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mindful leadership solutions

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS: The impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic on U.S. organizations over the next 2-5 years

May 2020 study by Take Charge Consultants based on personal interviews with over 25 U.S. CEOs and COOs, information drawn from organizational, change and leadership experts, and research conducted by firms other than Take Charge during the Covid-19 pandemic

The findings at a glance

- Most CEOs and COOS anticipate long-term and significant organizational and societal change.

- The immediate challenges are clear, are being and have been addressed with a level of responsiveness and ingenuity that many have found impressive, and are not the focus of this study.

- Interim challenges (a few months to a year or so) vary, are being explored, and highlight different targeted short-term future paths. Survival is a key and current need for many organizations.

- Leadership now and in the new world will be critical.

- It is difficult to see beyond the next few months to a year (a period of survival for many). Longterm factors are taking shape, likely scenarios are not yet clear, and multiple viable future paths exist.

- The immediate CEO/COO wish list for future success is a crystal ball since the future is so uncertain at this point. Beyond that their hopes are as varied as their views of the future.

- A number of key takeaways provide the framework for immediate action taking. They highlight areas, that if addressed now, will help ensure future success.

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The future: Where you are determines what you see
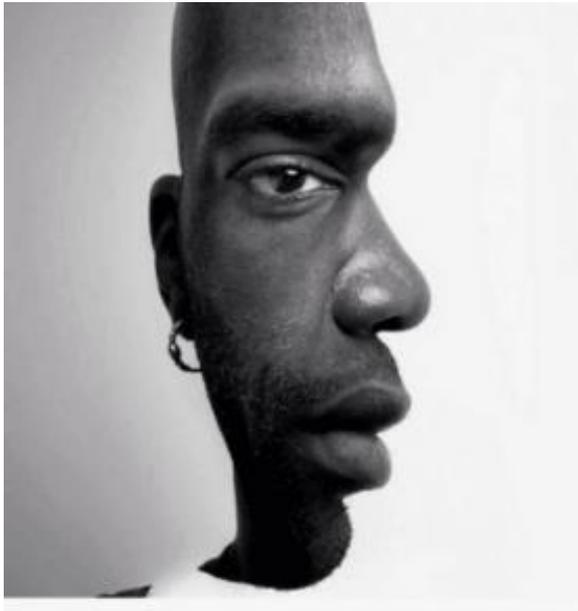
Profile or straight-on view?

What will be the future impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on US organizations? The majority of participants anticipate significant long-term organizational and societal change as a consequence of Covid. A small percentage (12%) of leaders question whether people can break through the instinctual yearning to go back to what is known and comfortable.

The challenges to success, and for many survival, depend on what they have experienced. What leaders believe is needed and what will happen is context dependent. In other words, where they sit determines what they see.

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Interim challenges

**For many, survival
is an immediate need**

Types of organizations Where they are / what they see	Where they need to focus short term Diagnosis, Rx and Remedy
Doing Business as Usual Operating as an essential business without significant change/strain	**Diagnosis**: Likely to survive **Rx:** Implement operational changes as environment shifts Be attuned to changes in markets, talent pools, suppliers and vendors as they shift, shrink, die or expand and act accordingly.
Shifting to/from remote Working remotely (or having significant staff working from home) and serving a somewhat stable market	**Diagnosis:** Tend to operations **Rx**: Make necessary decisions re: remote vs onsite Provide people and customers the tools and skills needed in the new remote/onsite environment. Implement operational changes as the environment shifts (see above).
Sitting without customers or serving a weak to dying market Experiencing significant market / customer impacts including the inability to serve the market or serving a market that is no longer buying, is shrinking, or is dying	**Diagnosis:** Critical - need to regain / reestablish relationship with market **Rx:** Mission shift Implement significant change to ensure survival by fundamentally changing **one** of three elements of mission (<u>What</u> you do, <u>Who</u> you do it for, or <u>How</u> you bring your products or services to market)
Experiencing significant upheaval Dealing with multiple, significant shifts in products/services, markets, and/or delivery modes	**Diagnosis:** Near death **Rx:** Recreate / regenerate / transform Determine new ways to provide value and recreate <u>what</u> you do, <u>who</u> you do it for, and <u>how</u> you bring value to the market you serve or will serve
Hero Orgs Providing 24x7 care, services or products while putting selves at risk, finding new ways to do core work and maximizing the use of people resources	**Diagnosis:** Post-op care/renewal followed by significant systemic change **Rx**: People first, then act with haste to capture learnings and make changes Tend to emotional, psychological, and interpersonal needs associated with Covid demands on the individual. Then work quickly to systemize and build on Covid innovations. Address emergent security concerns.

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Leadership will be critical

Most CEOs and COOS believe their role will remain stable i.e. to provide strategic foresight, communicate, network/influence, coach/groom talent, etc. A few noted the need for more emotional connection to people and the organization and/or the need to lead by being more intimately involved with the market, customers, employees and a potentially flatter organization.

The number and expectations of managers change dramatically

- Fewer managers. Increased span of control for those that remain.
- Increased responsibility for dealing with safety, health, and care of others (extends to the wellbeing and health of the greater community as well).
- Ability to communicate in ways that create security despite uncertainty – to bring calm and confidence to staff, to lead through ambiguity, and manage in ways that keep fabric of organization bound tightly together,
- Capacity to deal with balance and boundary issues – between employees and leaders / work / home / community,
- Ability to create and maintain a flexible, innovative organization/unit that acts with speed and confidence,
- Shift from managing the people who do the work to managing operations/programs/processes, driving and shaping the business (not simply equipping people to run it on auto pilot), integrating and coordinating continual change into operations while aligning and engaging a fluid, flexible diverse workforce comprised of employees/contractors/technology.
- The front-line supervisor role is recognized as critically important; they are the people in daily contact with those who do the work.

