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Leveraging Pandemic Learnings (Part 1)

The Present: Facing the Storm

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Emergencies and crises often create the perfect storm for transformation, as change is primarily driven by the powerful winds of Pain and/or Gain.

Not surprisingly, up to 80% of change is propelled by Pain, a wake up call that pushes us out of complacency, providing opportunities to raise the bar, innovate, shift paradigms, modernize, and make systems work better for more people. Pain compels us to face outdated realities and systems that we are otherwise reluctant to contemplate, infusing us with the courage to do so. See this reference for examples in the world of IT.¹

Connecting the Dots and Identifying Improvement Opportunities

Pain also entices us to connect the dots. For instance, the pandemic pointed to obvious parallels with the climate change emergency, increasing our awareness, motivation, and sense of responsibility:

Covid-19 is a dress rehearsal for dealing with climate change: telework and virtual meetings show travel can be reduced, with satellite images revealing the dramatic decline in air pollution. While the crisis exposes weaknesses in existing operations, it opens the door to shorten supply chains and make them more transparent, socially conscious and environmentally friendly.²

Bottom Line: as dramatic as COVID-19 is, it highlights significant opportunities to improve our social, democratic, economic and environmental systems.³



Stepping up to the Plate

During crises, people pull together. COVID-19 is not only bringing people, but the whole country together! Driven by caring, compassion and stewardship, Canadians in droves, are volunteering, donating to charities, looking after their communities, celebrating healthcare heroes, grocery shopping for their homebound neighbours, signing up to volunteer at distress call centers... Throughout, people are looking for opportunities that match their talents & strengths, as well as deepening purpose & meaning.

¹ Edmead, M. (2016, January 8). What's driving your organizational change? IT Convergence Factor. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.cio.com/article/3017199/whats-driving-your-organizational-change.html>

² Davis-Peccoud, J., & van den Branden, J.-C. (2020, April 17). Covid-19 Gives Sustainability a Dress Rehearsal. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.bain.com/insights/covid-19-gives-sustainability-a-dress-rehearsal/>.

³ Image retrieved from: Crowdiate Gathers a Global Creative Army to Fight a Global Enemy: LBBOnline. (n.d.). Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.lbbonline.com/news/crowdiate-gathers-a-global-creative-army-to-fight-a-global-enemy>

For example, seeking to offer hope and inspiration, artists are painting rocks with uplifting messages, and dropping them in parks & forests for people to read during daily walks. In this touching picture, a citizen thanks the artist... who then responds!!!



Photo by Kris Banfield

Meanwhile, musicians record comforting, hopeful songs and post them online. Check out this heartwarming [video](#),⁴ featuring members of the Crosby family (father and toddler daughter) in a rendition of *You've got a friend in me* from the movie *Toy Story*.

Recently, Canada's beloved aerial acrobatics team, the Snowbirds,⁵ launched *Operation Inspiration*, a cross-country tour to pay tribute to all Canadians, especially health care workers working tirelessly to fight COVID-19.



Team members repeatedly express their delight with the initiative, finding it meaningful and rewardarding.

Meanwhile, Canadians line up in droves with flags to see them: "Snowbirds are always worth seeing," Kevin Carter said. "They came out to encourage everyone across Canada, so we wanted to encourage them by showing up."⁶

⁴ The Crosbys. (2017, January 17). You've Got a Friend In Me - LIVE Performance by 4-year-old Claire Ryann and Dad. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukD8zj6ngVY>.

