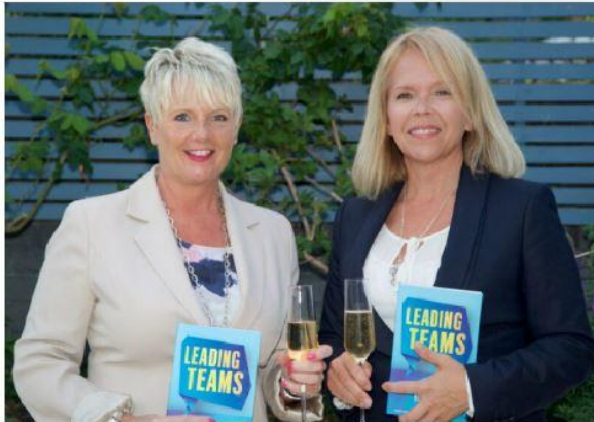


How to get your team working together in uncertain times



By Mandy Flint and
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Change and uncertainty is unavoidable. The current speed of change makes the periods of uncertainty more frequent.

During uncertain times, people can experience all sorts of emotions – often, but not always, on the negative side.

Fear, worry, anger and anticipation don't necessarily bring out the best in people, but there's plenty you can do when this happens in your team or workplace – to support and drive constructive progress, lessening negative emotions. The current climate following the EU referendum can be such an opportunity.

Let's have a look at some proven solutions for getting your team to pull together and work together despite – or maybe thanks to – the uncertainty:

TALK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS

Naturally there are many questions during uncertainty, and not necessarily as many answers. Keep the communication flowing though; sit your team down at regular intervals, check how they are doing, what they wonder about, what concerns and hopes they have. And wherever possible try to find answers. Follow these four principles of answering questions transparently:

1. **Answer the question**
2. **If you don't know the answer, say so**
3. **If you cannot answer the question now, make a commitment for when you will and honour it**
4. **If you know the answer but cannot say currently – say so – and make a commitment to share information when you can**

RE-AFFIRM THE TEAM'S PURPOSE

Remind everyone of the important role and purpose the team has, and discuss how that purpose can be best served right now. For example: if the team is worrying about the future of their industry given recent political decisions, remind them of their bigger goal and purpose to keep them motivated to make a difference where they can, while moving towards the overall vision. In times of challenge people want someone to take charge and set or re-affirm the direction. Say "this is where we are heading".

FOCUS ON THE TEAM

Keep the team extra close during this time. Have regular quick check-ins – face to face (or Skype) where possible – or over the phone when needed. Recognise each other, find things to laugh about, support each other in your work. Encourage your team members to help each other and to ask for help. Encourage openness and sharing of information.

FOCUS ON WHAT IS CERTAIN

Even in uncertainty there is usually more that is certain – get the team focusing on this. Find reassurance in what you all know to still be true or certain. Get people busy doing what they can control and impact. It's not good for a

team to have too much time for worrying, they need to focus where they can make a difference and deliver results. The work still needs doing.

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

There is very little in this world that can be controlled, in fact we can only really control our thoughts. Share this insight with your team, encourage people to see opportunities (without brushing away concerns) as well as taking control of how they think about what's going on. Focus on what you can control and influence. Your influence together as a team is far greater than individually.

"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see." Henry David Thoreau

SEEK CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHERS

When seeking answers and progress through uncertainty, go into discussions with others showing positive intent and assuming that others have positive intent too. So many misunderstandings (especially when people are worried or concerned) are created through incorrect assumptions of wrongdoings in others. People usually do their best they can and when assuming that others have positive intent, you can have more constructive

discussions and even disagreements that can lead to answers, solutions and ultimately progress.

KEEP MOVING FORWARD

It's easy to become "paralysed" when faced with uncertainty. Make sure the team keeps moving forward. Adjust goals, plans and tasks if needed, as long as the team keeps progressing. Too much valuable time is wasted in the "uncertainty void", it's crucial to keep moving forward. Allow team members to try things out, encourage courage, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Mistakes (=not getting the desired results) are blessings in disguise. They give new insights that are needed to innovate, grow and move on through to the next stage of development. Use turbulent times as an opportunity for the team to show just how great it is. When it gets tough, just keep taking it one step at a time but it must be forward.

"Too much valuable time is wasted in the "uncertainty void", it's crucial to keep moving forward"

LET GO OF THE NEED TO BE RIGHT

Uncertainty is a result of change or looming change, and no one can have all the answers when things are changing. Be a role model for "letting go of the need to be

right", show others that an open, curious mind is the best way to approach the situation. Recognise that what you (and others) knew, may no longer be true and must therefore not limit your thinking. Take interest in what the new answers might be.

FIND THE GOOD NEWS

There's plenty of "bad" or "negative" news in uncertain times. Don't underestimate how much this can impact the team negatively. Seek out the good news – there's plenty of it out there, but it's not what gets reported. Sadly enough, the "bad" news sells better. Share good news with the team and ask all team members to do the same. Make a point of sharing at least one piece of good news (about anything!) every day.

CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Be extra observant and recognise and report on success of individual team members and most importantly of the team as a whole. Highlight how team members' actions and behaviours have led to the success achieved – and how much more can be achieved when collaborating. Don't forget to celebrate the small things too.

Stop worrying about what could go wrong and start looking for what could go right

Mandy Flint and Elisabet Vinberg Hearn are authors of the award-winning book, "Leading Teams – 10 Challenges: 10 Solutions" (FT Publishing), which is available to buy now on Amazon. For further details visit: www.leadingteamsbook.com