New or significantly enhanced skills needed in these areas

- Virtual communication, meeting, problem solving, and decision making
- Communication – strategic, operational, tactical and interpersonal (the ability to provide consistent, clear communication to a disperse audience working flex hours, both off and onsite, with different levels of availability in a fluid work environment with continually shifting needs)
- Accountability – building / creating / maintaining motivation, discipline and a strong results orientation in both self and others
- Empathy and HR-like skills needed to address the safety, health, and emotional needs of others
- Agility and the ability to create a sense of urgency in order to innovate, risk and fail, push work and decisions down and out, and provide the speedy responsiveness clients and stakeholders have come to expect

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Beyond Survival: What the future holds

The interim challenges (few months→few years)	The longer-term issues / questions	Potential future scenarios
Life comes to work along with people as they return and organizations deal with more, different, and more complex work/life/balance issues	**Where/how will people work and connect?**	**The org finally turns upside down** in recognition of those at the "bottom" and the value they deliver
The workforce is lean and fragile – stressed, afraid and shrinking as people opt out, work part-time, etc. At the same time, organizational expectations re: the care, health and safety of others explode.	**How will employee expectations change?**	**The workforce and organization are agile, collaborative, super lean, safety focused and dynamic**
Work itself is in a state of flux as things open/close, people work both here and there, policies change, markets shift, operations and technology change	**How will leadership change?**	**IT explodes and AI takes a strong foothold** creating new ways to connect, deliver and serve
New skills are needed (see previous page)	**How will skills change?** See previous page	**Leadership and power shift** to be distributed vs hierarchical
Loss of customers, vendors, partners – as they are forced to shutter their doors, move into new markets, drop/change products and services	**How will customers and customer relationships / expectations change?**	**Humanity evolves** to be interdependent and less self-oriented
Need for adaptability, agility and speed – to change as fast as markets change	**How will success be measured?**	**The economy transforms and our economic engine is rebuilt**
	What will be the new cultural norms?	**We breakdown before we break through**
	What will be the long-term economic impact and recovery?	**We are unable, unwilling, or uninterested in changing**

Click here for additional detail

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What CEOs / COOs wish for in order to excel in the new environment

- A quick recovery

- A+ staff. A commitment to never promoting/hiring someone into management without a proven record of "caring for people." Knowing that your team has the skill, courage and people skills to problem solve, innovate, and act with speed.

- Increased efficiency as we recognize and capitalize on what makes remote work so effective

- Less division / less competition / a fair and equal playing field

- The wisdom to lead, to be open and connected – to truly hear (rather than fail to listen), to stay open a little longer to truly understand alternative viewpoints, and as a consequence to be able to move us beyond our differences and bring out the best in others

- Enhanced/new technology that enables people to better connect, keep up with the rapid pace of change, and swiftly deliver outcomes

- To be the first to unlock the communication challenges in the new world

- To have the courage and resources to keep staff and their families safe

- Better support/structure/guidance regarding the "soft" issues – people, culture, safety

- More immediate strategic communication from customers and/or the market so that we have clearer insight into how we are performing at any moment in time

- To grow my strengths even stronger

- Outside help getting our executive leadership team through one of our critical issues (the ROI of simply breaking through would be priceless)

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Key takeaways

- **Executive shift IS needed.** While the CEOs and COOs with whom we spoke don't see the need for significant shift in their roles, others see the need for a radical shift at the top for any hope of future success. Their concern: The stodgy, detailed, slow moving and well-worn processes for decision making, risk taking and action taking will keep organizations from innovating, acting and ultimately surviving.

- **A shrinking middle is a likely a blessing and a curse.** With fewer managers looking over shoulders, people are freer to innovate and do work without impediment. At the same time, the middle is a role historically and heavily relied upon during times of change and for the implementation of significant change.

- **The markets hold the answers.** To succeed organizations must be able to hear what's needed, be quick to adopt/adapt/create (i.e. be agile), and make things happen. Those that do have a chance. Those that don't are taking chances.

- **The markets and people inside organizations aren't going to buy the hype anymore.** The pandemic sparked authentic in-the-moment communication as people struggled to figure things out. It's that kind of communication – authentic, personal and transparent – that makes a difference in a remote and impersonal world.

- **Failure is an option.** It's a natural byproduct of innovation and responsiveness. Organizations and their leaders must learn to let it happen, take appropriate steps once it does, learn and quickly move on.

- **The new experts / heroes / leaders are taking shape, emerging and rising.** Have you noticed? What can you do to help them?

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Two Take Charge Resources to help

Breakthrough Change session

Enables resolution of key challenges and development of high level business plans in a 1-1.5 day strategy session. Results in significant movement/progress/goal achievement in as little as 6-12 months.

- Uses agile meeting, strategy development and decision making processes
- Involves key constituents in ways that ultimately help them get you to where you need to be
- Involves employees who ready the rest for organization for buy in and change
- Enables you to move forward with speed, simplicity and agility.
- Can be facilitated onsite or virtually

Click here for additional information.

A Manager's Guide to Transition and Transformation

Provides targeted, actionable resources & personalized help.

Includes a guidebook, training (live online and virtual), daily tips, and access to an expert consultant/coach so that you or your managers master the skills and strategies needed for success including:

- Virtual meeting, problem solving, decision making
- Strategic, operational, tactical and interpersonal communication to meet the needs of a dispersed audience in a fluid environment
- Accountability (how to build motivation, discipline and results orientation, in both self and others, to ensure prioritization, focus and delivery
- Empathy and HR-like skills to address the safety, health, and emotional needs of others
- Agility and a sense of urgency to innovate, risk and fail, push work and decisions down and out, and provide the speedy responsiveness clients and stakeholders have come to expect.

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