

Leadership Discussion Series

Lessons of 2020 - a year of loss, a time for reflection and renewal Dec. 2020



In [April's Loss, grief and leadership](#), I wrote on the benefits from regular calls with colleagues and friends. As 2020 thankfully closes, some summer break reflections from those calls and more. Please send your reflections.

Adaptability - the A-side to resilience for being pandemic ready. As Australian Nobel Laureate Dr Peter Doherty[1], says, another 'animal to human' virus will come. We adapted quickly to hand washing, distancing and masks.

Casualisation rates – too high at 25% and up to 40% could be in insecure work[2]. How do we build a future with insecure work? Surely our children deserve better?

Character - the minimum leadership standard. The ancient Greek philosophers said good citizens needed four virtues: courage, wisdom, justice, and temperance. See [CNN's Van Jones](#) [3] after the US election explaining to his son how presidents should act.

Community at work– many caring leaders building healthy workplaces. Meanwhile locally, we have been spending and building stronger bonds.

Check in calls - being present for others benefits the caller as much as the receiver. Recall the old maxim: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.



Dogs are tops – from singles with their pets to a senior leader who has enjoyed many more hours with a much loved, aged pet. Loneliness lowered. So why have apartment blocks without pets?

Family and friends – they are the reason we do what we do. Unnecessary travel out, more family time in!

Freedom isn't free – rights come with responsibilities. Can the individual be free without the support of the community? Ask a few Melburnians.

Grace – recall a gracious speech from a winning or losing grand final captain or [George H.W. Bush's concession speech to Bill Clinton](#). Much more please.

Gratitude – many thankful smiles from cafe staff have reminded us how our spending can save lives. We praised our forgotten, real heroes, all the key essential workers that kept us all safe, fed and together.

Hugs and handshakes - Didn't realise how much I enjoyed them. 'Don't know what you've got 'til its gone' as Joni Mitchell sung.

Leadership – thanks to our state premiers and the National Cabinet - a global model. Our business leaders amazed themselves by moving quickly and supporting teams in WFH. Bravo!

Mindfulness – getting back to a more regular 10 mins daily practice has been helpful.

Purpose – when you are on it, you know it! Often the difference between great leaders and the rest.

Productivity - is not place bound it happens anywhere, anytime without supervision!

Remote learning – huge kudos to our dedicated and organised teachers. Parents, often mothers, have plumbed new depths of patience and management skills wrangling students while juggling WFH. Always been heroes!

Self-care - is what it is all about. We have team members talking to managers about mental health concerns. Leaders can help by taking self-care leave and setting regular reflection time. It is very ok to say "I am not ok!"

Scientists, our true rock stars - Is it too much to ask that more national leaders are STEM grads? More rational outcomes likely. I'm a biased BSc.

Resilience world champions – medals go to our Melbourne friends. 100+ days of hard lockdown. Bloody well done!

WFH has worked - even during stressful times. Surveys find 70%+ employees want at least half WFH ongoing. Offices can provide four connections [4]: people, place, routine and purpose. This bundle isn't always ideal. Leaders will need to optimise for their teams and business needs. The flexibility genie is out!



Zoom, an overall winner – we now have closer connections from our 'in home' meetings. More voices are heard. Many board meetings will be on zoom. Zoom Doom can be fixed. Atlassian's [5] suggests we could redesign and parallel stream meetings, record them, then set deadlines for catch-up feedback. Less frustration, more inclusivity and momentum kept.

2021 - a better year as we build back better. It takes a collective effort to build anything worthwhile – great teams, communities, and companies. To the folks I did get to talk to, it was wonderful to connect and share your stories. Wishing all a restful break and a more intentional 2021. Please add in your reflections below. Go well.

References

[1] Life beyond coronavirus: the expert view, Ep. 6 Preparing / preventing the next pandemic, Uni of Melbourne, July 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l22qLkMUboE&%3Bt=218s>

[2] Casualisation rates <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-17/fact-check-casualisation/9654334>

[3] <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2020/11/07/van-jones-reaction-2020-election-result-elexnight-vpx.cnn>

[4] In praise of the office, Insead; HBR <https://hbr.org/2020/07/in-praise-of-the-office>

[5] Atlassian Covid 19 research

<https://www.atlassian.com/blog/teamwork/new-research-covid-19-remote-work-impact>