of women who have unfortunately taken on some of the attributes of their male mentors. Those women are just like men and they are not really bringing anything new. But most do not do that. They actually have taken this ability to listen, which is required for collaboration.

You can't collaborate if you don't listen. That is why men, generally speaking, are not good at collaboration. They think it takes too much time. If you don't have a purpose. It doesn't matter. If you're just trying to achieve a financial goal for this quarter, you're not pursuing purpose.

A strength of a leader is to not know everything

Listening is required to have empathy. You can't have empathy if you're not listening and paying attention to what people are saying, what they're not saying and their body language.

There is a controversy on this about whether or not women should speak with a question mark tone on the end, like "well, don't you think that perhaps we could should consider this?" People may say that you should not do that because men never do that. You're right, men never do that. But whether you should or shouldn't do it. I think that you're talking about the wrong thing because what that woman is doing is living in the question.

The expression of uncertainty actually unblocks everyone. It creates the opportunity for everyone to be uncertain, which is a strength of a leader is to not know everything. That's where innovation comes from. But, of course, there's a reaction to that way of speaking because people will say, well you're uncertain and you should be like a man. I think that if you think that woman's less certain and therefore a less effective leader because of tone, at the end of a statement, it says something about you.

3. You need to have skills

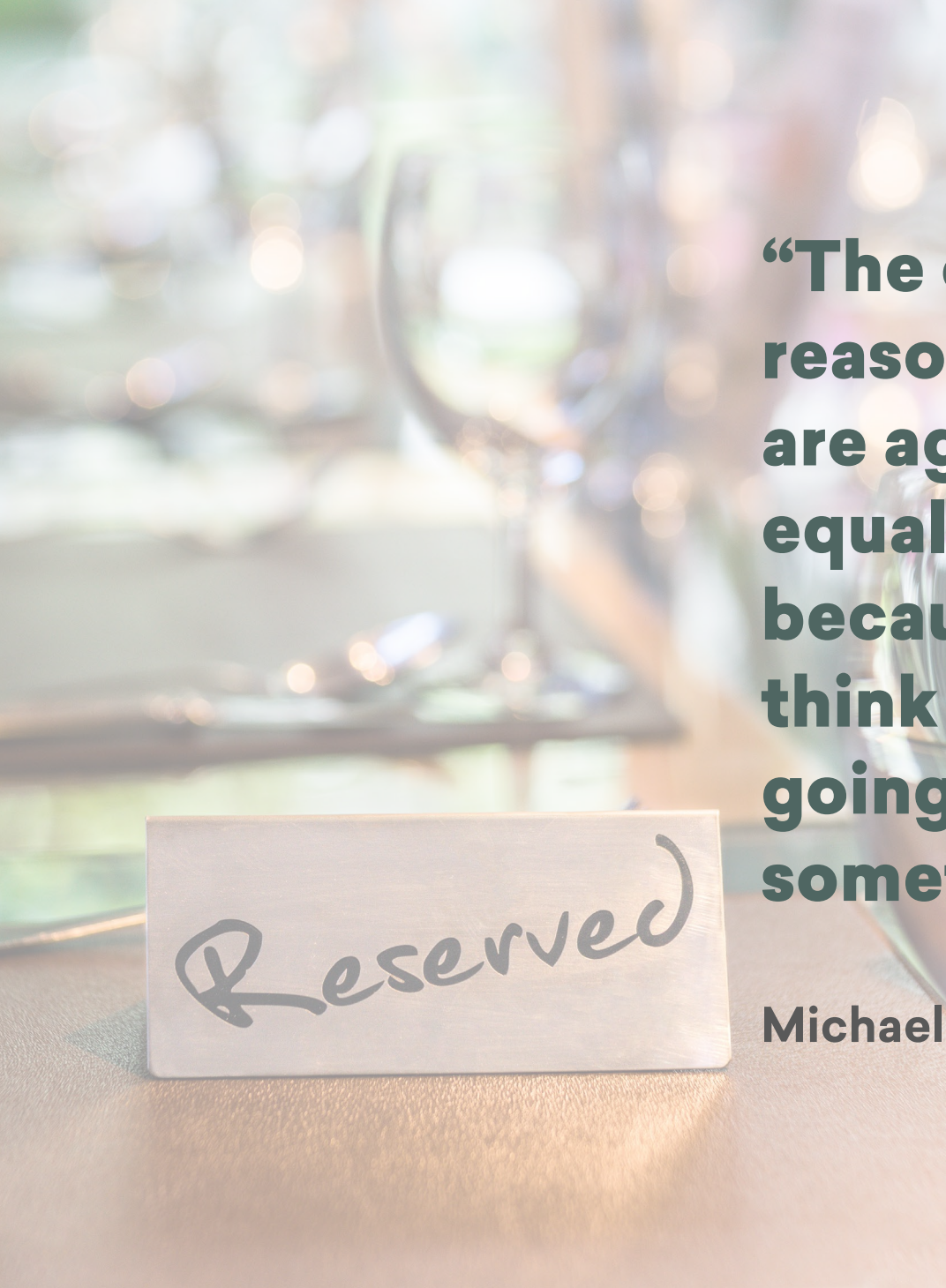
Great leaders are competent. They have skills. They know how to hold people accountable. They know the importance of measurement and accountability. They understand financials. They understand the areas of their expertise around products and services. If you are just this purpose driven person who cannot really do anything, you are probably a politician. In organizations, you have to have both. You have to have skills and leadership qualities.

