

Chapter by Kylie Denton

I am honoured to have been asked to write a chapter for this special lockdown edition, and to be able to share my insights on how to manage and lead in the current climate.

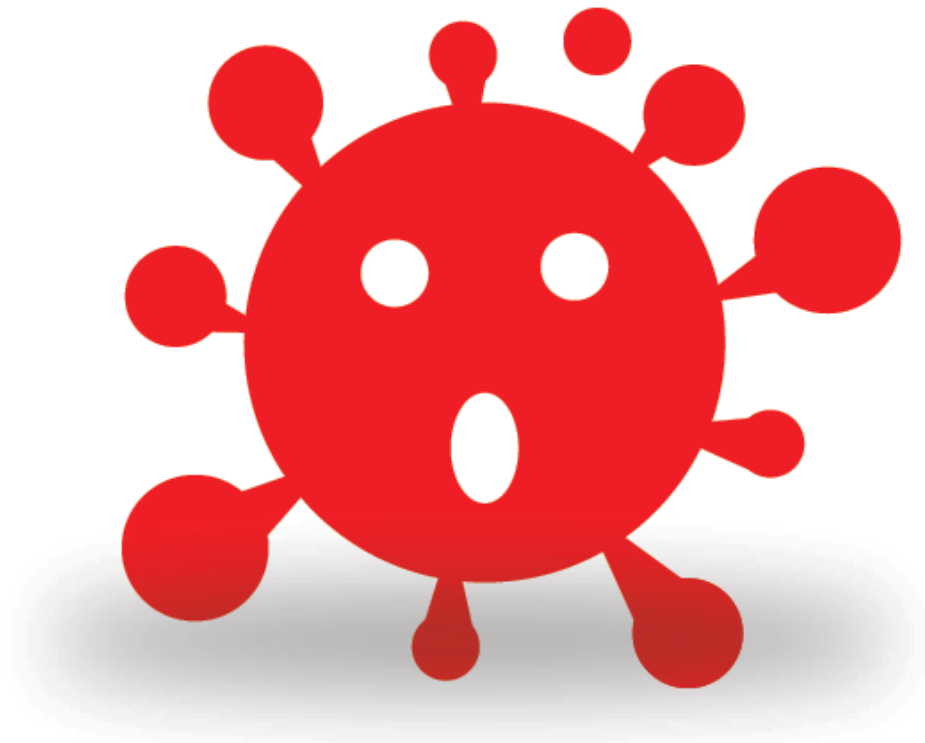


Kylie

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SPECIAL LOCKDOWN EDITION **FIT-FOR-PURPOSE** **LEADERSHIP#6**

24 inspiring business leaders share
their highest-value thinking on the leadership
that's needed right now in very challenging times



LEADERSHIPGIGS

Staying Resilient Right Now

Kylie Denton

COVID 19 pandemic has been like watching the longest domino line in the world spiral out of control. One simple event setting off a chain of events throughout the world in a matter of months.

Our whole world has been turned upside down and is threatening lives and livelihoods across the world. In as little as three months over a million people and 180 countries have fallen sick from this viral illness. The decisions the world leaders make for their country determines if people live or die and that is a heavy weight to carry on anyone's shoulders.

Leaders are facing an unprecedented test on their ability to lead through a crisis. Some will cripple with fear and inaction and others will move into overdrive and will be remembered as a great leader long after this crisis.

This pandemic has hit both our health and our economy and requires business leaders to have a multi-pronged response. Leaders might be asking themselves right now how resilient their business is, but I suggest we all start with a more important question and that is "how resilient are your people?"

As a business and leadership coach, every day, I am speaking to leaders, peers and professionals about the impact on peoples mental, physical and emotional health. Emotions are heightened, people are facing fear, uncertainty and sadness. Feelings of being out of control, frustrated, unpredictable, irritated, unsupported and guilty just to name a few.

You will be pleased to know this is all normal and certainly expected with a crisis of this scale. In times like this people look to leaders for guidance and reassurance. How you as a leader lead through this will determine your success and the success of the people around you.

I want to share with you the eight distinct qualities that will help you lead through this crisis successfully.

1. **Calm.** We all know the effect calm people have on us so remaining as calm as possible in front of your staff and customers is important. Even if you are scared and concerned on the inside. Your staff and customers are looking for you to lead them through this difficult and uncertain time. They are watching everything you say and do. How can you project a calmer demeanour during this time?
2. **Confidence.** We know this is an important trait for any leader generally, but right now it is critical. Confident but realistic. Displaying excessive confidence despite obvious difficult conditions will lose credibility. Therefore, projecting confidence that the organisation will find its way through this whilst also showing there is uncertainty will help others. How are you currently projecting your confidence?
3. **Collaboration.** Collaboration is key for any leader however during a crisis it is important you don't stick your head in the sand and make all the decisions yourself. You don't have all the answers, and no one expects you to either. Call on your team members, your peers, your mentors and speak to trusted advisers. Engaging your team will allow them to feel like they have some control over the direction of the business. Who should you be collaborating with and how will you go about it?
4. **Decisiveness.** You might be thinking "how do we even make a decision when there are so many unknowns?". One area I work with leaders on, is to look at the decisions they can make and then park the decisions they can't. When we start to look at things we have control over it allows us to gain more focus and feel more in control. Your people are looking for decisions, but they also understand there is a large element of unknown. Explain to them what we can make decisions on now and what we will make decisions on as further information comes to hand. Write a list of decisions you can make and a list of decisions you can't make. Share this with your people.
5. **Focus.** Currently our world is full of distractions - everywhere. And it takes a real effort to stay committed and focussed.

