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Crisis Leadership:

Understanding Good Leadership in Critical Situations

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Abstract

Organizations of all types (private, government and non-profit) and sizes (local, regional, national or multinational) will at some point experience a critical situation—a crisis. Whether an organization emerges stronger, or at the very least without long-term sustained damage, is heavily dependent on the organization’s leadership. It is leadership’s decision-making, the actions they take and oversee, and the environment they espouse during critical situations that make up the foundation of most modern day crisis response. In consequence, the ability to lead effectively before, during and after a crisis is critical to an organization’s survival. The purpose, then, of this study is to synthesize existing truths about leadership in critical situations and build in an Atlantic Canadian context to the literature through the use of local case studies when possible. What are the most important qualities, motivations and drivers of successful leadership in a crisis and how does it apply in the Atlantic Canadian context?

In an attempt to answer the above question, this study will summarize relevant literature on the topic of leadership in critical situations. By first outlining the nature and impact of crises, the stage will be set for an analytical review of the theoretical framework relating to good leadership in non-crisis situations and how those skills can be applied in crisis. Then, using local case studies where applicable the functions of and challenges to leadership in crises will be analyzed, identifying best practices from which managers can draw to better prepare, guide and steward their organizations and also serve to enhance systemic crisis management strategies within their organizations, making for a better prepared and more resilient organization.

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Introduction

“The biggest mistake I ever made”

“It’s the biggest mistake I ever made. I regret it to this day. I will always regret taking her to the IWK,” said Glen Canning, the father of Rehtaeh Parsons, a 17-year-old girl who took her own life in the spring of 2013 (Willick, 2013). Rehtaeh was allegedly sexually assaulted and subsequently cyber-bullied after pictures circulated among her peers and classmates at Cole Harbour High School in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia. Canning’s statement to the local newspaper, the *Chronicle Herald*, on June 7, 2013 was referring to his daughter’s stay at 4 South, the IWK Health Centre’s Mental Health Inpatient Unit for children and youth across the Maritime provinces (located in Halifax, Nova Scotia). Among Canning’s claims against the IWK: Rehtaeh had been aggressively strip searched by male staff on the unit, was discharged before she was ready and had learned from other patients in the unit to self-harm. “They just made it [her depression] even worse,” Canning stated of the IWK (Willick, 2013).

Canning’s claims were made in a very public form, were severely critical of the care provided by the IWK to its young mental health patients and had the potential to establish severe, long-term financial and reputational damage. The IWK had to act swiftly, smartly, and most importantly, with sensitivity. Indeed, there had to be a quick response regardless of the time and information deficiencies. In sum, the IWK response had to:

- a) be sensitive to and respectful of the privacy of the patients of 4 South, including Rehtaeh;

- b) adequately address the worried parents of former, current and future patients as well as the concerned public, including IWK donors; and,
- c) address the grieving friends and family of Rehtaeh, including Canning.

This all occurred just days before the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the IWK Foundation, the fundraising arm of the IWK, which was in the throes of raising funds for a new mental health unit—the timing was critical, to say the least. What was the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), led by President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Anne McGuire, to do? It was a crisis.

The Inevitability of Crisis: Why the Study of Crisis Leadership Matters

Organizations of all types (private, government, and non-profit) and sizes (local, regional, national, or multinational) either have or will experience critical situations, much like the one experienced by the IWK in June 2013. According to the Institute of Crisis Management, there were more than 82,000 newsworthy organizational crises in 2012, in line with a steady upward trend since 2009 (Institute for Crisis Management, 2013). In today's interconnected world, crises have become a focal point for organizations' business planning in part because of a larger and more connected populace; more people are impacted by crises and the *speed* at which information travels and the *way* in which it can travel has been tantamount in this shift. Information is increasingly being shared in short form, without all of the facts or before the facts are known. Social media has become a primary source for news sharing. When headlines are shared it is often alongside the sharer's opinion and the opinions of their "friends" or "followers." Indeed, facts and opinions are becoming more difficult to distinguish, at least on the surface.

Despite these changes, what has been constant throughout history is that crises are inevitable, be it natural or man-made. Indeed, human error, the unpredictability of weather, and economic instability are certainties. As such, the forward thinking modern leader will look to learn how to handle critical situations. Crises lay siege to an organization's financial wellbeing, reputation, and can destroy the trust an organization has with its internal and external stakeholders. Whether an organization emerges stronger, or at the very least without long-term sustained damage, is heavily dependent on its leadership.

Research Outline

It is leadership's decision-making, the actions they take and oversee, and the environment they facilitate during crises that forms the foundation of most modern day crises (James & Wooten, 2010). As a result, the ability to lead effectively before, during and after a crisis is critical. This begs the question: what are the most important qualities, motivations and drivers of successful leadership in a crisis? How do these apply in the Atlantic Canadian context?

To answer this question, this study will first outline the nature and impact of crises in the modern context. This will be followed by an outline and assimilation of key theories on crises including crisis typology and the state of crisis management as it exists today. The result will be a theoretical framework to provide a foundation for an understanding of crisis leadership, provide a nuanced understanding of organizational crises in the modern context, and form the theoretical basis to analyze the threats crises pose to the organization both during and after the event.

The second section of this study will look at leadership in non-crisis situations, looking at the functions, qualities, and behaviours that make for successful leadership in general—that is, what good leadership looks like in the non-crisis context. Here, great leadership will be defined as leadership that conveys i) passion for; ii) belief in; and iii) understanding of the organization’s *raison d’être*: the leadership triumvirate. What effect does great leadership have on organizational culture in “normal” times—that is, during non-crisis operations? From here, the question of how strong leadership “best practices” can be applied to maintain organizational composure in times of crisis.

The third section of this study will integrate the first two sections, focusing on the practical functions of and challenges to leadership in crises. Local examples of leadership in crisis will be analyzed to identify best practices from which managers can draw to prepare, guide and steward their organizations, serving to enhance systemic crisis management strategies in their organizations, making for a better prepared and more resilient organization using local examples and case studies. The study will conclude with an overview of best practices for leadership in critical situations, demonstrating that leadership in crises not only matters, but it is key to the organization’s success or failure during and after a crisis.

Chapter One: Literature Review

The Nature of Modern Crises: Global Impact

Crisis leadership is a relatively new and underdeveloped segment of study in the congested literature on leadership. Crisis leadership began taking shape under Ian Mitroff in the 1980's and continues acquiring palpable interest from academics, business leaders and governments (Mitroff Crisis Management, 2013). Indeed, it is no longer local populations or immediate stakeholders that are affected by organizational crises, as clearly demonstrated by the global fallout after the terrorist attacks in New York City on September 11, 2001 (9/11) and the 2008 financial meltdown in the United States (US); both events that reverberated around the globe. The number of people impacted by organizational crises is increasing as populations around the world swell, global trade becomes a business norm and technology increases the speed at which information travels (Kovoor-Misra & Misra, 2007). Although globalization is a buzzword that has been over- and mis-used, the global impact of many modern crises cannot be ignored by today's leaders. The decisions leaders make and the way in which they manage (or mismanage) their organizations through crises impacts the world beyond the executive boardroom. While 9/11 and the 2008 financial meltdown are classic case studies demonstrating the interconnectedness and potentially global impact of modern-day crises, let us consider a lesser known example.

Originating in a flat in England, a group of extremists developed and planned a plot to detonate liquid-based bombs disguised in beverage bottles on passenger airliners headed for North America. The plot was foiled by British intelligence (MI5) and local police in August 2006. The result was a widespread ban on liquids over 100ml for all

carry-on luggage—a ban that still exists today. Across the Atlantic, a seafood business in Nova Scotia was presented with its own crisis: Clearwater Seafoods Limited (henceforth referred to as Clearwater) sold live and cooked lobster (a Nova Scotia specialty and a multimillion dollar business) packed on ice or with gel packs—both of which were no longer allowed as carry-on luggage. Understandably, many customers did not want to pack their dinner in with their checked luggage. Management at Clearwater had to deal with a local retail crisis because of an international security threat originating in an apartment in another country.

