



SHRM Linkage

From Strategic Intent to Enterprise Impact



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During the COVID pandemic, corporations showed unprecedented adaptability and agility in a context where forecasting was near impossible. While the current business environment may lack the pandemic's coalescing focus, senior leaders today face similar levels of uncertainty and unpredictability.

Barriers

Three internal barriers can hinder leaders' ability to make the decisions required for long-term resilience:

1. **Short-term bias:** The pace of change pushes leaders to spend more time fighting fires than building long-term strategy. Additionally, short-term demands may directly conflict with what the corporation needs for long-term success.
2. **Analysis paralysis:** The proliferation of data and scenario planning places expectations on leaders to justify every decision with analysis, slowing execution and devaluing intuition and spontaneity.
3. **Risk aversion:** Shorter executive tenures encourage risk-averse decisions that protect personal accountability rather than the organization.

To lead through uncertainty, senior leaders must:

1. Set clear priorities
2. Change culture
3. Reward the right behavior

01 Drive Execution Through Clear Priorities

Set no more than three major strategic priorities. All discussions and decisions must serve at least one of those priorities or be set aside.

Ensure everyone commits to the priorities, whether they agree with them or not. Invite debate and diverse perspectives. Set a time limit for discussion. Once the decision is made, be clear that the time for dissent has passed.

Clear priorities allow authority for risk-taking and decisions to move deeper into the organization, increasing speed and adaptability.

02 Change Cultural Behavior From The Top

Everyone looks first to their leader during uncertainty. The leader's posture cuts through doubt, allowing the team to relieve their anxiety and focus on their work.

Be confident in the goals you set for your company. Show your teams that you trust your intuition and the information supporting your decisions. Don't hide the depths of uncertainty; be upfront about what you don't know, but show confidence in the plan on how you will manage it.

Be clear about the behavioral traits you seek from your workforce and celebrate tangible examples. Model the desired behavior.

03 Reward The Process

Failed initiatives are inevitable during periods of high uncertainty. Reward the quality of the decision process, not only the outcome.

Rather than trying to guarantee success, focus on increasing the probability of achieving it.

CASE STUDY

Behavioral Leadership

In 2022, Harvard Business School surveyed 1,500 CEOs on the leadership skills most needed after the pandemic. In order, the top four were:

1. Adaptability
2. Curiosity
3. Creativity
4. Comfort with ambiguity





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