In society, you can have political leaders where one group of people really like one leader and another group of people really like the other leader. We certainly have it in the US at this moment.

You cannot have that in organizations. Everybody needs to be aligned with that leader. You want 90 percent of the people believing that the leader has good judgment, cares about them as a person, is making good decisions and it's involving the people in decisions that are going to affect their work.

Don't mistake a speech impediment for a lack of intelligence

As an example: I had a CFO in my career, a few companies ago who had a speech impediment. He was like number two in his class in finance. And because of his stutter, he couldn't get a job. That was a goldmine for me because I hired him, and I never met anyone better. People would mistake a speech impediment for a lack of financial intelligence. They will make this judgment based on something that has nothing to do with reality. He is a genius, but the world didn't see it.



“The only reason they are against equality, is because they think they are going to lose something.”

Michael C. Bush

Everybody likes fairness. Even those who are not for (gender) equality. The only reason they are against it, is because they think they are going to lose something. There are only so many seats at the table. And if it is 50/50, there are fewer seats for me. The data shows that when you are more inclusive, GDP and all financial metrics get better. It means that there will be more seats at every table.

In every nation you can see the GDP growth when women are introduced into the workforce. The only group that loses are incompetent men. If you are willing to get the best talent, don't look at are those that are less talented. When you are less competent, men are replaced by more competent women. The men who are still involved, they make more money. They do even better.

Don't spend 10 seconds with someone who does not believe in your purpose

Not everyone believes in your purpose. There are people who believe it and there are people that are curious about it. All of your work should just be on those two groups. I would not spend 10 seconds with someone who doesn't believe in *Great Place To Work For All*.

I can tell if someone is genuinely curious when they ask me a question. If somebody asked: "Michael, this gender equality thing, can you pull some data together for me that I can use to talk to my team?" – That is a curious person.

When you are trying to pursue a purpose, every day you are going to meet disappointment. Be able to sustain yourself through meditation, walking, exercise, reading, music, connecting with an old friend or calling that cousin you really don't like. These are the things that are necessary to kind of break things open, get you a different perspective, which gives you the energy and the fuel to keep doing what you are doing.

You don't want to hang around people that drain you. Delete that negative energy from your phone. Just eliminate it and keep moving around people who give you energy.

MARION VAN HAPPEN

COO
USG PEOPLE



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‘Leadership means taking action
without losing sight of yourself’

USG People's mission is to help people find meaningful employment. That means letting people do work that they enjoy, and that contributes to the greater good. We talked to Marion van Happen, COO at USG People. What impact has the pandemic had on the temporary services organisation, her vision of leadership, and her own leadership style? And how does she maintain a connection with their employees so they can continue innovating?

USG recently reached a milestone of providing 1,000 employees for the municipal health services. The people inside the company are proud of that achievement, as it allows the organisation to help the thousands of people who are tested every day. It also provides meaningful work for temporary staffers in these challenging times.