Clearwater faced the challenge head-on out of necessity: sales dropped to zero immediately after the ban came into effect (Jabbour, 2006). The following Monday, Tony Jabbour, general manager of the retail lobster division, called his staff in for an emergency meeting and brainstorming session (Jabbour, 2006). The outcome? Peas, carrots and cauliflower. Frozen vegetables passed Halifax International Airport's security screening as well as food safety requirements, keeping the lobsters cold and security-friendly. The challenge Clearwater faced as a result of an international security threat had been successfully navigated under Jabbour's leadership. Jabbour had encouraged his staff to participate in finding the solution and, perhaps more importantly as we will note later, Jabbour *admitted that there was a problem.*

Organizational Crisis Defined

There are many definitions for organizational crisis. Mitroff defines it as, *...disasters precipitated by people, organizational structures, economics, and/or technology that cause extensive damage to human life and natural and social environments. They inevitably debilitate both the financial structure and the reputation of a large organization* (Mitroff, Shrivastava, & Udwardia, p. 283).

While Mitroff is correct in that many crises do have extreme outcomes such as extensive damage to human, natural and social life, it may be more tempered to state, as he does with Christine M. Pearson, that a crisis is an event that “imposes severe strain on the organization’s financial, physical, and emotional structures...[posing] a threat to the organization’s reputation and viability” (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993, p. 49). Indeed, not every organizational crisis is existential. The Clearwater example was not an existential threat. Indeed, lobster sales at the airport composed of a significant portion of its \$4 million retail revenues, yet this figure only accounts for a small portion of the total \$315 million in revenues Clearwater earned in 2006 (Bratton, 2006). While the challenge Clearwater faced only affected 1.27% of its sales that year, if left unaddressed it may have accumulated into a larger crisis. For instance, without airport retailing (a high-traffic, visible location with high marketing value) Clearwater may have lost access to potential international buyers passing through to their terminals. Indeed, the airport location is valuable as a marketing strategy as well as a revenue source. Further, if competitors found a solution to the problem, Clearwater would lose its airport retail revenue altogether whilst other retailers selling fresh product continued on. Clearwater dealt with the problem before it had a chance to accrue into a potentially bigger issue for the company. In dealing with the crisis at an early stage, Clearwater prevented potentially larger problems down the road.

While not an existential threat, the Clearwater example is more than an organizational problem. Indeed, problems tend to be frequent, affect only a few stakeholders, and have an internal focus, whereas a crisis, on the other hand, is rare, affects multiple or a significant number of stakeholders and goes beyond the internal

impacts (James & Wooten, 2010). Pearson and Mitroff identify five key aspects that distinguish crises from problems:

- a) the impact is of a high magnitude;
- b) there is a need for immediate attention;
- c) there is an element of surprise;
- d) there is a need to take action; and
- e) it is of a nature that is outside the organization's complete control (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993, p. 49).

Where Pearson and Mitroff tend to focus on the general criteria of a crisis, Erika Hayes James and Lynn Perry Wooten point specifically both to the organization's stakeholders and the organization's internal and external pressure points. As such, the criteria put forward by James and Wooten is more specific to the organization in crisis and thus, more useful to the study of crisis leadership:

- a) the event is a rarity;
- b) it is significant;
- c) *it affects multiple stakeholders*; and
- d) *has both an internal and external impact* (James & Wooten, 2010, p. 18).

In highlighting the affected stakeholders as well as the internal and external impact, a crisis is seen not only as an infrequent traumatic occurrence for the organization, but looks at the bigger picture—both inside the organization and out. James and Wooten put forth the notion that true organizational crises are dual pronged in that they have internal elements and external elements that leadership must consider when preparing for crisis, navigating through the fallout and formulating a response. In other words, crisis affects

multiple stakeholders, meaning that investors, management and consumers are not the only stakeholders to be considered in a crisis. Any combination of government, suppliers, political groups, communities, employees, trade unions, the environment or a wider economic market could be impacted as well. As such, “stakeholders” has an inclusive definition in the modern study of organizational crisis.

Threats to the Organization

The literature indicates widespread agreement that there are three significant threats to an organization in crisis. First, a crisis is an event that imposes severe strain on the organization’s resources. Time, money, supplies and other tangible goods can be pumped into the crisis management response to the point that it bankrupts the organization. Secondly, a crisis imposes significant strain on the members of an organization, meaning a crisis can be draining on members’ psychological resources. Studies show that when in crisis fear, stress, sadness, anger, and anxiety become prevalent (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003). This can create a sense of hopelessness leading to a loss in productivity within the organization, increased turnover from employees (leaving for less stressful or more secure employment environments), and overall disengagement from the organization for any number of reasons including disappointment, feelings of betrayal or embarrassment. In publically traded companies, the psychological shock of a crisis often materializes in the stock market, with prices falling upon the news of trouble. Consider, for instance, the listeria outbreak in a Maple Leaf Foods plant that saw sales of sliced meats drop by 50% and shares drop by 10 cents, leading to a \$12.9 million loss in a single quarter on top of the direct costs associated with the \$25 million recall (Flavelle, 2008). Although more difficult to measure

quantitatively, the psychological impact can be devastating to an organization and should not be underestimated by leadership. Thirdly, a crisis can threaten the reputation of an organization, effectively diminishing trust in the brand. When an organization fails to maintain the status quo, if not exceed it, stakeholders can feel a sense of betrayal. When a customer, stakeholder, donor or citizen feels betrayed, this can lead to legal action, financial penalization or discontinued support and loyalty. Stakeholders tend to ask how “people who have risen to positions of leadership lack[ed] the foresight, judgement, [or] character in the face of crisis...feelings [in an organizational crisis] are basically attributable to our feelings that the CEO and top management should have taken better care of us” (Mitroff, 2007, p. 207). Indeed, when an organization is hit by crisis, the audience critiques how the leadership either should have known better, should have done better, or both.

Crisis Typology

Crises can be man-made or natural, intentional or unintentional, accidental or malicious. Tracing the roots of a crisis is helpful in formulating the solution and developing a strategy for preventing a similar event, or at the very least enabling an organization to be more prepared should the event occur again. The most thorough list of crises is that developed by W.T. Coombs which provides not only an extensive list of crises, but is also divided into crisis types—helpful in that it “differentiates between human and technical breakdowns and crises that originate within and outside the organization” (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003, p. 49).

Table 1.1: Coombs Crisis Types

Crisis Type	Crises
Natural Disasters	Hurricanes; Floods; Tornadoes
Malevolence	Product Tampering

Technical Breakdowns	Product Recalls
Human Breakdowns	Human Error
Challenges	Discontented Consumers
Megadamage	Oil Spills; Environmental Damage
Organizational Misdeeds	Illegal Activity
Workplace Violence	Aggression
Rumours	Reputational Undermining

While thorough, it is less succinct and user-friendly when compared to Coombes’ matrix model which, although more general and simplistic, is more useful in determining the primary roots of the crises (Coombes, 1995, p. 455). Here, the origins are either internal or external, intentional or unintentional.

Table 1.2: Coombs Matrix Model

Intentional	Unintentional	
Terrorism <i>(i.e.: 9/11)</i>	Faux Pas <i>(i.e.: Unintentionally offensive advertising campaign)</i>	External
Transgression <i>(i.e.: PG&E knew of contaminated water supply in Hinkley, California and failed to inform residents)</i>	Accident <i>(i.e.: Accidentally selling defective product)</i>	Internal

Once the type of crises has been determined, the leadership can begin to look at and understand what led to the crisis. This enables an organization to be more reflective. In determining the crisis type, leadership can better determine the scale of the damage (financial, psychological, and reputational), identify stakeholders who require attention and remedial action (the “victims”), how to respond to remedy the situation, and analyze the overall performance of the moving parts of the organization and how its internal processes functioned prior to and during the crisis, paving the way for improvement (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003, p. 51).

Although the merit in crisis typologies is now clear, it is critical to stress that crisis typologies have limitations given the dynamic nature of crises. Matthew W. Seeger et. al. note that there are two limitations to crisis typology (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003). First, crisis types are almost never mutually exclusive and secondly, crises will continue to form, emerge and manifest in unexpected ways:

Natural disasters can take new and unexpected forms, particularly as they interact with human technology and development...unforeseen human resource challenges will create new crisis forms. Although crisis typologies are very helpful crisis learning and management tools, they cannot predict when an event will occur, what specific features it will have, or how the crisis will evolve. (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003, p. 64)

Crisis Management Today

Although leaders cannot prevent all disasters, nor predict with absolute certainty when, where and how they will happen, Mitroff and Paul Shrivastava argue that “organizations can adopt a systemic and comprehensive perspective for managing them more effectively” (Mitroff, Shrivastava, & Udwadia, Effective Crisis Management, 1987, p. 283). Mitroff and Shrivastava initially developed a four step crisis management model in 1987, when the study of crisis management was beginning to emerge. This evolved into a five phase crisis management model by 1993 under Pearson and Mitroff, working more as a cyclical process, reconfiguring the steps to give prominence to the roles of preparation and learning in the crisis management framework.

