



Making Your Business More Resilient

Organisations need to be strong in the face of continuing uncertainty with leaders ensuring their senior teams are fully aligned, **David Hobbs** reports

Strength in depth is an oft-quoted maxim for successful sports teams. It could equally be applied to organisations as they face the curve balls of an uncertain future. With the prospect of potential restructurings ahead, leaders must ensure their senior team is firmly aligned and that their organisation's communications and culture are deep rooted and robust.

At Criticaleye's [HRD Forum](#), held in association with [Accenture](#) and [Workday](#), a poll found that 30 percent of HRDs felt alignment across the leadership team was starting to fall apart. While unity in the top team might be relatively easy at the peak of a crisis, cracks are now beginning to show.

Responding to this, **Matthew Blagg**, CEO of Criticaleye, said, "Where we are going

now is much more difficult. We are in a much tighter environment where the strength of the leadership team is being exposed. Strong leadership makes such a huge difference and if you haven't got it, it's going to be really hard to take the business through the next 18 months."

Leaders need to be decisive – making calls that will affect both their short-term survival and longer-term resilience. **Andy Young**, Managing Director and Talent & Organisation Practice Lead at Accenture, said, "This is not an easy time and it's going to get more intense with decisions having to be made under pressure.

"For business leaders, it's a time to make the decisions that really matter, because those that are made now will be the ones that shape the decade. If they make the right ones, using data and empathy,

they can shape a better future for their organisation and its people."

David Balls is Group HR Director at Rank Group, the gaming and casino operator. He agreed that even in the eye of the storm, businesses need to be thinking about how they will emerge. "Whatever you do now will lay the foundations for how your organisation is going to come back together post-pandemic – however far ahead that is – so you've got to do it right," he said.

The decisions leaders make need to be in tune with the business purpose. "You must have very frank conversations at a leadership level. Protect your culture and manage [the crisis] in a very humane way. We need to ensure that we control our costs but equally we've got to make sure we treat people respectfully," **David** said. ➤



Decisions also need to be communicated effectively. **Genevieve Glover** is HR Director at Barchester Healthcare. Two years ago, the company embarked on a communications overhaul, creating a framework to ensure consistency in its messaging – a big challenge with such a widely distributed and hands-on workforce.

“It is about being clear on what you’re communicating, to whom, when and why,” she said. “Of our 19,000 staff, around 16,000 don’t have regular access to a computer or company email address. We need to make sure they have received the information, and we use a range of media including a [bespoke] app and mass email to ensure that.

“To be able to scale that up for COVID – when we were talking twice a day, seven days a week with different groups, including conference calls with over 250 operational leaders at a time – has absolutely helped our company-wide response to the pandemic. It’s strengthened the business as a whole by ensuring that our leaders were, and remain, clear about the new and changing requirements that would impact their services.”

Restructuring in a Virtual World

Matthew stressed the added importance of great communication when you are going through a restructure. This is critical if you are going to maintain trust.

“Restructures are much harder at the moment, for the simple reason that virtual restructuring is even more brutal than physical restructuring. It can cause distrust, because when you’ve got people at the end of Zoom calls, it feels very inhuman,” he said.

“The HR director has a key role to play in ensuring the cultural strengths of the organisation are drawn upon and will remain after this huge period of change.”

For **Nicky Pattimore**, Chief People and Customer Officer at City & Guilds Group, peer coaching has been used to help colleagues transition through redundancy. Business leaders have also played a pivotal role in supporting people and anchoring the organisation’s culture.

“As leaders, we’ve made the commitment to keep in touch with colleagues until they’ve found a new job. From an HR team perspective, we’re doing everything we can, including contacting other organisations to help our colleagues find new work.

“We’ve tried throughout to be very human and empathetic. It’s produced very positive feedback, even from colleagues who are leaving. You can bring in compassion to these difficult processes. Companies that haven’t done that will suffer in the long term,” she said.

Andy agreed: “People will remember how an organisation treats its people during the response to the pandemic. This will impact the Employee Value Proposition for those in the business and also for those who leave. Remember, that group of people are potential customers.”

Inevitably, the ongoing pressure is also impacting on business leaders’ personal resilience. Criticleye research earlier this year found that 58 percent of CEOs felt isolated in their role. With more difficult periods and decisions to come, it is incumbent on those at the top to take a step back and look after themselves, as **Matthew** observed.

“These pressures are real, and you and your HRD may well get a lot of nasty things said about you. You can do everything right, but you’re still going to get mud thrown at you. So, you’ve got to have that resilience and be able to look at yourself in the mirror knowing that you’ve done the right thing.”

David concluded that if CEOs think they should have seen this pandemic coming and should know what to do next, then they’re being too hard on themselves.

“The significant majority of us did not have a global pandemic on our risk registers 12 months ago and we certainly haven’t got all the answers. So, remember that and give yourself space to reflect. That’s how you become resilient.” ■

Featuring Commentary From:



Matthew Blagg
CEO
Criticleye



Genevieve Glover
HR Director
Barchester Healthcare



David Balls
Group HR Director|
Rank Group



Andy Young
Managing Director
Talent & Organisation
Practice Lead, Accenture



Nicky Pattimore
Chief People and
Customer Officer
City & Guilds Group

Contact the contributors through:
www.criticleye.com