Leadership: be yourself

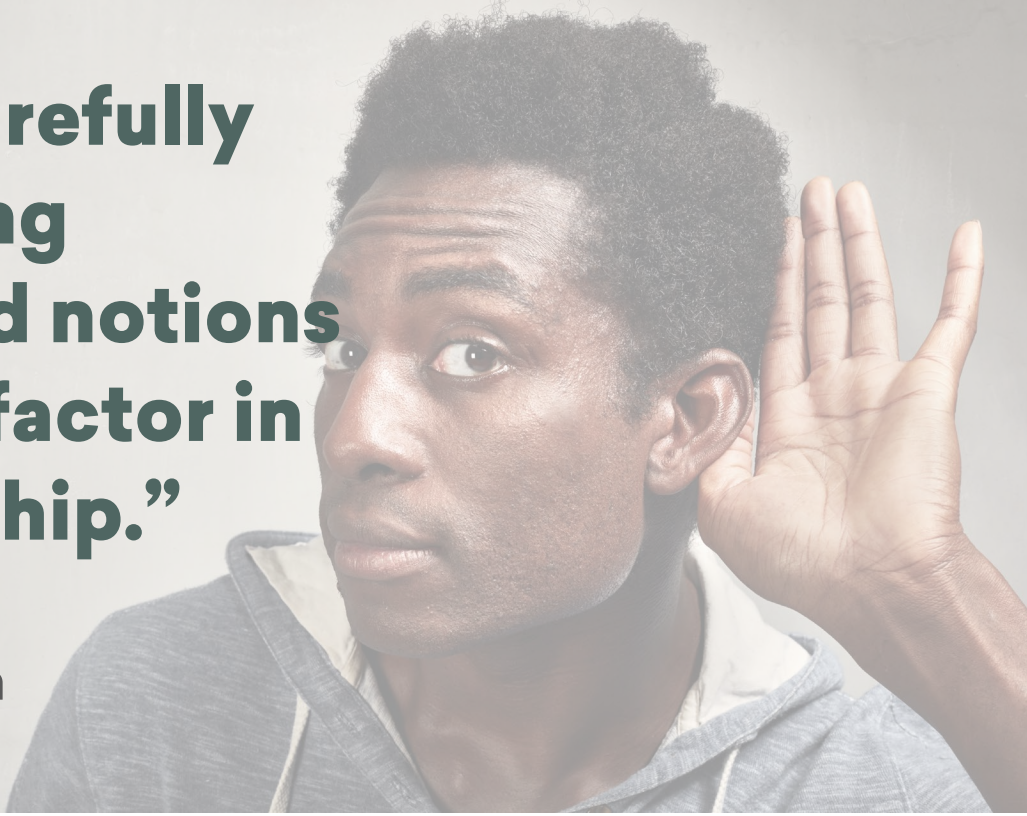
1. Take action

To me, leadership literally means leading the way and taking responsibility. It is vital for you to take concrete actions, such as communicating effectively. But at the same time, it means you have to be accessible as a person.

My personal example is Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand. She isn't afraid to say what needs to be done, but she also communicates like she's talking to a friend. She also uses a variety of communications channels, not just traditional media.

“Listening carefully and not having preconceived notions is a decisive factor in good leadership.”

Marion van Happen



2. Be true to yourself

People watch how a leader portrays themselves. If I were to act like an authoritarian, don't ask for people's opinions, don't listen to input or don't dare to delegate, then that would be a different style of leadership than what I use now. The main thing is to stay true to yourself.

Among the men in the Board of Directors here at USG, it's important that I act like who myself. I don't 'act like a man' or pretend to be something I'm not; I just am myself.

When I started, I noticed that I'd reply faster or literally use different words, but once I realised that, I went back to doing what feels most comfortable to me. That also sets an example for others: it's okay to be yourself, the important thing is what you bring to the table.

3. Practice what you preach

Listening carefully and not having preconceived notions is a decisive factor in good leadership. It makes people feel like they can actually share their opinions. They can also expect me to act upon their opinions.

If you do what you say and say what you do, you create a foundation of trust. It's about practicing what you preach. I try to find a some way to support everything I think or do, but I don't always succeed at that. So be open and transparent about it.

What effect has COVID-19 had on the organisation and your leadership?

I initially switched into control mode. Some business units in our organization were faced with large numbers of people losing their jobs all at once. They included people that worked at Schiphol, but also the students working at places like the Apenheul or at the musical Soldaat van Oranje. We were faced with a crisis situation, so you naturally switch into action mode to solve immediate problems.

Finding solutions together

To me, it was important to look for a concrete solution: what are we facing, and what effect does it have on my team? It's good to listen to the answers to those questions, and then to communicate clearly. In so doing, I tried to create a shared route and to give everyone an opportunity to suggest solutions. You notice that you coordinate more with one another, and you have to communicate much more effectively. But you also have to make decisions fast, and you have to dare to make changes.