Table 1.3: Crisis Management Models 1987-Present

Four Phase Model, 1987-1993 (Mitroff, Shrivastava, & Udwadia, Effective Crisis Management, 1987)	Five Phase Model, 1993-Present (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993)
I. Detection: Simulate, disrupt, prepare, prevent II. Crisis: Proactive, reactive response as crisis unfolds to contain damage	I. Signal Detection: Early warnings of pending crisis/weaknesses II. Preparation/Prevention: Crisis planning, risk management

III. Repair: Recovery, return to normal or “new” normal	III. Containment/Damage Limitation: Proactive, reactive response as crisis unfolds
IV. Assessment: Learn from I-III, broaden detection, redesign, adapt	IV. Recovery: Return to normal or “new” normal, short and long term recovery initiatives
	V. Learning: Collating, analyzing and acting on lessons learned, best practices

Pearson and Mitroff’s model puts emphasis on the aim to do as much as possible to *detect* and *prevent* the crisis, separating detection and prevention, whereas in the earlier model, they were considered one and the same. Here, signal detection requires an organization to look for early warning of a pending crisis. As Pearson and Mitroff note, “[w]ith very few exceptions, crises leave a trail of early warning signals” (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993, p. 53). This is not to say that these signals are obvious or clearly identifiable. However, under this model, leadership must be willing to look critically at its own processes and the surrounding environment to detect these signals and act on them. The second major change in Pearson and Mitroff’s five phase model is the emphasis on learning. Here, assessment is no longer a step in the crisis management process, but rather a constant and continuous exercise in each of the phases aimed toward prevention, mitigation and learning. It is important to note that leadership must be careful to avoid scapegoating when reviewing the situation; the emphasis “should be on improving future capabilities and fixing current problems” rather than looking to place blame (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993, p. 54). The focus, then, is on constructive recovery and strengthening—although in many cases there will be errors identified and remedial or disciplinary actions taken.

Functions of Leadership in Crisis

It is a common misperception that in a crisis, the leadership—namely the CEO—should take over all aspects of operational management. Although leaders must take initiative, it is usually a mistake for a leader to take on everything and anything that comes across their desk during crisis. The tasks the leader must oversee may grow, however it is their ability and *willingness* to delegate power within the organization that makes a tremendous difference in planning and executing crisis management strategy. The CEO should primarily serve as a symbolic figure of core organizational values and the primary communicator during the crisis, not necessarily as a micromanager.

Thierry C. Pauchant et al identify five key areas which require leadership's attention. This does not mean that leadership is to take action on very element that falls within these five categories, but rather, leadership is to serve as the oversight and trouble-shooter for aspects of the crisis management plan that impact the bigger picture. These five key areas are: strategic efforts (guiding philosophy, overseeing creation of and strategy for a crisis management team); technical and structural efforts (collaboratively appointing a crisis management team which provides tools for and gives power to credible and capable individuals—possibly drawn from outside the organization if the necessary skills are absent within the existing management team); evaluation and diagnosis efforts, communications efforts; and psychological and cultural efforts (symbolic and psychological support and setting tone within and outside the organization) (Pauchant, Mitroff, & Lagadec, 1991, p. 212).

The key role of the CEO, when considering these five key areas, is to provide support to those he or she has empowered to act in each area, work with expertise to create and operationalize a crisis management team, and serve as a symbol that stands

behind the strategy and philosophy for the organization as it makes its way through the crisis. Rather than creating the solutions, the leadership should help ask the right questions that clarify and structure the response and recovery. Leadership should provide assurance to concerned employees and stakeholders that there is a plan for the future. The CEO acknowledges the broad strokes of that plan to the public and oversees internal plans and operations for a coordinated effort that stays on track.

While it is useful to delineate the functions into pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis pockets of time, these functions are not always part of a linear process. Indeed, the necessity for a leader in crisis to be adaptable to changing priorities inherently requires that a leader in crisis not be chained to linear processes or old ways of getting things done. While there will always be certain efforts that must come first, such as putting in place a crisis management team, many of the other roles will be carried out simultaneously or dictated according to the speed and severity at which the crisis unfolds. No crisis is exactly the same—time, location, and people change. Under changing circumstances in a crisis adaptability, nimbleness and flexibility are critical. Perhaps the most useful summary of this notion of flexibility and adaptability comes from Sun Tzu: “The highest skill in forming dispositions is to be without form; formlessness is proof against the prying” (Sun-Tzu, 2009, p. 37). However, changing what works is not the solution. Indeed, it can hinder recovery, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Good Leadership and Critical Situations

Leadership in Crisis: An Argument Against Reinventing the Wheel

Tanya Prive, Forbes contributor and founder of RockThePost, contends that in critical situations leaders tend to focus on what needs to change without highlighting (or maintaining) essential constants:

When money is tight, stress levels are high...it's easy to let those emotions get to you, and thereby your team. Take a breath, calm yourself down, and remind yourself of the leader you are and would like to become (Prive, 2012).

Indeed, when times get tough, a leader need not change who they are in the workplace nor the ideals and goals they strive for of themselves and for the organization, assuming that the leadership is not the culprit in creating the crisis (meaning the leader and the executive team's behavior was not a significant contributing factor nor was their decision-making irresponsible, damaging or directly causal). In other words, Prive argues that overhauling one's leadership style in critical situations is neither compulsory nor inherent. To determine if the crisis requires change, Karl E. Weick and Kathleen M. Sutcliffe suggest leaders should take "audits" in critical situations that serve as "mindful moments...in contexts that are dynamic, ill-structured, ambiguous, or unpredictable" (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 85). Leaders in critical situations must stop and take a moment to review the situation and their role in it moving forward; changing what was working *before* a crisis is not necessarily going to contribute to the solution and way forward *during* a crisis—in fact, it may delay recovery.

Weick and Sutcliffe highlight deference to expertise, calling for the migration or expansion of decision-making to experts within or outside the organization rather than completely transforming the decision-making structure within the organization (Weick &

Sutcliffe, 2007). They argue, then, for minor tweaks depending on what the situation calls for. As situations and priorities shift throughout a crisis, the leader must review the relevant available information, adding additional support to *pre-existing* strengths as required. For example, if the communications team was already strong before the crisis, there is no need to shift press release writing to the executive office. Rather, the release may include a quote from the executive office or be released on behalf of or from the executive office, but the expertise in the communications team may very well suffice in formulating the messaging.

In crisis, a leader must not betray organizational beliefs, values and principles (again, under the assumption that they are not causal factors in the crisis to begin with). However, if it is the case that the challenges being faced are a result of misguided or ill-fitting beliefs, values or principles, a crisis may “represent [the] best opportunity to make major changes in [the] organization because they lessen the resistance [to change] that exists in good times” (George, 2009, p. 12). Regardless of whether a critical situation calls for steadfastness or major organizational changes, employee commitment is essential; leadership, particularly the CEO, greatly influences employee loyalty and their decision to fight or take flight.

The CEO as the Connector

While priorities may continually shift, leadership should always be concerned with and have their finger on the pulse of three crucial aspects of the organization:

- a) the financial health of the organization;
- b) the vitality of the mission and vision; and,
- c) finally, the relational aspects of the workplace, including setting the tone for

the organization's culture.

While day-to-day challenges may bring different foci to the attention of the CEO, the three key areas mentioned above should be constant priorities during both normal operations and critical situations. The people who carry out the work on the ground and the connection they have with the organization's vision and mission largely determines an organization's efficiency, functionality, productivity and thus, profitability. In sum, employee loyalty is important *before* a crisis to be strong *during* a crisis.

Relating to the CEO's role in setting the tone for organizational culture, consider that employees "must be tied to larger organizational ambitions. Employees who don't understand the roles they play in [the company's success] are more likely to become disengaged" (Gallo, 2011). Indeed, perhaps one of the most basic tenets of leadership is an understanding of the importance of united action driven by belief in a central vision. It follows that the role of the leader is to represent the spirit of the organization through their words and actions. As guardian of the organization's mission and vision, the leadership can enhance or diminish the worker's desire to connect with and support that organization's vision. The CEO, then, is the connector—the catalyst between the employees and the organization's mission. They can foster loyalty to the organization that, in times of crisis, is invaluable.

