

# 3Rs OF LEADERSHIP RESILIENCE IN THE NEXT NORMAL

**Uncertain. Unknown. Unpredictable.** Besides mirroring the dynamic nature of a crisis, these adjectives are reflective of the “**next normal**” - an unprecedented new era that is ever-changing and riddled with ambiguity. As such, **resilience as a leadership competency** is more important now than ever. This refers to the ability of a leader to manage, recover, learn, and grow from chronic or crisis adversity. This series will share stories of leaders from diverse backgrounds and industries on how they have responded in times of uncertainty, managed recovery, and reinvented for the future. This issue of this series explores how leaders may hasten recovery from crises or adversities by implementing a **collective pause**.

**RESPONDING**

NAVIGATE THROUGH  
UNCERTAINTY

**RECOVERING**

LEARN AND EMERGE  
STRONGER

**REINVENTING**

PREPARE FOR THE  
FUTURE

## THE POWER OF A COLLECTIVE PAUSE

*We are at a crossroads of a changing global context, with many assumptions and beliefs of the world, including the way we live and work, being challenged. It is important for leaders to take time to pause and reflect, at an individual, team or organisational level – to review and consolidate. Pressing pause in the recovery of a crisis could provide leaders with an opportunity to take stock, create a shared mental model, and cast a vision of what lies ahead for themselves and their teams.*



When Apple first went public in 1980, it was worth about \$100 million under the leadership of Steve Jobs. When Jobs rejoined in 1997 (after having left in 1985), he faced the task of restructuring an organization that was on the brink of bankruptcy. At that time, Apple was producing a random array of computers and peripherals, including a dozen different versions of the Macintosh.

Job's first order of business: to drop costly projects and streamline the company's focus. Because of this renewed focus on purpose, Apple changed everything about the company. Instead of producing multiple versions of the same product to satisfy requests from retailers, Jobs' strategy was to produce only two categories of products targeted at consumers and professionals – desktop and portable device. By getting Apple to focus on making computers, he saved the company. “Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do,” he said.



While trying to bounce back quickly from a crisis, it may be tempting to jump from one urgent task to the next, to take charge of what is right in front of you— to just execute. Yet this can be a tragic mistake. At the individual level, the simple act of pausing, even for as little as a few seconds, allows the brain to focus on the most relevant information. Therefore, it is essential to give yourself and even your team a moment to **step back, think deeply about what is happening, and prioritise the most pressing issue first**. The ability to consolidate one's thoughts, goals and values may enable one to better anticipate how things might unfold subsequently, in turn facilitating better decision making that can help to minimise knee-jerk reactions and poor outcomes.

“If leaders today do not step back, to stop momentum, to gain perspective, to transcend the immediacies of life, and to accelerate their leadership, we will continue to crash economically, personally and collectively.”

- Kevin Cashman



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### **#1: Press Pause: Take Time to Step Back**

- In times of uncertainty, it helps to **step back** from the situation to gather information and gain clarity on what is most important. The metaphor of "**going to the balcony**" captures the essence of stepping back in the midst of action and asking "What is really going on here?".
- Inspect the changes that may have occurred due to the crisis (e.g. in your work or your relationships with colleagues). Think about what the changes mean for you and the people around you.
  - What are some positive or negative changes and what can you learn from this experience?
  - What is most important to address right now? What might we be missing?
  - How might things unfold from here, and what could we influence now that could pay off later?
- Focus on what can be done better and differently in the future, rather than defaulting to the way things worked before the crisis happened.

### **#2: Dive Deep into Assumptions and Key Questions**

- To engage in honest and meaningful reflection and learning, it is important to examine **key assumptions** and **ask the right questions**.
- One may consider examining the implications and changes in the interaction with team members and question the norms and default ways of working.
- One may also revisit **core strategic questions** around the work, the workforce, and the workplace, which helps to frame one's vision
  - From the perspective of your team members, what are some of the changes? How have the changes impacted their well-being?
  - Have the goals, needs and expectations as a leader and team changed moving forward?
  - What are some goals that should be prioritised?

### **#3: Move Forward with Intention**

- Simply making sense of what has changed and what can be learnt are insufficient — they should be accompanied by **intentional actions** to support beneficial changes, be it structurally or socially.
- One should also be mindful of the needs of the self and the team when crafting strategic goals and focus.
  - One example could be reimagining conventional 'benefits' (e.g., gym membership, team retreats) and adapting them to the current climate.

Please scan the QR code to find a video by Kevin Cashman, a global thought leader and author, on the **Pause Principle**.



### **Sources**

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