



“My business is in crisis and I need help...”

by John Higgins

We are in a time of business crisis like never before and many business owners and leaders have never experienced a threat as critical as this. Business survival and the health of our teams have become mission critical. Cash flow is drying up, suppliers are shutting down, our employees are scared, and our families need us. How do leaders who already have significant stress and responsibility survive and thrive, make the right important decisions and stay healthy in a world like the one we are living in today? **Ask for help and don't hesitate to do it quickly, openly and honestly.**

Over my forty-two-year working career I have lived through three recessions, a corporate bankruptcy, the global financial meltdown and a few oil market collapses. In my early career, I was watching as an employee as my leaders, some good and some great showed us how to navigate a crisis. Later in my career, I was the one that the employees were looking to as the example of how to lead in a crisis. At no time in my career did I feel as much weight and responsibility to my organization and employees than in a difficult crisis.

Here are a few difficult lessons I learned along the way:

- You are the captain of the ship and yes it can be very lonely.
- You can become exhausted without even knowing it
- Your decision making can become broken, emotionally charged or paralyzed
- You can become that negative, defeated person you never were
- Your health can start to suffer
- You can become the centre of chaos
- Your decision making can become very short sighted
- That strategy you worked so hard to implement – Gone!

When we allow ourselves to get in this deteriorated mental and physical place, we can become the catalyst to a very serious damaging outcome. But we don't have to get there and here is the

best thing I have learned to help prevent it. **“Recognize that you are in a crisis and be willing to ask for help”**

If there is one time in your business career you should put the ego or pride aside this is it. I have learned over my long career that there is a very big community of leader’s out there that are willing to help. If you have a **trusted mentor** get them involved early and be brutally honest about where you are. Having humble, honest and open discussions will allow you to surface the true challenges you face. Surfacing “ideas” and discussing the “what ifs” will allow you to have an amazing exchange of ideas that just may find the solution or the path forward.

Here are a few ideas where to look for help:

- Reach out to a retired business leader.
- Call up a peer executive at another company
- Think about a business or community leader you have always admired
- Seek out a respected Board Member
- Ask one of your trusted employees
- Ask a family member

These are just a few ideas that have worked for me and have allowed me to grow and stay mentally and physically healthy as a leader. You will be very surprised how willing and committed other strong leaders will be when you ask for help.

As business and community leaders we will all face very difficult times and some of us will be challenged like never before. We can struggle trying to lead through it alone or we can ask for help and, in the process, become a better leader and a better future mentor ourselves.

My advice, “Ask for help and do it quickly”. Our family, employees and our business are counting on it.

Please note that DFS is making consulting services available on a pro bono basis to help companies impacted by the Coronavirus. If you’d like to discuss how we can assist you and your business, get in touch with John Higgins, the author of this article, at jhiggins@dfs-solutions.com