The connecting role of the CEO is demonstrated at Ambir Solutions (henceforth referred to as Ambir), an IT company with offices in Quebec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Fredericton employee Michael George has a son who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, epilepsy and developmental delays requiring semi-annual checkups amounting to approximately three days per visit at the IWK. Citing it as

a “non-issue,” Ambir accommodated George with flextime so he did not have to use his valuable vacation days. (Martin, 2010). As a result, George did everything he could to eliminate a reduction in his billable hours, his son received the care he needed, and Ambir in turn was rewarded with loyalty, hard work and “solid financial results.” (Ambir Solutions, 2012; Martin, 2010). In April 2013 Ambir, led by CEO Ian Cavanagh, was recognized both regionally and nationally as an excellent place to work (Industry News, 2013). Cavanagh believes in treating his people with respect and building trust. As a result, employees have been found to “trust management, have pride in their jobs, and enjoy the people they work with...[and] *care about their work, their organization, and their community*” [emphasis added] (Industry News, 2013).

While Cavanagh is clearly a well-liked and respected leader, revered by his employees or “team members” as he refers to them, many successful leaders are not necessarily renowned for their winsome personalities. Yet, these less agreeable personalities have employees that are proud to work for the organization under their tenure. Consider former Apple CEO Steve Jobs. Jobs was well known for his hot temper and insensitivity to those around him but was incredibly successful as a leader, with Apple turning record profits and consistently landing on Forbes’ list of Most Admired Companies under his leadership (Isaacson, 2011). Although Jobs was the subject of criticism for being hostile, Apple is by and large considered a desirable place to work (CNN, 2012; Dennings, 2012). Here, we have an example of a CEO creating an intellectually stimulating environment that inspires loyalty and commitment like Jobs, rather than a people-oriented and considerate environment like Cavanagh created at Ambir. As such, it can be concluded that leadership is not dependent on having an

agreeable or people-oriented personality. Rather, it is the leader's ability to connect employees with the organization's cause. Jobs and Cavanagh are two very different men with two very different leadership styles, and yet, both companies are financially viable, have strong leadership directing the mission, and a largely connected and engaged employee base. Both CEOs successfully connected their employees to the mission and created environments that fostered teamwork, loyalty and respect using transformational leadership, albeit very different elements of transformational leadership. Jobs and Cavanagh demonstrate that leadership is not about who you are so much as what, why and how you do it—a conclusion that can be traced through the evolution of the study of leadership.

What is Good Leadership? A Brief Overview on the Evolution of Leadership Theory

The understanding and study of leadership and what makes for a strong leader has greatly evolved since the turn of the 19th century. Among the first theories to emerge was the “**Great Man**” theory, where physical characteristics determined leadership ability. Tall, dark, handsome and male were characteristics widely believed to be correlated with good leadership (Barling, Christie, & Hopton, 2011). By the 1940's the **behavioral attributes** of leaders were considered, of which there were two main archetypes: initiating structure (task-focused personalities keen on processes) and consideration (people-focused personalities keen on relationship building). Fred E. Fiedler argued that these two types, when viewed as independent of each other, were riddled with “inconsistencies which...demanded an integrative theoretical formulation,” signifying that effective leadership was dependent on the situation—different situations demanded different styles of leadership for the best outcome (Fiedler, 2004, p. 369). By the 1970's,

the study of leadership began to look beyond the leader, focusing on the role of the employee. This led to the rise of the **path-goal theory**, postulating that success is determined by aligning employees with the organization's goal. This was further explored under the **leader-member exchange theory (LMX)**, where organizational success is determined by the interaction between leadership and employees. Here, leadership's role here is largely centered on the encouragement of employee participation, clear directives and support (Barling, Christie, & Hopton, 2011).

Most modern leadership theories draw largely on the dyadic, interactive approach of mutually supportive and collaborative relationships between the leader and employees. Noting the importance of the CEO as the connector, *how* can the leader motivate employees and connect them to the cause? **Transformational leadership** is often cited as the answer, whereby the leader:

- a) emulates idealized influence, leading by example;
- b) provides inspirational motivation, fostering commitment through symbolism, communication and the development of interpersonal connections;
- c) encourages intellectual stimulation, consistently asking employees to exceed the status quo; and
- d) provides individualized consideration, paying attention to the personal and professional needs of employees as much as is practical (Bass, 1990).

The LMX and transformational leadership theories have been identified as the most popular theories relating to leadership today (Barling, Christie, & Hopton, 2011). Both of these theories identify the importance of a high degree of interplay between leaders

and employees, with the transformational leadership theory building on LMX by fleshing out the vehicles of employee engagement.

Although a modern buzzword, the concept of transformational leadership dates back several thousand years. It can be found in Sun Tzu's the Art of War. Here, a good leader is described as:

- a) capable of earning and retaining the good faith and confidence of followers in the organization's vision ultimately leading to a united force (inspirational motivation);
- b) maintains a fair balance between discipline and compassion (individualized consideration);
- c) has knowledge of the terrain and the organization's direction (intellectual stimulation) and is able to clearly communicate and demonstrate that knowledge and why it is the *right* direction for the group (idealized influence), and;
- d) finally, has and oversees a knowledge-based strategy to guide the organization and the people within it (Sun-Tzu, 2009).

Adding to transformational leadership, Sun Tzu notes the importance of strategy and planning in the last point, as per above. Thus, there is an added element to consider in the leadership paradigm. Leadership must have a solid strategy that will operationalize and guide transformational leadership. This strategy is rooted in and guided by a strong mission statement and aspirational vision that makes sense in the organization's structure, is inspirational to the employees within the organization, and marketable outside the organization.

The Leadership Triumvirate: Passion Capital, True Believers, and the “Why”

While inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and a solid strategy are key vehicles for employee engagement vis-à-vis transformational leadership, there is a foundation that is required to *do* great leadership, to *be* inspirational, to *have* idealized influence. These key elements of transformational leadership need fuel; I propose that a leadership triumvirate provides the fuel for that action. Specifically I posit that the leadership triumvirate i) passion for; ii) belief in; and iii) understanding of the organization’s *raison d’être*. The leadership triumvirate will be deconstructed as “passion capital,” “true believers,” and the “why,” respectively. These three pillars will be further analyzed by comparing two case studies that cover the time before, during and after a crisis. One example will illustrate an instance when the leadership triumvirate was present as a complete whole, the other when it was not. These case studies are the Hurricane Juan response by the Canadian Red Cross (CRC) in Atlantic Canada and Invisible Children’s Kony 2012 campaign.

Passion Capital

Coined by Paul Alofs in 2012, passion capital is,

...the foundation upon which all other forms of capital are built. With passion capital you can acquire the others. Expressed as a formula, passion capital looks like this: Passion Capital = Energy + Intensity + Sustainability (Alofs, 2012, p. 7).

Energy for the mission, intensity in the focus, and sustaining passion are the elements that make up passion capital. For one to stick with something and see it through there has to be, according to Alofs, passion capital. Business is a series of inputs that are transformed into outputs that turn a profit, which is then reinvested into the next series of inputs and outputs. When passion capital is present, it is about more than inputs and outputs.

Passion capital converts inputs and outputs into an intense and sustained drive to see the realization of the best outputs possible.

Passion capital is underpinned by persistence. Hard work, trial and error, rejection, and patience are not easy to withstand without a passion for the outcome. As such, success is not generally a result of beginner's luck. Malcolm Gladwell advocates for the 10,000-hour rule, whereby excellence is not so much a result of genius or one brilliant idea in isolation but intelligence enough to seize an opportunity and possessing the work ethic to make it a reality (Gladwell, 2008). Consider hockey prodigy Sidney Crosby. Winning his first Stanley Cup at 22 years old, he was the first draft pick overall in 2005 upon being eligible for the National Hockey League (NHL). Described as "extremely driven, extremely competitive" by his Pee Wee Coach Paul Mason, Crosby spent hours shooting pucks at the family washing machine, perfecting his shot (Reebok, 2010). A natural talent without a doubt; however, Crosby's legendary status as "the Next One" did not come without years of daily practice on and off the ice and team work in practice and games to help the Penguins reach the pinnacle of hockey. Indeed, luck and genius are only so useful as the willingness and work ethic—the passion capital it takes—to turn the right corners. Turning those right corners requires hard work. For those born into wealthy families but with more ambition than to be satisfied watching interest accumulate, they too will find they are no exception; turning the corners to build on an empire requires hard work. Taking a step back, it takes passion (sustained energy and intensity) to seek out those corners which one must turn to realize success. It also takes a belief in what one is trying to accomplish.