Don't stay silent during a crisis

Until March we were looking at a candidates' market, where the candidates were often in short supply. Now it's more of a clients' market, with fewer clients looking for staff and a much larger group of potential candidates available. That means we have to change how we manage the business.

You shouldn't stay silent, even though we're in a crisis situation. For example, right now digitisation is accelerating. We've been thinking about expanding the digitisation of some of our departments and implementing new systems for some time, and now we've brought those plans forward to anticipate developments. Our guiding star is still the same, but we've noticed that we're in for quite a few changes in the near future. The traditional temporary services company is going to be totally different five years from now.

How do you maintain contact with all the social distancing measures?

The focus is on constantly communicating. That's different from how we did things before. As a large corporation, we often got bogged down in memos and paperwork. Now we've switched to other methods, such as video calls and webcasts, to find more personal contact. We also organise virtual outings and get-togethers to help the teams stay connected.

Right now, especially in the autumn and winter, it's mainly about displaying empathy. Asking people how they're doing. Helping people who are struggling psychologically or have difficulty going from meeting to meeting at home. You have to create opportunities to talk about those subjects.

Encourage people to suggest ideas, even during Zoom sessions. In the beginning, people tend to be more quiet. Back when we had face-to-face meetings, I would look at everyone or mention everyone by name. Now I try to do that during our online sessions as well.

What have you learned about yourself?

Every day, I think about the question: how can I take care of the people with whom I work, if I don't see them on a daily basis?

Of course, I had provided a great deal of leadership remotely before. We employ 2,000 people, and I definitely didn't see each of them every day. But as a team player, I have trouble with the feeling that it's not possible now. The two most important lessons I've learned over the past six months are:

- I'll never work for a company where I have to work entirely from home, and; I have to work together with people.
- During the first lockdown, with the children at home, I realised that teaching isn't a career for me, because I don't have the patience.

Motivating people is what drives me, and that's what I'll continue to do.

What tips do you have for other (female) leaders?

Female leaders should contribute to decision-making. They shouldn't ask themselves: am I allowed to contribute? Because just by asking that question you water down your contribution. Secondly, it's about the combination of empathy, a bit of creativity, and not losing sight of other people. Focus on the issues that are important for individuals and for the company. Celebrate successes, and honestly admit it when things aren't going well.

“Celebrate successes, and honestly admit it when things aren't going well.”

Marion van Happen



ATILAY USLU

OWNER
CORENDON



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I feel like a fish in water during
this crisis”

The travel industry had to make an emergency landing when COVID-19 ‘came ashore’ in the Netherlands in March. Airplanes were grounded and hotels stayed empty. So how does a tour operator deal with the situation? We spoke with Atilay Uslu, Corendon’s founder and Commercial Director. You’d expect that this period would give him sleepless nights. But the opposite is true: doing business in these times actually gives him energy. Discover a story of entrepreneurship, the importance of ‘networking outside your network’, and the drive to prove oneself.

Leadership means setting the example for the people who work with you. If you set a good example for your colleagues, then they’ll adopt your vision and your behaviour. I’m an entrepreneur in heart and soul. I want to make sure every room is booked. I’ve always found energy in setting up something from nothing, not in optimising what’s already there.

On entrepreneurship during the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus has crossed out everything we’ve built up so far. Now we have to fight for every customer and to fill every bed. To me, that’s real entrepreneurship. Every action is a reaction, and I love that. Fiddly entrepreneurship - shifting the helm of a huge container ship a degree to the left or a degree to the right - simply isn’t for me.

We prefer to promote people to leadership positions from inside Corendon. If we can’t find them internally, then we’ll look for them externally. What do we need? What profile should they have? And who’s the best I can find? Then I’ll call that person, have a good conversation, and the decision can be made fairly quickly.

Everyone’s facing insecurity today, and that is extremely stressful for some people. I’ve noticed that a lot of entrepreneurs have trouble with this second wave now, because winter is coming. What we lack as entrepreneurs is a sense of perspective. It’s okay if things are going bad for the moment, but we need a light at the end of the tunnel. How will we deal with travel in the future? How will we deal with hotels? And restaurants?

Doomsayers think that things will never go back to how they were. But I guarantee that once the pandemic is over, you won’t want to go on holiday twice; you’ll want to go four times.

