



ALEXANDER HUGHES INSIGHTS

Coronavirus Pandemia:
Do we need to go through the
“Burning Platform”
effect every time?



CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Do we need to go through the “Burning Platform” effect every time?

In February 2020, nobody in the western world would have believed what we are seeing just a month afterwards, gradually more than half of the world's population confined at home and consequently, the sudden stop of the vast majority of the world's economy. Not even the worst climate emergency has produced results anything near to what we are seeing today.

However, the truth is that it began happening right in front of our eyes 3 months before, when the virus exploded in Wuhan, China and more than 40 million people had to be confined. Even worse, back in 2015 most of us were made aware by leaders such as Bill Gates that the biggest risk for human kind wasn't a nuclear war but a virus pandemic such as we are experiencing today. We are not 3 months late, but 5 years.

Not listening to seasoned advice, and failing to recognize what was right in front of our eyes, has set us up for “the burning platform effect” we now face. The name of what happened is fear, still the most powerful emotion that triggers behaviour in the human brain. Sometimes I feel that we still haven't left the jungle where life or death is a matter of decisions that must be taken in a breath, at the last second.

But changing the behaviour, changing the culture (Organizational Automatism), is precisely the most difficult task for human beings, or at least this is what we thought until the Coronavirus Pandemic occurred. We have seen that people not only confined themselves without many difficulties, but we have also seen a great deal of generosity and empathy from both people on the front line, and ordinary citizens offering their help and recognition. Hopefully this change of behaviour will also help us to change some of our way of thinking, values, etc. Many times, by trying things in a different way we change our minds and automatism more easily than if we are told to.

Can we really learn something from it, or do we need to go through the “the burning platform effect” every time? The theory is based on the capability of thinking beyond what's really happening even though the future is uncertain, and facing a current problem with its opportunity yielding the two scenarios: 1) Problem scenario: keep doing things as we are currently doing and its implications or 2) Opportunity scenario: doing things differently and also its implications. Exactly what Dr. Anthony S. Fauci presented to Donald Trump on the 29th of March, 2020 with the estimated chart of deaths in the US with both best- and worst-case scenarios. Although Dr. A. Fauci recognised that those were only estimated figures, those triggered Donald Trump's “burning platform scenario” and changed his mind.

Do we really need to go through this process every time, reacting with our inner beast as if we were in the jungle? Or we can introduce in our behaviour the ability of developing stronger long-term vision and lose the fear of managing uncertainty, thus anticipating problems and opportunities. Probably a step forward in talent and human intelligence, and also something that will surely help us to efficiently manage social and racial inequities and also the Climate Emergency we are in, probably up to our necks.

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