The True Believer

Although very different in many respects, leaders of mass movements and leaders of organizations must captivate and recruit followers; they must be peddlers of hope for a bright future, and give those they take into the fold a sense of “chosen-ness” (Hoffer, 1989). As such, being a part of a movement has many parallels to being a part of a winning workforce: both significantly benefit from a leader who inspires loyalty and motivates action. Key elements of Eric Hoffer’s work on the nature of mass movements can be applied in the context of employee loyalty and motivation. Consider that Hoffer cites the “elements of pride, confidence and purpose [followers feel] by identifying with the efforts, achievements and prospects” of the collective (Hoffer, 1989, p. 13). The winning workforce that exceeds the status quo is not begotten of carrots and sticks. The leader of an organization, like the leader of a mass movement, must nurture and support *ideologically* driven followers who *want* create success and *want* to be a part of the organization’s success. Indeed, ideology rather than money creates a stronger bond. This is not to say that financial reward is not important. Indeed, salary quantitatively represents an employee’s value. However, as demonstrated in the example of Michael George and Ambir, how employees are treated matters. As demonstrated at Apple, a leader like Steve Jobs who embodies and vehemently watches over an organization’s aspirational vision inspires and encourages ideologically driven followers to fight for the organization and what it stands for. This will help prevent employee turnover in times of crisis.

Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric from 1981 to 2001, oversaw a five-fold increase in revenue during his leadership. When asked how he did it, Welch credits his

authenticity; his genuine belief in what he and his employees were doing. Welch stresses the impact of a leader's authenticity,

Values are a funny thing in business...But they're meaningless if leaders don't live and breathe them. Your team and bosses come to know who you are in your soul, what kind of people you attract and what kind of performance you want from everyone. Your realness will make you accessible; you will connect and you will inspire. You will lead (Welch & Welch, 2013).

To be authentic, the leader must truly believe that what the organization is doing will result in success. Toting values and offering up inspirational speeches are of limited use without action; the kind of authenticity Welch speaks of requires the CEO to say what they mean and do as they say. Not surprisingly, hypocrisy is positively correlated with employee turnover. According to a 2005 study,

Perceptions of organizational hypocrisy are genuine and have real consequences. Acts of inconsistency influence an organization member's intention to leave. Practitioners who believe they can ignore "walking the talk" because they provide a paycheck should realize their actions can have negative ramifications. The idea that organizational flexibility and goals are more important than consistency between perceived management action, culture, and rewards needs to be reevaluated in light of these results (Phillippe & Koehler, 2005, p. 20).

The true believer needs idealized influence. Both Jobs and Cavanagh walked their talk, and for that they were respected and admired, though for different reasons. Both exhibited authenticity, and employees respected that. No one went to Jobs for a hug, but he ensured an environment that was intellectually stimulating. Cavanagh is people-oriented, creating a quid pro quo between the company and its employees. Both strategies—although very different—encourage employee loyalty with action that aligns with words. Idealized influence is authenticity. Authenticity is about believing the *meaning* of the talk to *authentically* walk the talk.

Nelson Mandela once said, “Money won’t create success, the freedom to make it will.” Leaders who tend to be motivated primarily by other factors (money, prestige, accolades) tend to make decisions that are based on short-term outcomes—the price of stock or a year-end bonus. In contrast, the true believer takes the organization to new levels of innovation and creativity. As aforementioned, the CEO always wants to keep a finger on the pulse of the organization’s finances and ensure fiscal good health. In that vein, while driving up revenues is the end product, it is not *just* about making money, but also *how* and *why* one makes money. Every organization has a bottom line, but it is the satisfaction one finds in *what* they do and *why* they do it that brings lasting success. Thus, the CEO must find the synergy between passion capital and inspiring true believers. Employees must believe in what they are doing and why they are doing it if they are to find ways to make and do things better. Indeed, counting money does not improve efficiency or effectiveness.

While the ideals, vision and values will attract a potential true believer, true believers are usually not hired, but cultivated. As noted by a Harvard Business Review study released in the summer of 2012, while a vision can draw the attention of potential employees it does not necessarily keep them (Stafford, 2012). Today’s worker has easy access to a host of other opportunities online and if workers, particularly younger workers, “don’t feel like they’re learning, growing and being valued in a job” or not “getting ‘the personal attention, mentoring, the coaching [and] the training they wanted’ they are likely to look and eventually leave for another opportunity” (Stafford, 2012). As such, the true believer in the context of the organization is more a product of nurture rather than nature.

The “Why”

A key aspect is formulating loyalty among followers, as discussed above, is developing trust. Trust often comes from an acknowledged set of shared values, which leads to a sense of camaraderie and—especially in times of crisis—a “we are in this together” mentality. Articulating those values comes from a clear understanding of what Simon Sinek calls the “why” (Sinek, 2009). Sinek argues that if a leader is able to explain the vision the organization striving towards, he or she can inspire, motivate and encourage a culture of loyalty. A common cause gives people something to believe in and satisfies a *biological* need to belong (Sinek, 2009, pp. 49-53). The overlap between a leader of an organization and a mass movement is once again apparent; people by their nature are social creatures that want to be a part of something positive and impactful—something *great*. It follows that when a leader can articulate and demonstrate why the organization is great, employees will be more inclined to get behind the organization and stand behind it in times of trouble, based on a strong pre-existing relationship and group mentality.

In articulating the “why” a leader must remain honest about what is possible and the work required to take the “why” from talk to reality. The “why” must be at the centre, tethering “what” is being done within the organization and guiding “how” things are done (see *Figure 2.1*). While cheerleading is necessary, aspirational messaging cannot serve in lieu of realistic planning (“how” things are done) and disciplined operations (“what” needs to be done). Indeed, as important as inspiration, aspirations, and values are, the larger volume of an organization’s work and senior management’s time resides in the “how” and the “what” (see *Figure 2.2*). Hoffer notes that a leader can

be too aspirational, leaving the follower (or employee, in this context) to feel as if: “All that I am doing, possibly can do, is chicken feed compared with what is left undone” (Hoffer, 1989, p. 49). A CEO must ensure that he or she articulates and promotes the “why” and the management team stays focused on ensuring the strategy is smart (the “how”) and what is being done is effective and productive (the “what”).

Figure 1 (Sinek, 2009)

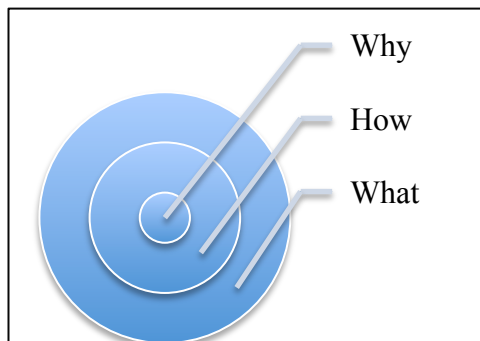
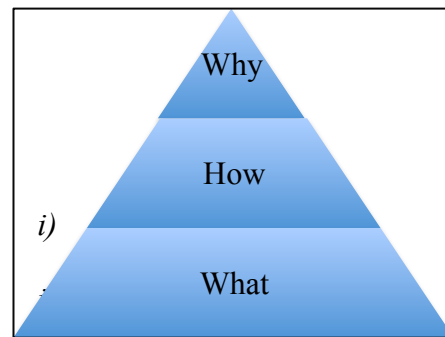


Figure 2 (Sinek, 2009)



Strategy is a Necessity: An Illustration of the Triumvirate Without Strategy

As previously mentioned, it was Sun Tzu who articulated the need for strategy in any organized group. Without strategy passion capital, true believers and the “why” are predestined shipwrecks sailing on good intent. To illustrate the importance of strategy, consider two non-profits: one international (the Kony 2012 movement led by Invisible Children) and one local to Atlantic Canada (CRC Atlantic Chapter’s response to Hurricane Juan).

