

## Leading with Clarity in a Financial Tsunami

I was speaking at a dinner recently, and after I had finished the CEO gave a presentation to the group of leaders who were assembled. He made a number of comments about leadership and the content of my keynote, but what really struck a chord was when he described the current worldwide financial situation as a financial Tsunami. He then echoed my thoughts that the way to deal with any real challenge is to really understand your own clarity of purpose.

When we understand why we do what do, and when our teams have congruence around how we are going to meet our goals or objectives, then we have a real good chance of being successful. However, in times such as those we are seeing now, when our resolve is tested, it becomes even more important that we have clarity of purpose to drive our behavior.

Having a very clear clarity of purpose, having the ability to articulate what that is to our internal and external stakeholder's, enables leaders to make decisions knowing they are connected to that purpose, rather than constantly reacting to external circumstances.

I really do believe that the importance of understanding our clarity of purpose exists on a number of levels. First, what is it that as an organisation we are really trying to achieve? What is it that is most important to us? Second, as individuals what is it that really drives us and guides us in our decision making process? Third, how committed to these goals are those we enter into partnership with?

I see the importance of this time and time again, and on so many different levels.

I was flying to San Francisco a little while ago and sat down and have a conversation with the gentleman who was seated next to me. We both talked about what we do and we got onto talking about "clarity of purpose" and the significance of this. He was the Senior Vice President of a large multi-national company that was involved in the manufacture of medical related products. He told me how the organisation had just come out the other side of a very testing time. A product they manufacture and distribute was found to contain a fault that could possibly have an adverse effect on the user and, in the direst and remotest of circumstances, could lead to a death. Now, because the possibility of causing a death was so remote, it made the decision making process a difficult one that lasted almost twelve months. The decision was, do they recall the product or not?

He described in detail the process that the organisation went through, the cost analysis, the risk analysis etc. He then said that at the end of this very long and trying process, the decision was finally made when those on the deciding panel went back to what was most important to them. What at the end of the day did they really stand for above all else? Turns out it was the patient's health. Therefore the decision to engage in a product recall became easy and the many millions of dollars it would cost them became secondary.

On a similar and equally important level was the decision of an event co-ordinator who had heard me speak on ten different occasions. For the past two years I have been presenting for him on a senior leader management program, having heard me speak on so many occasions it was rewarding to hear what he took away after a recent presentation. He recounted a story for me of an employee of his whose wife was suffering from cancer; the drug she required was not on the PBS level and as such was cost prohibitive. He told me how he how he wanted to do something for this couple and had decided to lobby government to have them list the drug on the PBS system, thus making the drug affordable. At the end of the keynote he came up to me and said "I have heard you speak so many times, but today I really understood the message of clarity of purpose. All I need to do is fund the drug treatment for this lady. That will give her the result we are all after."

Two very different stories, but two examples of how the decision-making process just becomes so much easier when we are really clear why we do what we do.

For some there will be difficult times ahead, there is no doubt about that. People will lose their jobs, companies will fold, this is inevitable. But for those who face significant challenges one clear way to see your way through the fog and haze is to be clear on why you do what you do and surround yourself with people who have a similar resolve.

Peter Baines has road-tested leadership the hard way.

During a police career spanning over two decades, he has come up against some of the most confronting natural disasters and acts of terrorism the world has seen. Peter is an expert in authentic leadership, building powerful teams and creating the right results, even when starting from nothing – no time, no money, no staff - but as Peter says “No worries”.

At the core of Peter's presentations is the idea that there is no shortage of challenges in today's increasingly uncertain world. However, once we fully accept that the only constant is change, there are only two possible courses of action... become paralysed and fail to respond to the challenges we face, or take command and realise that Leadership Matters.

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