



Liz on Leadership

Great Leaders Help Weather the Storm

As I sat down to this article, Houston was in the early stages of recovery from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Harvey. The Caribbean was reeling from the wrath of Irma. And Florida was bracing itself in anticipation of the storm's descent.

Over the past two weeks, Houston's corporate leaders have rapidly stepped up, reassuring their workforce in words and action—ensuring paid time off and providing resources to recover, repair, and rebuild. And in Florida, workers have been guided to focus on safety for themselves and their families, with offices shuttering in advance of the monster storm.

My client, John Cuomo, Group Vice President and General Manager of KLX Aerospace Solutions, wanted to convey his unwavering support to his Miami-based organization. He stayed closely connected, sending targeted communications like the following September 8th email (excerpts shared here with his permission).

Miami Team,

I hope today finds you all finalizing your preparation to be in a safe and secure place to ride out the storm. Our outside offices will handle the business matters. Your time should be focused on your safety and the safety of your family.

Our Miami campus will close for today, Friday, September 8 and Monday, September 11. Please check the employee hotline for status updates and do not hesitate to contact me directly should you need anything.

We are a strong community and will be there for each other as the storm passes and to support each other as we transition back to life and business as usual. I wish each of you, and your loved ones, a safe and peaceful few days ahead.

John

John's email serves as a demonstration of leadership in times of crisis, when it is most essential to convey care and concern, provide clear direction, offer support, and model optimism for what lies ahead.

Every organization has storms to weather. They may not be as acute as a natural disaster, but organizational crises take many forms:

- *Large scale layoffs.*
- *The sudden departure of a CEO.*
- *A steep economic downturn.*
- *The loss of key customers or marketshare.*
- *Reputational damage and the erosion of investor confidence.*

Each of these (and more) can turn an organization upside down. To protect your people and speed a healthy rebound from crisis, here are three simple steps you should take.

1. Inform your organization. Rapidly and honestly, let your people know what's happening—before they read about it in the newspaper or overhear rumors at the proverbial water cooler.

2. Reassure your workforce. Provide authentic assurances and back them up with action. Help your employees know you're aware of the difficulties, have a plan to address them, and are prepared to take care of your people. Help them gain confidence from your confidence, and let them see your unwavering leadership.

3. Be responsive. Provide multiple venues for your employees to gain clarity and dispel rumors and misconceptions. Be open and non-defensive as you address concerns.

Organizational storms are unavoidable but the effects can be mitigated with this kind of thoughtful, honest, and genuinely caring approach to leadership.

My thoughts, prayers and support go out to all those impacted by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. May your recovery be swift and your future bright.

Did you miss my last newsletter?

Five Signs Your Team's Got a Hidden Trust Problem

My family and I were sitting in the backyard last week, enjoying a relaxing summer dinner, when we heard a loud cracking sound and booming thud. We turned to the side yard and found that a 30-foot ash tree had come crashing down. It now lay across our lawn, trunk and branches scattered and strewn. We hadn't seen it coming.

Upon inspection, we discovered the previously hidden danger: termites had been surreptitiously eating away at the foundation of this seemingly strong and healthy

tree, destroying it from within. Eventually, the damage was too much to sustain.

Hidden dangers exist in organizations, too. One of the biggest threats is a lack of trust. If unrecognized and untreated, mistrust will silently eat away at the health and productivity of your organization.

In my work with executive teams, I find that fixing the trust issue leads to improved business results, fewer errors, enhanced retention of top talent and accelerated innovation. So ask yourself: *Does my team have the kind of trust that leads to top results?* Think about it, and be honest with yourself. Consider the following signs that your team has a trust problem:

1. There is a lack of information sharing. Your people aren't proactively bringing important information to one another. Gaps in knowledge and unwelcome surprises are the norm.

2. There is a lack of debate. Ideas aren't actively discussed or challenged. Decisions may be superficially accepted but then passively resisted.

3. There is an excess of niceness. Politeness prevails and direct communication is hard to come by. Disagreements and frustrations are kept in rather than openly addressed.

4. There is a paucity of collaboration. People remain in their functional silos. They refrain from reaching out to their colleagues to identify mutual goals or drive to collective success.

5. There is a lack of overt vulnerability. Your team doesn't freely express concerns with one another. There is a reticence to reveal weakness or ask for help.

Teams that operate without sufficient trust fall short of their full potential. They fail to deliver top results. They slowly but surely erode from within.

As a leader, it's incumbent upon you to recognize and call out trust issues within your organization. Be direct with your team. Talk openly about your concerns. Tell the team you see an issue with trust and ask whether they see it too.

Work together to discern the reasons trust is lacking. Solicit solutions. Consistently model what you'd like to see. And be sure to hold your team accountable for the kind of behavior that drives trust and builds a robust foundation for growth.

Slow Down to Speed Up: Lead, Succeed and Thrive in a 24/7 World

I'm thrilled to announce that my forthcoming book, *Slow Down to Speed Up: Lead, Succeed and Thrive in a 24/7 World*, is officially in production! It's a highly actionable book, filled with pragmatic advice to help you, and your company, thrive in today's fast-paced world.

If you would like the book for yourself or a colleague, or if you'd like to submit a bulk pre-order, please send me an email: liz@bywaterconsultinggroup.com.

Stayed tuned for additional details and special offers!

"Liz provides an in depth look at something we all struggle with. Finding the balance. These real life examples provide insight into some innovative new thinking around the pragmatism of finding high impact results in the middle of changing priorities and the constant search for overall effectiveness."

David and Esperanza Neu
Founders, Neu Center for Supportive Medicine and Cancer Survivorship

"I have worked with Liz and greatly benefitted from her advice and the tools she has developed over a long career of advising executives. She creates a very easy system to get you to Stop: reflect, reprioritize, and create a vision for personal and career success. I love having all the tools in one book. Having this toolkit to put your thoughts into action is invaluable."

Lorrie Vogel
Former VP, Nike Material Science and Innovation

Dr. Liz on Leadership: New Column and Special Offer

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About Dr. Liz

Dr. Liz Bywater has been called a one-of-a-kind leadership expert. Working at the intersection of business and psychology, she brings together pragmatic experience, advising top executives across the Fortune 500, with an advanced degree in Psychology and a dynamic personal style to inspire, engage and counsel her clients.

For more than a decade, top global organizations have requested Liz's help in resolving issues such as creating extraordinary client relationships, increasing market persuasion, and driving productive collaborations in an increasingly complex world.

Liz advises senior leaders at some of the world's most successful companies, including Johnson & Johnson, Nike, Thomson Reuters, Bristol-Myers Squibb, AmerisourceBergen and more. She uses her expertise in human behavior to drive commercial success. She helps her clients propel innovation, exert influence and lead their organizations through change.

A thought leader in organizational excellence, Liz provides expert commentary for such publications as the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Fast Company and USA Today. She is on the editorial advisory board for **Life Science Leader** magazine and is a featured expert on such radio broadcasts as CBS Philadelphia's **Philadelphia Agenda** with Brad Segall and **Woman of the Week** with Marilyn Russell.

Liz earned her PhD in Psychology at the Derner Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies at Adelphi University. Her undergraduate degree is from Cornell University, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Cum Laude. She is a longstanding member of the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Advancement of Consulting.

She lives in Bucks County, PA, with her husband, teenage son, and FaceTime away from her college freshman daughter.

Stay tuned for Liz's forthcoming book, **Slow Down to Speed Up: Lead, Succeed and Thrive in a 24/7 World** (Business Expert Press, November 2017).

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