Invisible Children

In March 2012 the non-governmental organization (NGO) Invisible Children, led by director and founder Jason Russell, released a video describing the atrocities committed by Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). Kony’s crimes include using rape as a weapon of war, child soldiers, drugging

soldiers to encourage cooperation, and massacring civilians in the Central African region (mainly Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]). The goal of the video was to bring the remote African warlord out of obscurity, making him famous in an effort to encourage the US and the United Nations (UN) to take more aggressive action to stop Kony and the LRA (Crotty, 2012). The video became the fastest growing viral video of all time, receiving approximately 112 million views in just one week (Grossman, 2012). The video was successful in that it did garner widespread international attention. On Spring Garden Road, the main shopping district in Halifax, Nova Scotia, telephone poles were covered with “Kony 2012” posters, bought through the Invisible Children website which was selling Kony 2012 action kits. Millions of people around the world continued to view and share the video online. Support for Invisible Children was at an all-time high. Indeed, the video brought attention to Kony; however, intense attention was also cast on Invisible Children itself, including its cost per dollar raised, its motives, and whether a small organization from San Diego had any place interfering with and simplifying a complex geopolitical issue that predates Kony.¹ Invisible Children was not prepared for the attention it was receiving. The organization’s true believers had released an aggressive “why” with passion, but without a strategy for the successes and criticisms that would follow.

Within a few weeks of the video going viral, public opinion quickly shifted from accolades to cynicism, with human rights groups, journalists and critics raising questions

¹ This is not to say that Kony is not contributor to the atrocities and perilous conditions in parts of the central African region. However, in the 1980s, the imposition of political authority by southern Uganda in the north led to several resistance armies, of which the LRA was one. Today, governance structures are rife with corruption and geopolitical issues including the illegal exploitation of natural resources, particularly along the Ugandan-Congolese border, are major underpinnings of the conflict. Kony is one part of a much larger and more complicated narrative of which the LRA is a small—albeit horrific—element.

about Invisible Children’s accountability structures, particularly as it related to the sudden influx of donor funds and what “raising awareness” would really accomplish in such a complicated African narrative. Invisible Children and Russell were accused of running a white savior campaign and oversimplifying a very complex regional conflict.² In the weeks following the release of the video, Invisible Children went from being a relatively small organization based in San Diego to the centerpiece of an international controversy. Invisible Children had no contingency communication plan for the controversial video. Making matters worse, Russell did 17 interviews in 48 hours, crossing the country on red eye flights whilst attempting to manage daily operations as per his usual schedule (Russell, 2012). The Kony 2012 campaign was going so fast it had run off the rails, finally imploding with Russell having a public meltdown, removing his clothing and running around the middle of the street outside of his home in San Diego, screaming at passing cars.

Invisible Children immediately lost credibility, and the organization and its cause faded from the spotlight. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey following his very public meltdown, Russell noted that he regretted not “surrendering ‘Kony 2012’ to my colleagues,” instead continuing to try to run the show by and large on his own (Russell, 2012). Invisible Children was not a small NGO anymore, and Russell *refused to adapt* to the changes the Kony 2012 campaign brought and *failed to delegate authority*, instead trying to take it all on himself. His belief in the cause was genuine—he was a true believer. He had passion for the cause. The “why” was clearly articulated (albeit oversimplified). What was missing was a *strategy* for successful viral cause marketing and the willingness to adapt and delegate.

² The notion of the “white savior” has been well summarized by Teju Cole in *The Atlantic* (Cole, 2012).

Hurricane Juan

Turning now to a local case study, consider the CRC Atlantic Chapter's response to Hurricane Juan in 2004. First, it is important to note that Invisible Children is a stand-alone organization, whereas the Canadian Red Cross Atlantic Chapter has both inherent national and international support given the scope of the Red Cross not only across Canada, but the world. Indeed, the support from which CRC Atlantic Chapter can draw is vast. However, as we will see, the Atlantic Chapter ensured that it had the capacity to be self-sufficient and self-sustaining should there be a large-scale local call to action. Further, the CRC Atlantic Chapter responds to natural disasters, which often come without warning and infrequently. This is similar to the attention Invisible Children received in that it was not typical for the organization. Easily, CRC in Atlantic Canada could fall behind and lose local disaster response capacity—but it doesn't. Invisible Children could have put together a contingency plan for massive success—but it didn't. Both organizations were faced with crises that required immediate response; one organization planned and had a strategy, one did not. As such, this case study makes for a relevant comparative analysis on the role of strategy in good crisis leadership.

Prior to Hurricane Juan, the largest disaster response had been the Halifax Explosion of 1917 (Halifax Regional Municipality, 2006). Indeed, CRC in Atlantic Canada had not had a response of that magnitude in nearly 87 years. With winds in excess of 180 kilometers an hour, the Hurricane Juan caused over \$100 million in damage, with the eye of the Category 2 hurricane passing directly over Halifax, moving in towards mainland Nova Scotia. Houses were ruined, many of the boats along the coast

sunk or had been cast on-shore, boardwalks washed away, steel posts bent and massive trees snapped, and 100,000 people went days without power, bringing the region to its knees (Canadian Press, 2013). Three lives were lost as a direct result of the storm. Moving directly into the response, CRC in Atlantic Canada mobilized a fully trained volunteer force—a force larger than what had been needed previously, but had been trained and maintained nonetheless for an event much like this. It did this alone, as national support could not immediately get access to the storm-struck region.

The volunteers were true believers in the cause. They had passion for the cause and the work they were doing. CRC keeps the “why” in the forefront of all training, beginning each training course with an overview of CRC’s vision, mission and principles. However, the bulk of the training moves directly into the “how” and focuses on the operations, logistics and human resource management of disaster response. Despite it having been over 80 years since CRC Atlantic had been called to action on such a large scale, it maintained volunteer reserves in the thousands, constantly recruiting and training volunteers to act in the event of a large disaster. In the end, CRC Atlantic was able to assist 27,000 people, operate 11 shelters and comforts centres, and successfully manage over 100 volunteers serving over 5,000 volunteer hours in an intense 12-day response without immediate national CRC assistance (Emergency Measures Organization, 2003; Canadian Red Cross, 2003). This was no small feat for a small regional branch of CRC that hadn’t been fully mobilized since the early 1900s.

This comparative analysis has illustrated the importance and interconnectedness of the leadership triumvirate with strategy, highlighting the importance of pre-planning

and strategy in crisis preparation, mitigation and management. Again, this comparison is made with full acknowledgement of the very different crisis types (one a natural disaster and one a public relations crisis), two different outlooks (one a regional response, one an international awareness mission), with two very different causes (the “why”), and finally, two very different resources from which to draw. However, these variables, acknowledged and taken into account, do not undermine the juxtaposition of how each organization dealt with crisis—one with pre-planning and strategy and one without. This comparative analysis provides a useful and stark contrast demonstrating the hazard in a cause (the “why”) without solid guiding strategy (the “how”).

Openness and honesty are critical. Passion capital must be guided, stewarded and managed—volunteers at CRC were given clear indications of what to expect in their training; sometimes CRC volunteers will be asked to take out the trash or sweep the cafeteria in the disaster shelters—the volunteers know that a disaster response often requires less glamorous assignments. Bandwagon jumpers are often disguised as true believers. When CRC volunteers discover in their training that the role may require more than the picturesque ideal of wrapping blankets around displaced persons, those without the passion and belief in the cause tend to be weeded out. Invisible Children fostered resentment from those who had supported the cause when the tide of public opinion began to turn. They felt as though Russell was unable to deal with the criticisms and inarticulately defended the cause, which led to mass abandonment. Invisible Children’s “why” had been oversimplified without readily available information relating to the nuances of the situation in central Africa and the limitations of Invisible Children’s

mission, and Russell was crucified for it. To manage the “why,” passion capital and the true believers, and to create new true believers, strategy and honesty are key.

Chapter Three: The Elements of Crisis Leadership in Practice

Application of the Theoretical Framework in Atlantic Canada

Having reviewed the theoretical framework of both modern day organizational crises as well as good leadership in critical situations, testing these frameworks in real scenarios will demonstrate these truths wholly and in practice. The first case study to be applied will be the IWK case initially discussed in the *Introduction*. The case will be looked at in its entirety, first testing it against the elements used to identify a crisis then examined to identify the elements of good leadership in crisis.

