Leading Yourself, Your Workforce and Your Business in the COVID-19 Crisis

Dr. Bob Milligan
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• Studied Agricultural Economics At Michigan State and UC Davis
• Cornell Faculty 1975-2003
  ➢ Early career: Economic analyses of production and financial practices
  ➢ Later career: Developed programs for and taught leadership and supervision to adults (extension) and undergraduates
• Consultant 2003 – present. Work with farm clients in essentially all ag commodities to improve leadership and supervision. Most of our clients are seeking to go from good to great.
Leading Yourself, Your Workforce and Your Business in the COVID-19 Crisis

Three keys to survive/thrive in COVID-19

1. Leadership
2. Planning
3. Communication/collaboration
Leadership

Great leaders rally people to a better future

"In the current crisis, we need to think of the better future as referring to any future - 1 minute, 1 hour, 1 day, 1 week, 1 month, 1 year, 1 decade, 1 career."
Agenda – Four Topics

• You Must Stay Prepared to Lead

• You Must Have a Safe and Engaged Workforce

• You Must Lead Your Farm Business

• Thoughts on the Image of Agriculture
You Must Stay Prepared to Lead

A. Understand your limitations during loss/grief
   • We are all in various combinations of the first three stages of loss where decision-making capacity is reduced
Decision Making in the Loss Cycle

“Normal” Functioning

Shock & Denial
• Avoidance
• Confusion
• Fear
• Numbness
• Blame

Anger
• Frustration
• Anxiety
• Irritation
• Embarrassment
• Shame

Depression & Detachment
• Overwhelmed
• Blahs
• Lack of energy
• Helplessness

Dialogue & Bargaining
• Reaching out to others
• Desire to tell one’s story
• Struggle to find meaning for what has happened

Acceptance
• Exploring options
• A new plan in place

Return to Meaningful Life

Developed by Sharon M. Danes, Professor, Family Social Science Department, University of Minnesota; illustrated by Jim Kiehne Graphics. From Kubler-Ross, E., 1969, On Death and Dying.
“Normal” Functioning

Shock & Denial
• Avoidance
• Confusion
• Fear
• Numbness
• Blame

Anger
• Frustration
• Anxiety

Depression and Detachment
Hard to find the energy to make decisions

Decision Making in the Loss Cycle

Shock and Denial
Need for decision making often not recognized

Anger
Emotional drain makes decision making very difficult

Dialogue & Bargaining
• Reaching out to others
• Desire to tell

Depression & Detachment
• Overwhelmed
• Blahs
• Lack of energy
• Helplessness

Return to Meaningful Life

Acceptance
• Exploring options
• A new plan in place

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You Must Stay Prepared to Lead

A. Understand your limitations during loss/grief
   • We are in various combinations of the first three stages of grief where decision-making capacity is reduced
   • **We are more of who we are when under stress**—instinctive and thoughtful behaviors
Emotion

- Effect is internal to yourself
- Impact is primarily on yourself

Emotion are normal and very personal

Never tell someone: “Don’t be angry!”
Behavior

• Effect is external to yourself
• Impact is primarily on others

Since the impacts are external, other individuals and our environment can and should impact our behavioral response.

We choose our behaviors.
You can ignore your decision opportunity and express or act on the emotion.
You can use your decision opportunity and proactively discover the root causes that made you feel the way you do.

Think

Thoughtful behavior

React

Instinctive behavior

You can ignore your decision opportunity and express or act on the emotion.
You Must Stay Prepared to Lead

A. Understand your limitations during loss
B. Make plans to socially distance yourself and your family – in small businesses consider isolating key people
C. Take care of yourself – eat well, exercise, build in focus/thinking breaks
You Must Have a Safe and Engaged Workforce
You Must Have a Safe and Engaged Workforce

A. Everyone is watching you – you must maintain and build trust
TRUST

“We think of trust as precious, and yet it’s the basis for almost everything we do as civilized people. Trust is the reason we’re willing to exchange our hard-earned paychecks for goods and services, pledge our lives to another person in marriage, cast a ballot for someone who will represent our interests.”

Trust

• Harvard Business, May-June 2020 article “Begin with Trust” by Francess Frei and Anne Moriss.

• Build trust when you are viewed with
  1. Authenticity: I experience the real you.
  2. Logic: I know you can do it; your reasoning and judgement are sound.
  3. Empathy: I believe you care about me and my success.
You Must Have a Safe and Engaged Workforce

A. Everyone is watching you – you must maintain and build trust

B. Our agrarian independence and invincibility may, likely will, cause problems in this crisis
   • We and our employees hate to call in sick
   • Work until we are overtired
Keep the Workforce Safe

• Learn from what has happened at packing plants
• Establish and enforce social distancing rules
• Follow all recommended sanitary procedures
• Rethink and revise your sick leave policies to minimize the likelihood of the workforce being infected – 14 days sick leave is required for all employees who have COVID-19
The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. These provisions will apply from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

**PAID LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS**
Generally, employers covered under the Act must provide employees:
Up to two weeks (80 hours, or a part-time employee’s two-week equivalent) of paid sick leave based on the higher of their regular rate of pay, or the applicable state or Federal minimum wage, paid at:

- 100% for qualifying reasons #1-3 below, up to $511 daily and $5,110 total;
- 2/3 for qualifying reasons #4 and 6 below, up to $200 daily and $2,000 total; and

**QUALIFYING REASONS FOR LEAVE RELATED TO COVID-19**
An employee is entitled to take leave related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work, including unable to telework, because the employee:

1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;
3. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. is caring for an individual subject to an order described in (1) or self-quarantine as described in (2);
5. is caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) due to COVID-19 related reasons; or
6. is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
I Dare You to Overcommunicate

A. Be encouraging but realistic - authentic and empathic
I Dare You to Overcommunicate

As the pandemic continues to disrupt business as usual, managers must grapple with overwhelming uncertainty about the future. But even when you don’t have all the information, you should be transparent with your team whenever possible. Think about your employees’ perspective and consider what you would want to hear if you were in their shoes. Allay their anxiety as much as you can — and be honest about what you don’t know. You might say something like: “I wish I could tell you exactly what’s going to happen. We’re giving you updates as soon as we can.” At the same time, don’t sugarcoat bad news.
Trust

• Harvard Business, May-June 2020 article “Begin with Trust” by Francess Frei and Anne Moriss.
• You build trust when you are viewed with
  1. Authenticity: I experience the real you.
  2. Logic: I know you can do it; your reasoning and judgement are sound.
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Active Listening

Focuses on:
- Both message content AND underlying feelings.

Requires:
- Listening to both content AND emotions
- Providing feedback on both

Fosters:
- Open communication
- Growth in people
Skills to Become a Better Listener

1. Pause 1-2 seconds before replying
   - Show you are carefully listening
   - Avoid risk of interrupting
   - Hear the other person better

2. “Tell me more?”
I Dare You to Overcommunicate

A. Be encouraging but realistic - authentic and empathic
B. Use active listening and the short pause before responding
C. Everyone’s resilience is down - burnout will happen soon; watch for it
D. Involve everyone and collaborate as much as possible
E. Increase formal communication – weekly
Focus on Your Workforce

A. Ensure that you have enough labor if (more likely when) some part of your workforce becomes sick
B. Have a contingency labor force
C. Be creative in seeking additional labor as we now have high unemployment
D. Training and cross training is even more important
You Must Have a Safe and Engaged Workforce

A. Everyone is watching you – you must maintain and build trust
B. Our agrarian independence and invincibility may, likely will, cause problems in this crisis
C. Keep the workforce safe
D. I dare you to overcommunicate encouraging but realistic -authentic and empathic
E. Focus on your workforce
You Must Lead Your Farm Business
“When you're in a crisis of, you know, tremendous proportions, it's beyond any human capability to control, you just make the best decisions you can, and you just hope that your intuition is correct.”

Rudy Giuliani
You Must Lead Your Farm Business

A. Protect the farm and your farm business
   • NO Unnecessary visitors
   • Establish and post social distancing and sanitary policies – for those who must come onto the farm
   • Establish policies on who can be on the farm – use virtual communication whenever possible
You Must Lead Your Farm Business

A. Protect the farm and your farm business

B. Understand the circles of concern and influence and stay in your circle of influence
Circle of Concern

Circle of Influence

I have control or influence

Things over which you do not have influence
Circle of Concern

Your focus MUST be HERE

I have control or influence

Things over which you do not have influence
You Must Lead Your Farm Business

A. Protect the farm and your farm business
B. Understand the circles of concern and influence and stay in your circle of influence
C. Seek advice and collaborate
Collaborative Decision-Making

Common Vision

Gathering Information

Reaching a Decision

Learning from Experience

Experiences
Double or Triple Your Planning Time

Three levels of planning

• Detailed Plans – great detail; ready to implement

• Contingency plans – some detail; sufficient to know the threats and challenges

• Scenario plans – Unlikely but possible threats and opportunities; enough to get started when in grief or great urgency
Double or Triple Your Planning Time
Plans Required

- A workforce member or family member has or may have COVID-19
- A large enough proportion of your workforce has COVID-19 or is isolating that farm operations cannot be sustained.
- An owner or key employee becomes incapacitated for a period of time or dies from COVID-19 or anything else - business succession
Double or Triple Your Planning Time
Plans Required

- A crucial input supplier or market outlet suspends operations or goes out of business.
- Your farm business uses all its working capital.
- A lender threatens to foreclose on some or all your assets.
- A capital purchase opportunity - land, buildings, livestock -- avails itself with a very short deadline.
You Must Lead Your Farm Business

A. Protect the farm and your farm business
B. Understand the circles of concern and influence and stay in your circle of influence
C. Double or triple your planning time
D. Keep a keen eye open for opportunities
Thoughts on the Image of Agriculture
Thoughts on the Image of Agriculture

- Food is in the news – this is an opportunity to improve our image with our community and consumers
Thoughts on the Image of Agriculture

• Don’t
  • Complain about how bad things are when many others have it worse.
  • Complain about difficulties getting labor when we have a 10-20 percent unemployment

• Do
  • Look for opportunities to share positive stories
  • Look for potential hires that might become career employees.
Agenda – Four Topics

• You Must Stay Prepared to Lead: Understand how your emotions, your resilience, and take care of yourself
• You Must Have a Safe and Engaged Workforce: Maintain and enhance trust and increase communication
• You Must Lead Your Farm Business: Stay in your circle of influence and make detailed, contingency, and scenario plans
• Thoughts on the Image of Agriculture – look for opportunities
Leading Yourself, Your Workforce and Your Business in the COVID-19 Crisis
LearningEdge Monthly Readers,

I have been visiting with clients and colleagues and thinking about how to respond to our COVID-19 crisis. My wife and I are hunkered down as we are among the vulnerable and are in position to isolate.

This issue is a series of short articles focused around what I think are the three keys to navigating this crisis. They are:

- Leadership
- Planning
- Communication and Collaboration

Fear and Loss

Essentially every American has some level of fear and is experiencing loss/losses - loss of the normal...