

## Reassemble vs Reimagine

### *How Will Your Organization Decide to Approach the Future?*

By Matt Lehrman

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Training for my first marathon nearly 20 years ago, I learned that it doesn't matter whether you run fast or slow. The essential decision is whether or not to keep moving forward.

Every step demands a choice.

Look at the distance your organization has covered in the last year and you've no doubt endured your fair share of "...not how many times you get knocked down, but how many times you get back up" experiences.

Such tenacity, determination, and bravery have powered many through an incredibly difficult time.

Even though the pathway ahead isn't entirely clear, it's fast becoming time for governing boards and management teams to make a pivotal strategic choice in how they intend to approach the future:

- **Reassemble** the pieces back to their positions before the pandemic, versus
- **Reimagine** the possibilities to reconfigure the pieces in freshly relevant and compelling ways.

#### Reassemble

Begin with a discussion that asks, "***Is a return to normalcy truly in our organization's best interests?***"



There's an understandable craving for the security of what's familiar and a return to stability for those whose lives and livelihoods have been affected. Emerging from stress and crisis, it's tough to fault a board whose logic flows, "*Let's first get back on our feet before we consider other options.*"

Still, a thoughtful approach to reassembly must ask such questions as:

- If we were starting fresh today, is that still the way we'd do it?
- Who could or should we have served better?
- What have we learned or accomplished in the past year that we shouldn't give up?
- What tough challenges were we facing just before COVID hit and are they resolved or still lingering?
- What progress have we made to address our longstanding vulnerabilities?

Reassembly mustn't ignore all that's happened in the last year. While there's nothing wrong with holding ambitions in check, it's unreasonable to expect that any organization can simply go back to the way it used to be.

As the song says, *"Time keeps on slipping ... into the future."*

## Reimagine

A courageous board is one that's willing to ask, ***"What might we achieve if we are willing to be bold in our expectations?"***

Help your board by posing a few questions that spark such innovative thinking:

- What would be truly amazing for us to achieve?
- What have we been doing that we are now prepared to stop?
- How will being a more inclusive organization energize our capabilities?
- What opportunities (technology, resources, knowledge, etc.) are available to us today that are different than before?
- What fresh relevance can we offer to our community, stakeholders and/or customers?

Such questions are potent building blocks. Where board and management find agreement and work together collaboratively, the potential of their organization's future is truly unlimited.

## It's Time to Choose

COVID and its economic toll ... 500,000 deaths ... political divisiveness ... a reckoning of systemic racism ... the rapid advance of technology – stress, distance & exhaustion - it's been quite a year.

At all times, a board of directors holds the responsibility to set its organization's direction. But right now, the stakes (meaning both the opportunities and consequences) of that consideration feel especially high.

These few framing questions are designed to prompt mindful and purposeful decision-making.

Every step demands a choice.

## Let Us Help

For nonprofits, businesses, and all sorts of communities and groups that need to communicate inclusively and make strategic decisions collaboratively (i.e., board and management retreats, all-staff meetings, strategic planning initiatives, multi-party alliances, public outreach/input sessions, and crisis situations), **Social Prosperity Partners** provides facilitation services designed to leave people feeling ***productive, empowered, and respected.***



*Matt Lehrman and John Little are co-founders of Social Prosperity Partners, providing services in strategic planning, group facilitation, and community engagement.*

## Contact us

[www.SocialProsperity.us](http://www.SocialProsperity.us)

Matt Lehrman

602-622-7694

[Matt@SocialProsperity.us](mailto:Matt@SocialProsperity.us)

John Little

480-720-4777

[John@SocialProsperity.us](mailto:John@SocialProsperity.us)