IWK Case Study

When Rehtaeh Parson's father went to the media on Friday June 7th, 2013 alleging that his daughter had been strip searched by two male staff at 4 South (the IWK's mental health inpatient unit), the IWK was thrown into crisis. Rather than remaining silent when media placed calls for comment from the IWK that would appear alongside Mr. Canning's comments, the IWK (via CEO Anne McGuire) released a generic statement regarding strip search policy:

Clothes are removed from patients if they are clinically assessed at a severely high risk to use their clothing to harm themselves... These types of situations are extremely rare due to our precautionary actions to provide a safe environment. However, in these circumstances, the gender of the care provider is of less relevance than the consequences of not acting quickly (Hoare, 2013).

McGuire waited until the article came out before commenting on anything specifically relating to Rehtaeh. Then, the IWK took what appears to be a dual-pronged strategy. First, to avoid shaking the public's confidence in the IWK, McGuire officially denied the allegations. Secondly, and arguably most importantly, in an effort to demonstrate respect

for an IWK patient and her grieving parents McGuire stated that Rehtaeh would not be well served by continuing the dialogue in public, stating: “We will reach out to Rehtaeh’s family to hear and discuss their concerns directly with them” (Willick, 2013). This strategy was very much in line with the hospital-wide policy of patient privacy, legally binding patient confidentiality rules and the ingrained culture of respect for patients and inclusion (as far as is appropriate) of patient families in patient care.

Next, the IWK took four actions to mitigate the crisis:

- i) McGuire provided Mr. Canning and Leah Parsons (Rehtaeh’s mother) with medical records and reviews relating to their daughter’s care and treatment at the IWK, personally reviewing the documents with them, whilst publically sticking to the messaging about official strip search policy. In a portion of the record released by Mr. Canning on his blog, it is indicated that Rehtaeh was not in fact strip searched by males, but that a “security presence was required,” thus indicating there were males present although not directly involved in the actual removal of any clothing (Canning, 2013).
- ii) The IWK Foundation was kept in the loop on the media releases coming from the IWK Health Centre and Foundation staff was provided copies of press releases to address any questions internally and ensure both entities were on the same page when questioned to avoid misinformation on a sensitive topic. All questions from the public to the Foundation were to be transferred to the Foundation marketing team. From there, any questions beyond the basic messaging were to be channelled to the

IWK public relations team. Above all, respect for Rehtaeh and her loved ones was priority.

- iii) Ahead of the upcoming AGM of the Foundation, at which a major donor was going to announce a \$1 million contribution to the construction of a new mental health unit, Gillivan informed the donor that there could be media and negative attention directed at the event. The donor was given the option to withdraw from the announcement. The donor decided to go ahead with the announcement, but was appreciative of the cautionary guidance provided to her and the option to withdraw. This was truly donor-centered, placing the donor first.
- iv) The IWK publically agreed to work with a provincially appointed independent expert, Dr. Jane Davidson, who had been commissioned to review practices at the IWK and Capital Health hospitals across the region (Canadian Press, 2013).

What was the outcome of this crisis from the organizational perspective? What was the process that led to this outcome? First, it must be tested to ensure that the event was indeed a crisis rather than a problem:

Table 3.1: Identifying Crises: The IWK Case Study

Criteria of a Crisis	Present	Comments
Impact is of a high magnitude/significant?	✓	Made local and international news, casting uncommonly widespread and intense spotlight on the IWK and its role in the situation.
Is there a need for immediate attention?	✓	A response was pertinent, not only to address the wider public, but to address concerned parents of patients in the unit and also acknowledge the pain and frustrations of Rehtaeh’s friends and family.

		The Foundation had donors who had given to the unit's redevelopment and needed to receive accurate and immediate information for donor accountability.
Is there an element of surprise/rarity?	✓	<p>The article featuring Mr. Canning criticizing the IWK was unexpected and came with less than one day's warning. The public relations team at the IWK received a request for comment prior to the article's release, as far as is known via available open source information.</p> <p>While the mental healthcare system in Nova Scotia had been the subject of scrutiny before, resulting in a commissioned report, this was the first time the IWK had been specifically singled out and criticized for procedures within this unit (Davidson & Coniglio, 2013).</p>
Is there a need to take action?	✓	The seriousness of the accusations alongside the timing regarding fundraising efforts towards a new unit required immediate action and collaboration with IWK, the Foundation, Rehtaeh's family and the government in order to find a respectful and meaningful resolution.
Is the event of a nature that is outside the organization's complete control?	✓	The right of Mr. Canning to speak out about the care and treatment of his daughter and his perception of that care is outside the control of the IWK.
Does it affect multiple stakeholders (internal and external)?	✓	<p>The criticisms of the IWK affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/patients • IWK staff • IWK senior management • IWK Foundation donors • IWK Foundation staff • Broader community who relies on the IWK for healthcare services, particularly those utilizing youth mental health services.

As illustrated in *Table 3.2*, the IWK was experiencing a crisis that originated from an external source. The crisis was a faux pas in that the IWK had unintentionally left the parents of a former patient feeling like the care their daughter received was careless if not

harmful to her rather than beneficial. The IWK had upset Rehtaeh’s parents, but without intent; a large part of this crisis stems from the lack of information Rehtaeh’s parents had about their daughter’s stay at the IWK. Given that there are no indicators that Mr. Canning was going to go to the media with his complaint, it is unlikely that this crisis could have been avoided. Freedom of speech ensures public dialogue, which can sometimes throw organizations into crisis. In bringing her family in to review the records, the IWK moved to alleviate concerns and facilitate understanding with full disclosure—albeit restricted to the parents out of respect for the patient and her right to privacy, even posthumously.

Table 3.2: Crisis Typology: The IWK Case Study

Intentional	Unintentional	
Terrorism	Faux Pas	External
Transgression	Accident	Internal

Table 3.3 demonstrates the steps taken across the IWK organization from pre-crisis to post-crisis.

Table 3.3: Process Management: The IWK Case Study

I.	Signal Detection: Early warnings of pending crisis/weaknesses	Rehtaeh stayed at the IWK in March and had attempted to take her own life in April. Her father addressed his concerns with the IWK and her care in June. The early signals of discontent are not immediately clear based on available open source information.
II.	Preparation/Prevention: Crisis planning, risk management	Ahead of the release of Mr. Canning’s comments, the IWK public relations team began to review mental health inpatient unit policies and processes, reviewing these with McGuire prior to her making a comment. The Foundation was looped into communications as necessary and



	centralized messaging came from the CEO of the IWK.
III. Containment/Mitigation: Proactive, reactive response as crisis unfolds	<p>The IWK avoided separate messaging from the mental health unit’s staff, the IWK administration and the Foundation.</p> <p>As the situation unfolded, the messaging remained the same, but the IWK was adaptable, agreeing to work with the government commission, meet Rehtaeh’s family and work with the Foundation to ensure coordination and provide all parties with accurate information as required.</p> <p>Critically, Mr. Canning and Ms. Parsons were not cast as the ‘enemy’ attacking the local children’s hospital, but as parents that required full information in a manner that would respect the privacy of the patient. This contained further potential damage by moving the crisis to a more private environment.</p>
IV. Recovery: Return to normal or “new” normal, short and long term recovery initiatives	With the records of the patient’s treatment at the IWK, the criticisms devolved from specific condemnation of the IWK to a broader discussion of youth mental health and cyber bullying in the province. The IWK offered full cooperation with the government commission in part as a result of the public discourse Rehtaeh’s death caused.
V. Learning: Collating, analyzing and acting on lessons learned, best practices	Resulting from the review of Rehtaeh’s records and the IWK’s cooperation with the government commission, the IWK along with other providers of mental health services would work to implement “trauma-informed care (TIC),” which strives to identify and avoid triggers that may stimulate further trauma for patients as well as facilitate a more integrated approach to mental health services and programs by including the education, social programs and the justice system in treatment and follow up procedures (Davidson & Coniglio, 2013).

	Rehtaeh’s family was given the opportunity to review the report before it was released. As a result, they were included in the solution and felt positive progress was emerging from a tragic event (Canning, 2013). This reinforced the mission of the IWK to incorporate as much of the family as appropriate in patient care (Davidson & Coniglio, 2013).
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Table 3.4 demonstrates the presence of transformational leadership. What is clear in this case study is that although transformational leadership is often viewed as an internal form of currency employed by management, transformational leadership can also have a positive impact on external stakeholders.