One-way you can do this, is to plan your day or week to ensure they are getting the critical and important work completed.

It is so easy to become distracted and to fall into old habits of doing the work that is easy rather than the work you should be doing. How can you set up each day to focus on the top three things that are critical and important right now?

6. **Positive mindset.** This can be tough when we are all impacted so deeply. I am seeing leaders making a conscious effort to look at the positive aspects of their life and business and practice gratitude and then helping their people to do the same.

Marcus Aurelius has a famous quote: The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts. There are many benefits to staying positive during uncertainty. What we do have control over is our mindset. How can you practise gratitude and a positive mindset?

7. **Belief.** Believe in yourself. Right now, the global pandemic has turned our world upside down and inside out. If there is ever a time to believe in yourself, it is right now. Don't wait for things to change. Lean in now, believe you can do this and turn those beliefs into self-fulfilling prophecies. Don't let fear cripple you into self-doubt and inaction. Get clear on your focus, believe in yourself and don't give up.
8. **Empathy and understanding.** Deal with the human element first. It's important that leaders demonstrate empathy and the understanding that there are both personal and professional challenges that each of their people are facing during a crisis. We shouldn't just assign this to human resources and communications and feel we have done our part. We need to get in there and demonstrate these qualities ourselves. Although it is important, we show these qualities to our people, we also need to open ourselves up to receive empathy from others and to remain attentive to our own wellbeing. Stress, fatigue and uncertainty limits our ability to process information, remain level-headed and to exercise good judgement. Investing time in your own well being will allow you to sustain your effectiveness over the weeks and months to come. What are some ways that you will show empathy and understanding to your people and to yourself?

Although these qualities are important, we must remember that what wraps around these qualities is the human element. Each one of us, is in some way affected by this pandemic, but how it is affecting each of us is different.

Although we are all experiencing similar emotions our situations are different and unique to each one of us. People are now having to work from home, working out of bedrooms, loungerooms, and back gardens, noise all around them, young kids screaming and school kids that are now doing

schooling online, are bored and miss their friends. There are so many distractions to deal with yet all so unique to every single individual.

I hosted a webinar recently where we saw one participant sitting on his bed in his 2-bedroom unit, with his newborn and wife in another room. This was his new office for 8 hours a day. Others are separated from loved ones; some are sick; some are living in small spaces with no spare rooms for offices; others have so many people in the house it is hard to work, let alone think with any substance.

For anyone managing people, this new world requires more than just the impacts on the business it means managing people's emotions, keeping them focused, agile and managing change rapidly and in adverse situations.

We must put people first if we want our business to survive or dare I say it - thrive. We need to support our people. We need to be able to understand their unique situations.

Here are some questions that you can use with your people to understand their situations and how you can help them.

- How are you managing and coping?
- What does your home life look like right now?
- Do you have a dedicated space to work in?
- Who else is at home? How is that impacting on you?
- What is challenging you right now?
- What do I need to know about you right now?
- How is your work impacted?
- What can I do to help?

Make a positive difference in people's lives. Doing this requires leaders to acknowledge the personal and professional challenges that employees and their loved ones are experiencing and by asking these questions will allow you to get closer to their true situation and challenges they are facing.

Everyone will need you differently and until you know how you can help them you won't be able to help them enough.

The most important point to remember is that we are all feeling vulnerable right now. We are all trying to put on a brave face and make sense of what this new world looks like but deep down we are all a little heavy and a little out of sorts and processing it in the best way we can. So give each other plenty of grace. Be kind but be clear; and help where each one of your people need as best as you can; and don't forget to also give more care to yourself because all of this is new to you too.

Don't wait for things to change; lean in now and become the leader you always dreamed of. This is your time to shine, believe in yourself and lead your troops to victory.

About Kylie Denton

Kylie Denton is a bestselling author and highly experienced business consultant, professionally certified coach and speaker specialising in the financial services, banking, insurance and wealth management industries.

With over 25 years' experience in Financial Services, a formal background in psychology and counselling, she has a proven track record in helping leaders and organisations achieve maximum success.



Kylie Denton is a professionally qualified Organisational and Leadership Coach, experienced in leadership coaching, executive coaching and team coaching. Kylie works with companies to help them improve productivity and performance and develop current, emerging and future leaders both personally and professionally.

Kylie has an innate ability to truly connect and understand her clients and is known for her ability to take people and organisations to the next level and turn good leaders into great leaders. Kylie pushes her coaching clients out of their comfort zones and challenges them to be the change they want to see in themselves and their business.

Kylie always has a wealth of information to share so reach out and connect.

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