

## Leading through Chaos

By Kathy Kraus

It is a little over a month since my last blog **“Embracing my chaos”**, where I shared my personal experiences in the first few weeks of lockdown. I was mostly upbeat and positive, albeit exhausted. I was channeling my inner warrior and digging deep for the resources to cope as a single mum, leader and friend.

I was consuming a thousand and one articles and white papers a week around how to cope with this crisis.

Catalyst’s MD, Debbie Craig, hosted a series of webinars around **Resilience in times of Crisis**.

One article by Korn Ferry, **Accelerating through the Turn**, explored the skills leaders need to succeed in the future by continually adapting. This resonated deeply with me... being agile, focusing on the positives and what is possible, welcoming ideas, staying connected and appreciating diverse values and perspectives.

Anticipate	Drive	Accelerate	Partner	Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make quick decisions and create opportunities and provide clear direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energize people and give purpose, keep people hopeful, optimistic and intrinsically motivated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement ideas and empower innovation, use agile processes and quick prototyping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect cross functional and organisational boundaries, enable exchange of ideas and enable high performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate diverse perspectives and values</li> </ul>

The Catalyst team stretched and flexed our digital muscles to near tearing-point - researching new tools, platforms, apps, systems and social media and marketing channels, to reorganise our team, restructure our client delivery and quickly establish new ways of working and collaborating. We quickly set up our core team to work remotely, and, in an effort to stay connected and support each other, we check-in 3 times a week for 30 minutes.

But the adrenalin-fueled emergency response (“it’s ok, we can do this”, or “it’s just another week or two”, “just push a little harder”, “let’s try this out”, “just keep going”) that had gotten me, and the Catalyst team, through the first 60 days of lockdown was not going to sustain us indefinitely. And as our initial SA lockdown was extended seemingly indefinitely, I felt my personal reserves running low. My mental, emotional, social and physical resilience was being tested and stretched.

I struggled saying no to children and clients alike, and the list of things to do just keeps growing. With a steady flow of school-work and projects, housework and cooking, and seriously fluid working times I have battled no small measure of guilt about how little quality time I was spending with my children.

Now, as a passionate people, talent and change consultant for the last 15 years, I know that you cannot pour from an empty jug. I knew that I needed to take time out to focus, renew my energy and fill **MY** jug, but **WHEN?** When could I possibly make the time to rest, reflect and to replenish my resources?

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And so, as if on cue, on one ordinary (ja, whatever) Wednesday evening, while grappling with a self-imposed (mostly) pressure to be the best version of myself and come up with yet another new product, the gentlest nudge from a dear friend opened the floodgates. The enormity of this awful crisis came tumbling down my cheeks all at once.

I cried for what seemed like hours. I cried for all the lives lost to the Coronavirus. I cried for those that have lost their livelihoods, and for all the hungry children I see and read about so often. I sobbed because I am a terrible homeschool teacher to my children, leaving them most days to entertain themselves on some device or other. I mourned the “loss” of my friends. And I cried because my jeans fit funny these days.

When the tears had run dry and I was left only with the dry heaving that follows a good cry, I realised there was never going to be **free** time, and that I would have to make the time. I was reminded of Steven Covey’s **7 Big Rocks**. If you don’t prioritise the big things first, you won’t ever get to them.

I deeply underestimated the support that I need from my fantastic and supportive team to continuously redirect and self-disrupt, and specifically how difficult it would be to ask for it. I am a warrior remember? Needy is so not my happy place.

So, I have had to find a way to prioritise **ME** time. I have had to contract and communicate my commitments clearly with all the people in my life.

It has been a steep learning curve, but with the support and compassion of my nearest and dearest friends, colleagues, I am learning to be a whole lot gentler with myself. I trust my team to be vulnerable, to have an off day, and to say no.

I don’t always find just the right way to say “thank you” but my cup overflows with gratitude.

***Kath***