Table 3.4: Elements of Transformational Leadership: The IWK Case Study

Element	Applicable	Evidence
Idealized Influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leading by example - Clear communication - Demonstrate knowledge of situation 	✓	<p>Clear communication was demonstrated throughout, with all internal parties remaining on message.</p> <p>McGuire appears to have been fully briefed on the situation and the relevant policies.</p> <p>Family-centered care was employed by bringing in Rehtaeh’s parents for further discussion.</p>
Inspirational Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster commitment through symbolism - Communication and the development of interpersonal connections - Capable of earning and retaining the good faith and confidence of followers in the organization’s vision ultimately leading to a united force 	✓	<p>In extending an offer to Rehtaeh’s family to come in and review the official records, the IWK reinforced the notion of family-centered care.</p> <p>The Foundation symbolized the importance of putting the donor first, in offering the \$1 million donor the option to back out of the public announcement. This also demonstrated interpersonal relationship development which served to retain the good faith of the donor.</p>
Intellectual Stimulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistently asking 	✓	<p>While the situation in and of itself was challenging to the internal parties, the</p>

<p>employees to exceed the status quo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of the terrain and the organization's direction 		<p>CEOs of the IWK and the Foundation maintained composure and internal communication throughout the crisis to ensure a united front and access to accurate information to ensure consistency.</p>
<p>Individualized Consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paying attention to the personal/professional needs much as is practical - Maintain a fair balance between discipline and compassion 		<p>The IWK worked well with the Foundation to ensure the Foundation had accurate information and consistent messaging when addressing concerned donors.</p> <p>McGuire maintained a delicate balance between patient confidentiality and the sensitive nature of the tragic loss Rehtaeh's parents were dealing with.</p>
<p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee knowledge-based strategy to guide the organization/people within it 		<p>The strategy employed by the IWK remained tethered to the core vision of the IWK: patient privacy, legally binding patient confidentiality rules and the ingrained culture of respect for patients and inclusion (as far as is appropriate) of patient families.</p>

The Leadership Triumvirate in Action

When dealing with the crisis, the IWK did not reinvent the wheel. Rather, what happened in this instance is that the public relations team jumped into action, the CEO was briefed on in-unit practices and policy, and kept messaging respectful and matter-of-fact by addressing policy rather than individuals. Although patient confidentiality is pivotal in the Canadian healthcare system, the IWK took steps towards reasonable disclosure by inviting Mr. Canning and Ms. Parsons to review Rehtaeh's stay but protect the confidentiality of the medical staff involved (Tutton, 2013). In meeting with Rehtaeh's parents, the IWK removed the dialogue from the public forum. It should be noted that physicians are expected "to act in accordance with all legal requirements, but must also use their best judgment to practice medicine in a safe and humane manner...and

act with sensitivity” and that a request can be made to review the IWK’s decisions or actions by a Provincial Review Officer (IWK Health Centre, 2014). The IWK’s “**why**” is family-centered care. By inviting Mr. Canning and Ms. Parsons in to discuss Rehtaeh’s treatment, the IWK demonstrated consistency with a key tenet of the hospital’s core values in a way that would also provide Rehtaeh’s family with answers and, hopefully, a bit of peace.

In providing the \$1 million donor with the option to back out of the public announcement regarding the donation towards mental health at the IWK, the Foundation reinforced the donor’s will to go public—this is a clear example of stewarding, respecting and cultivating a “**true believer.**” Finally, the joint efforts of the IWK and the Foundation provided the support and information required for empowered action by staff to reassure patients, patient families, donors and the general public. The concentrated efforts, messaging tethered to core values, and the flexibility in the response created a sustainable solution to see the crisis through to its end. Indeed, the belief in the core values and the concentrated execution of the crisis management strategy demonstrated sustained **passion capital** at the IWK and the Foundation (*Passion Capital = Energy + Intensity + Sustainability*). Perhaps most importantly, Rehtaeh’s friends and family felt positive progress in the learnings of the study the IWK participated in and the implementation of TIC, resulting in a tangible benefit born of a tragic situation.

Chapter Four: Conclusion and Recommendations

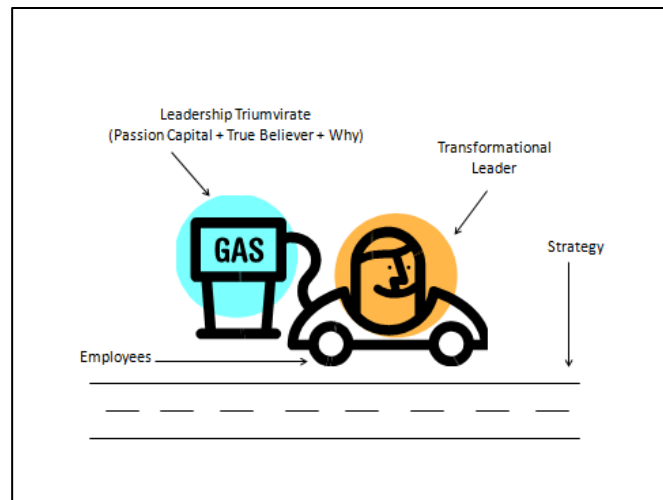
Making the Links

In each case study outlined in *Chapter Three*, the organization acknowledges the crisis at the highest level of management. Strengths are concentrated in existing areas of the organization, with expertise brought in as necessary, if at all. Communications are centralized and consistent, coming from the CEO to symbolize organizational unity and the gravity with which the organization views the situation. When the organization sees an opportunity to remedy the situation, as McGuire did in bringing in Rehtaeh's parents to review the medical records, action was taken swiftly. The confidence of employees is rallied behind the organization by the CEO through their commitment to and understanding of the organization's "why" and the crisis is lessened into something manageable. Throughout both case studies, the applicable theoretical frameworks are apparent, ultimately highlighting the importance of good leadership and sound crisis planning.

Removed from real world examples, how are transformational leadership and the leadership triumvirate related? What role does strategy play in linking these two concepts? What does this look like in times of crisis? In integrating these theories, a simple but effective way to view them as an integrated model is to view crisis as a journey—a road trip if you will—with the CEO at the helm, driving the organization forward. The road is the strategy, pinpointing the destination and mapping how the organization is going to get there. Transformational leaders and the key elements comprising transformational leadership are born of the leadership triumvirate; *the leadership triumvirate is the fuel that makes transformational leadership possible and*

impactful for employees. With the leadership triumvirate propelling the transformational leader forward, employees perform their roles with passion and a true belief in the raison d'être of the organization (the “why”). Employee loyalty is critical; they are on the frontline of

Figure 3: Key Elements of the Crisis Journey



the journey where the wheels hit the pavement. They are the internal mechanisms that ensure the engine is functioning and running smoothly. Communication between the leader and the employees is critical. If the leader spots a bump in the road ahead that may take the organization off course, honesty and consistent communication will be key. In addition, if one of the employees signals a weakness within the organization or comes across a bump in the road, senior management must be willing to listen, investigate and make a decision to act if needed.

Recommendations

From the aforementioned case studies and previous discussion of the relevant theories, the following recommendations can be made for organizations in crisis:

- Understand that not every situation is a crisis. Some situations are problems that the organization has dealt with before, only with different variables and players.
- The CEO should always keep a pulse on the financial health of the organization, the vitality of the mission and vision, and, the relational aspects of the workplace,

including setting the tone for the organization's culture. This is true in a crisis and after a crisis.

- It is key to understand that reinventing the wheel is not an inherent, necessary or beneficial management practice in crisis.
- Understanding the type of crisis (internal or external, intentional or accidental) is critical in determining the next steps. If the organization has erred, either intentionally or not, it is critical to acknowledge any responsibility. Swift action towards remedy is critical to mitigating damage and reducing the duration of the crisis. This is true whether the crisis is a direct result of action (intentional or accidental) taken by the organization or an external party.
- There is a process for crisis leadership. Not always linear, these steps lead to outcomes that enable learning for future situations.
- The evolution of leadership studies has led academics and practitioners to regard transformational leadership as an ideal for leaders of organizations. The case study and examples have demonstrated this to be true of leaders in crisis as well.
- There are different ways in which a leader can demonstrate transformational leadership, and different elements of transformational leadership are more important than others based on the organizational culture and situational factors.
- The leadership triumvirate is critical for internal and external audiences, yet, it is only as strong as the strategy. A key element to strategy is understanding the “why.” A key element to executing the strategy is the presence of true believers with passion capital, from front line employees up to and including the CEO.
- Be ready to adapt and do not be fearful of delegating authority.

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