⁵ Image retrieved from: Snowbirds and Street Festivals: What is an Escape Room? (2019, June 10). Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.enterthebunker.com/2019/06/10/snowbirds-and-street-festivals-what-is-an-escape-room/>

⁶ Basa, J. (2020, May 8). The Snowbirds bring Operation Inspiration to the skies over Kingston region. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://globalnews.ca/news/6922022/snowbirds-operation-inspiration-kingston/>

Ramping up Capacity

Not only are individuals helping out, businesses are getting into the action: Kitchener's *Ink Smith* answered the call for medical equipment and is now taking its contribution a step further.⁷

Last month, *Ink Smith* began 3-D printing face shields for frontline workers. According to a news release, that company has the capacity to produce 50,000 face shields per day:

“Over the past few weeks, we have been extremely concerned about the critical shortage of medical equipment that our frontline healthcare workers are facing during this unprecedented global pandemic,” Founder & CEO Jeremy Hedges states in the release. “Using our existing tools and infrastructure, we realized we were in a position to help.”⁸

They have been ramping up production through a new company aptly called *The Canadian Shield*. Watch this [video](#)⁹ from CTV news speaking to the transformation.

Living our Brand

Not only are we pulling together to help, we want our actions to reflect *who we are* and *what we stand for*. Yes, we seek to build a successful and sustainable future... but one that looks & feels like us: a future aligned to our identity, vision & values, and our national brand.

As Maclean's Magazine stated in its May 2020 edition:

“Here in Canada, it...has meant putting some of our core beliefs about ourselves to the test. That we value order. That we compromise. That we unite for the sake of the common good - in this case, nothing less than the preservation of life... We hear from our politicians and leaders that this is what Canadians do. We help each other’, says Kerry Bowman, a bioethicist at

⁷ Hedges, J. (2020, March 31). “We’ve been here from 7 a.m. until 2 a.m. every day”: This 3-D printing company is mass-producing plastic face shields for health care workers. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://torontolife.com/tech/weve-been-here-from-7-a-m-until-2-a-m-every-day-this-3-d-printing-company-is-mass-producing-plastic-face-shields-for-health-care-workers/>

⁸ Banger, C. (2020, April 7). 'In a position to help': Kitchener company expands to make 50,000 face shields a day. CTV News. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/in-a-position-to-help-kitchener-company-expands-to-make-50-000-face-shields-a-day-1.4886766>

⁹ Ibid.

the University of Toronto...’ This will prove whether we are who we say we are.”¹⁰

And proving, we did: “Food Banks Canada says that donations topped more than \$8 million to date, five days after the appeal was made in the ‘Stronger Together’ TV special which became the most-watched, non-sports Canadian broadcast on record.”¹¹



About the Author



Françoise Morissette, M.Ed., P.C.C., has been a facilitator at Queen’s IRC since 1994, and was made a Fellow in 2006. She played a key role in developing and implementing Queen’s IRC’s Organizational Development curriculum and currently teaches on the *OD Foundations* and *Coaching Skills* programs. Françoise is a Certified Professional Coach, and she leverages coaching in her leadership practice, as well as training leaders and HR professionals on coaching skills.

Françoise is a major contributor to the OD field, with an emphasis on leadership and systems transformation, helping individuals, organizations and communities enhance their leadership capacity for performance and sustainability. In 2016, she certified as a LEADS facilitator. LEADS, a leadership capability framework originally developed in the Canadian health care system, is rapidly spreading to other sectors and countries. Françoise wrote *Made in Canada Leadership*, with Amal Henein. It was the product of a large research project on leadership excellence and development. The book also explores ways to refine and leverage our national leadership brand in the global world.

¹⁰ Hutchins, A., Smith, M-D., Markusoff, J., Taylor-Vaisey, N., Gonzales, C. J. (2020, May 1). QUARANTINE NATION: Maclean's: MAY 2020. Retrieved May 23, 2020 from <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/2020/5/1/quarantine-nation>. Page 14.

¹¹ Nersessian, M. (2020, May 1). Stronger Together special raises more than \$8M for Food Banks Canada. Retrieved May 23, 2020, from <https://www.ctvnews.ca/entertainment/stronger-together-special-raises-more-than-8m-for-food-banks-canada-1.4920366> “Stronger Together” image retrieved from the same site.

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