

# Managing the Unimaginable

Chapter 2 – August 2020

As leaders, whether private, public or non profit, we're all being forced to explore dimensions of leadership within ourselves, our organizations and our industries that none of us could have imagined six months ago. And to be honest, none of us feels adequately trained for this. Quite the contrary. None of the institutions where we trained offered to teach us proficiency in "Managing the Unimaginable." So how do we proceed?

## Changing "Facts"

COVID has introduced a new set of "facts" that fundamentally alters the calculus of how we go about finding the right answers. COVID, the "novel" virus, has presented us with a novel business fact – "Trauma." Never within living memory has one global event produced such an immediate, pervasive and traumatic impact on virtually every aspect of life as we have known it.

The impact of this trauma on our individual and collective psyches constitutes a Super X factor that will influence nearly every aspect of how we live, love, work, and pursue our individual and collective activities going forward. The stark reality is that in both subtle and dramatic ways the rules of most of our games will have to change to accommodate the altered perceptions of the post-COVID world.

## Trauma Leadership

So here we are – leaders in a traumatized world. What do we do?

We have to start by admitting that we ourselves are traumatized – which does not mean we are either weak or paralyzed, but definitely in a greater state of uncertainty than we have been before. We need to personally acknowledge where and how our own foundations have been shaken.

We need to pause, give ourselves a break, and then embrace the four established principles of trauma recovery: *Recognize, Relate, Reframe, and Regenerate.*

Starting with ourselves, we must ask how COVID and the ensuing chaos has rocked our worlds. Have we been afraid? Have we gotten angry, frustrated, perplexed, confused, thrown off our daily rhythms, thrown a tantrum, or been surprised to find lethargy where we normally we would have resorted to action?



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**John McCreight** has been a management consultant in public practice since 1968, partnering with clients worldwide in developing and implementing strategy.

John's consulting involves partnering with CEOs and their senior leaders, directors, boards, and investors in industry; and senior leaders in the government.

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Matt has been associated with McCreightPartners since 2011.

### Our Firm

McCreightPartners serves clients worldwide, to ensure the successful design and implementation of strategic, large-scale change.

### Our Experience

Our consulting practice has been built on decades of experience partnering with some of the world's most respected leaders and organizations . . . implementing complex, and often intense change.

### Our Goal

Partner with our clients worldwide to ensure their competitive superiority.

Once seen in ourselves, we have to recognize these traits in those we lead, and our customers. Not one of us can be expected to behave according to the old scripts which comfortably defined our roles, our characters and the way the world worked before. New scripts are already being written with new roles, new props (think: Zoom), new boundaries (“social distancing”) and whole new ways of relating. We need to turn our doubts, fears, confusion, and maybe even grief at things lost into assets that we can share as bridges to empathy with those we lead. We need to find, if we do not already have it, “**Empathy**” as a primary leadership trait, because we will only know how to lead the people we serve if we know what both we and they are feeling.

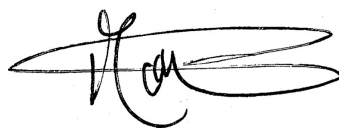
### **Empathy In Action – Trauma Leadership for the Post-COVID World**

The antidote to trauma is empathy in action. Those enterprises that emerge as winners from the current crisis are going to be those with leaders who establish a new “contract” between management, employees, and the customers and stakeholders they serve. The new contract will be based on transparency and trust starting with recognizing post-COVID facts, relating to their personal and external impacts, reframing our models to reflect post-traumatic effects, and then regenerating the enterprise to address post-COVID realities.

The bottom line is that we’re going to have to potentially change every aspect of our business models in both big and small ways to forge a new social and commercial contract. Those that embrace the requirements, and learn how to operationalize empathy, will be the winners in the post-COVID world.



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#### How We Add Value

- analyzing and refining strategy
- defining implementation initiatives with timelines and milestones
- defining implementation roles, accountabilities, and resources
- monitoring implementation progress and identifying and assisting mitigate roadblocks
- ensuring strategy is sound, sustainable, scalable, and will be successfully implemented, on-time, on-target, and on-budget

#### Our Clients’ Focus

- Community Justice
- Education
- Energy
- Healthcare
- Information
- National Security
- Technology

#### Our Alliance Partners

Our firm nurtures relationships with over 100 partner-level professionals as Alliance Partners. They complement our clients’ competencies, exemplify preeminence in their fields, and bring to engagements a depth of experience dealing with many difficult business, governance, culture, talent, information, and technology challenges.

#### Our Research & Operations Center Professionals (ROC)

Our ROC professionals focus daily on understanding lessons learned and emerging best practices. They ensure our firm’s professionals are informed, competent, proactive, and responsive, and that we bring immediate value to our clients.