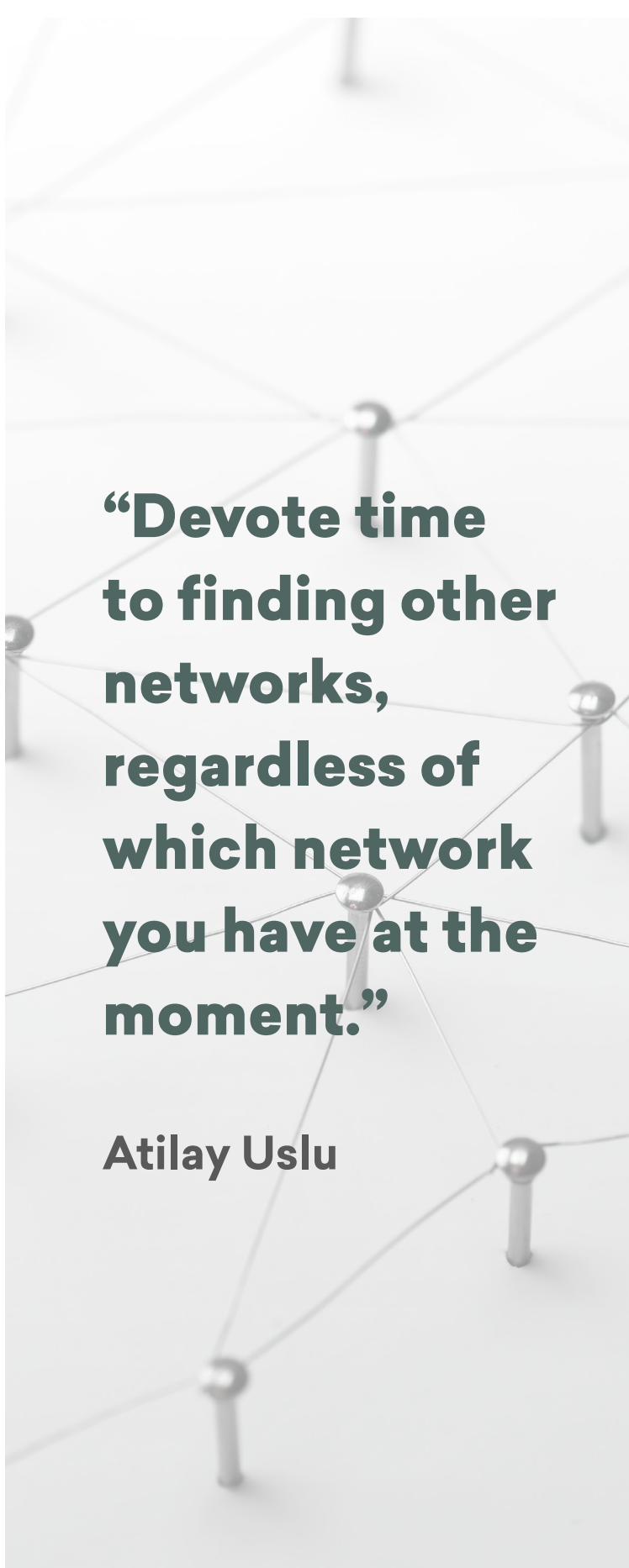
On diversity: networking outside your own network

My CEO Steven van der Heijden came to us from TUI, and he brought 12 of his confidants with him. They were all white people, and that's okay. I don't care what colour you are, as long as you're good at your job. Steven doesn't discriminate, but if your network only includes people who look like you, then that's the effect you'll get.

When I started from nothing, I also started my own network. Those people have grown along with me, and thanks to my background my network is a lot more colourful. I've done the same thing Steven did, but with a different community.

You need a network to make a career and to help your business grow. But be aware of who's in your network, and devote some time to finding other networks, regardless of which network you have at the moment.

For example, I was recently in one of our hotel's kitchens, where the Turkish staff played favorites. That's something I just can't stand, and I immediately put a stop to it. I always say: 'You have to be as good as the thief, but don't be tempted to become a thief yourself.' Just because someone has discriminated against you, doesn't mean you should discriminate against others.



**“Devote time
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Atilay Uslu

On women leaders: the problem with women is women, not men

Women all start out as good leaders. But the problem with women is other women, not men. If a woman works full-time, other women in the Netherlands will judge her for it. That's the problem that needs to be dealt with.

In the travel sector, 80% of the people are women and 20% are men. But very few women occupy the top positions. In our MT, we have more women than men. That wasn't a conscious choice. I've noticed that most women have more empathy than men. They're more likely to take on a mothering role; 'you are all my children'. They don't say that out loud, of course, but they do give that impression. That gives people a lot of confidence in them.

