

Governance . . . After the “You Know What”

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Corporate Governance and Business Transactions

14 articles

Sixth in a Series

With knucklehead certificates in Zoom and MS Teams in hand, shall we pause a bit to peek around the corner? What lies ahead for Governance? Beyond obvious “enlightenment” such as masks, social distancing, how to “work remotely,” we take a closer look.

Think-Space

Many have rediscovered how to “hear yourself think.” Unless one is trapped inside an NYC apartment, running an improvised, unlicensed academy with five kids and spouse. **[1]** Even with e-conferencing, one’s life is, well, quieter. More space to think.

Less time wasted by meetings too many and too long; and by fellow “workers” popping into your office and camping out. Some aspects of “social distancing” will change forever how we communicate, respect one another's time, and get things done.

Teamwork

Some have reconnected with colleagues and learned of their capacity to adapt and “run toward the fire.” Unexpected heroes surface daily. Others now see the literal definition of “deer in the headlights.” Not all display the benefits of strong education, experience and, well, character.

Competence and Execution

It is no crime to be ill-suited to Crisis. We have recent experience with government shutdowns, the 2008 subprime mortgage meltdown and “great recession,” mass-shootings, tornadoes, and hurricanes. But not everyone responds alike to such events.

COVID exposed those who learned and grew from prior Crisis chapters. Others did not. Many Organizations will emerge as champions because of this; others will fail or lose their heretofore burnished brand and image.

Trust

The primary “coin of the realm.” Years to build, minutes to destroy. Communities trust us. Our Stakeholders, Workforces and Customers. COVID is a sort of “final exam” on trustworthiness; or maybe closer yet, the defense of one’s doctoral dissertation. Our Communities are scoring how we respond and act.

Does it disturb us to hear some complex, potentially harsh decision justified by that tired old saw, “*Never waste a good crisis!*”? The maxim arises from truth, of course, but its application often is misapplied to great harm. Our Communities expect more of us than hammer/nail solutions, and they will measure their Trust in us by what they see us doing now. If and once Trust is broken, it can take a generation to regain.

Governance

Ah, you knew we would land here. The Crisis prompts a report card on how C-suites, senior administrative pro’s and governing bodies make and execute decisions. And, recalling, “Governance” in its simplest expression is the process by which we plan and execute decisions of how our Organization deploys limited resources amidst “live ammunition” competition. States of emergency adjust the mechanics of Governance, but they do not render it moot.

Did your Governing Body meet its legal duties – step up to support and contribute to the demands of the moment? Perhaps they and management grew closer, built Trust, worked hard, spent long hours together jointly exchanging and formulating advice, options, and pathways. Maybe they found and tested the gray zones between “governance and operations.” Or did the governors “grab the wheel,” openly distrusting leadership’s competence and trustworthiness?

Conversely, how is management doing? Are they growing together in Trust and competence-to-execute? Some Organizations have found renewed strength and support in their Governing Bodies. In others, executives may just “grab the wheel” to “save the ship,” and mushroom their boards. The former will emerge stronger in all the elements noted above. The latter will fracture, some hairline, others compound and life-threatening, especially if legal opponents raise claims the Organization or its officers acted beyond their legal authority.

So, How About it?

May we hear from you, ***privately via L/I Message?*** Or by pseudonym to **t7ramirez@gmail.com**. And it is OK to respond, “Uh, I heard from a ‘friend’ at an ‘Organization’ to remain nameless.” All comments will be digested without attribution.

The basic question: ***How has my Organization grown, succeeded, or struggled in matters of Governance during the Crisis?***

One thing is very sure, Gratitude once again ranks high in the hierarchy of professional and private life. We are so lucky to be alive, struggles notwithstanding. Stay safe.

Yours for Better Governance

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[1] See Jim Gaffigan segment, CBS Sunday Morning **<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8vPnsWDr1g>**