Women at the top: an urge to prove yourself

It's hard to find female talent, even though there's plenty out there. For example: Daan has a Bachelor's in Economics. His wife is a surgeon. She earns more than him. Once they have children, you'd think that the one who makes the most money would keep working. But often it's the man who works and the woman stays home. That's just the culture in the Netherlands. It's as simple as that.

I've noticed that a lot of women from immigrant backgrounds feel like they have more to prove. They want to achieve something, and they show it. Women from Dutch backgrounds don't have that urge as much, and if they make that choice other mothers at the playground will judge them for it. That's how I see the situation. So if you really want more women at the top, then you should hire more women from immigrant backgrounds.

NANCY POLEON

OWNER
BRANDEDU



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Become a team player and take on a leadership position in the team - That's what good leaders do.”

What impact has this crisis had on female leaders? You can find examples all over the world of countries with female leaders who are doing a good job in fighting the Corona virus. Why is that? And what can we learn from them? We'll end this whitepaper with a conversation with BrandedU owner Nancy Poleon. It's a story about visibility and the pursuit of a higher goal. The impact this has had on the American elections you'll discover in this story.

Empathy when times are tough

During this crisis two leaders have inspired me: Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand and Andrew Cuomo, the Governor of New York. Why? Because they were both visible. Jacinda held Zoom meetings and was constantly in the news. She provided updates and talked to people about their struggles. She made people feel like they weren't the only ones facing challenges.

She also made some tough calls. She was one of the first to close the borders with 1 goal in mind: 0% infections. That to me is real leadership: having a clear vision of what you want to achieve. I see her as a mother who sometimes has to be strict with her children: "we're having a tough time, but we're going to get through this together."

The importance of teamwork

I admire the fact that Jacinda and her cabinet gave up 20% of their salary. I've seen very few other leaders do that. Jacinda understands that it is proportionally unfair for you to continue to receive money when you have to fire people. I've seen women in my own network who have done the same and as a result, they didn't have to fire anyone. Many of the companies that have done it this way have achieved good things because they've created a culture of "we can do this together".

One of these women is Jayani Masthoff, founder of Goudvisie. During the crisis she, inspired by the Netflix series on Michael Jordan, decided to fully focus on the team spirit within her company. Michael Jordan, the basketball player says that his greatest successes came when he decided to become a team player and take on a leadership position in the team. That's what good leaders do.

I also found the daily updates by Andrew Cuomo very inspiring. He remained visible and communicated with New Yorkers by actively seeking out the media. People need someone to act as a cheerleader in times of crisis. They need someone who says: “We’re all going to get through this together”. Cuomo showed qualities like strength and empathy. And he spoke out against injustice. These qualities led to results: less people got the virus in New York.

He also showed his warm side when his brother (Chris Cuomo) interviewed him on CNN. Chris was in quarantine at home with Corona and during the interview Chris said to Andrew: “Call Mom”. It brought some much-needed humanity and lightness to the conversation. That’s also something leaders must do: show their human side.

People are fans of Jacinda and Andrew because they show human leadership every single time. Like when Jacinda took her child to parliament. Leaders need to show their soft side and that they’re having a tough time as well.

Leadership in the future

Visibility, humanity and vision are important for good leadership. Why should I follow you if I don’t know where we’re going? I think some leaders have no vision at all. They’re only concerned with making money and that’s no longer enough. You must have a vision of what you want to achieve with your organization.

Pursue a higher goal

Stacey Abrams is a wonderful example of this. Two years ago she wanted to be governor of Georgia. She didn’t win because many of the votes from black neighborhoods were not counted or registered. This led to a higher purpose: she wanted to make sure that the votes of those people also counted. And what happened in 2020? Biden defeated Trump in Georgia. Biden winning the election is partly due to Stacey Abrams. And that’s what I am seeing women leaders do: they’re not just concerned with their own happiness, instead they pursue a greater good for all.

3 lessons

1. Be visible

You need to show that you are out here.

In times of crisis people are seeking for support and structure. Communicate frequently and transparently.

2. Be human

You need to show that you care. People want to be heard and taken seriously.

Show that you struggle as well and pay attention that everybody is ok.

3. Be a visionary

You need to know where you are going to and you need to tell people what it is. In this way you can motivate people to work for a greater good.



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The mission of BrandedU is to bring women to the top of their fields by helping them develop their personal brand.

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