

Waldron Leadership Series

A Case for Virtual Development in Uncertain Times

written by

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As this health crisis stretches on, the wait-and-see posture can no longer continue, not if we want want leaders to be skilled and ready to remain a competitive asset to our organizations in this global economy.

Resiliency, grit, and agility are evolving into behaviors we must exhibit every day to navigate the current uncertainty swirling around us. In doing so, we often experience the feeling of two steps forward, one step back through attempts to manage global teams and new business models. Faced with choices challenging our previously held context around many topics, decisions where at one time a sentiment of 'we would never do that' is now teetering toward 'maybe we have no choice but to do that.'



A Point of Inflection

Over these last several months, one of the big decisions we've seen executives struggling with is the mindset shift from wait-and-see to we-need-to-act-now, particularly around shifting professional development, cohort programs, and executive coaching to a virtual environment. It's human nature to embrace the status quo, especially when we believe what we had worked. As the following phrase so adequately captures, 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it.' Yet here we are. It's time that we [accept that the playbook didn't have this scenario in it](#). Swept into operating in an environment where what we felt so sure was 'working' must evolve not to become obsolete. Not just the process or content, but the recipients, those critical assets we've invested in – our people.

With the call for agile leaders growing increasingly louder, **there are two critical components needed** to effectively make the shift to virtual development of your people: [1] Recognizing the mindset from which you (and those you need to influence) operate from and [2] acquiring the necessary tools for building a case for action.

Your Leader Mindset

Having self-awareness of your mindset is the first critical element in the process as it informs the context you hold and operate within. In a *Harvard Business Review* article "[To Be a Great Leader, You Need the Right Mindset](#)," the authors' research points to four distinct sets of mindsets that influence a leader's abilities. These are:

- Growth and fixed mindsets
- Learning and performance mindsets
- Deliberative and implemental mindsets
- Promotion and prevention mindsets

The article presents each in detail; however, there are a couple of points worth noting:

Leaders who tend toward a growth mindset are more mentally wired to take on challenges and dive into problem-solving strategies to achieve goals.

AND

Leaders with a deliberative mindset tend to be more receptive to change, making decisions that are more accurate and less biased in how information has been considered.

If you hold one of the other mindsets, it is not inferring you are an ineffective leader. What it does point to is how you might approach partnering with someone who holds an opposite mindset, especially for significant shifts or change initiatives where those mindsets naturally operate within.

Understanding your behavioral tendencies will guide your approach toward action and change. Perhaps an even more important takeaway from understanding mindset is that of those you need to influence to make this change happen. Once you recognize the behaviors associated with those you need to be involved in making this shift, you can then tailor your approach to how your audience operates and makes decisions.

But your leadership mindset is only the first step. Now you need to act, which requires a commitment to change, thoughtful preparation, and perhaps a little courage.

Your Case for Action

The second critical element is knowing how to build your case to influence those around you to make this vital and timely shift. It's a given that change happens faster when there is a direct tie to major strategic initiatives, decreased employee engagement, or hard bottom-line dollars. The following three steps will serve as a guide for your preparation:

1. **Ground in Data.** The adage 'data is king' really is true. When sourced and gathered correctly, it serves as the foundation for a conversation that is driven by 'what we know today' versus influenced by what we hope, feel, or wish could be.
2. **Model Scenarios to Share.** There is a power to providing something for people to react to, especially during uncertainty and within our sheer busy world. This level of preparation demonstrates your bias for action and problem-solving. If thoughtfully constructed, the time you invest on the front end will be rewarded with more focused and productive conversations when you are ready to present your case.
3. **Envision the Future Impact of Action vs. Inaction.** One of the most powerful tools anyone can use as part of a decision-making process is to paint the picture of how a situation might look six months from now if you elect to stay in a 'wait-and-see' mode. It's intended to stir emotion and action. To put this exercise into practice, ask yourself and those you need to convince, the following questions:

What Would the Business Impact Be?:

- If we continue to wait-and-see and the situation six months from now hasn't changed (i.e., travel restrictions are still in place, the COVID-19 virus has a resurgence) and our leaders haven't been developed or invested in, what impact on the business would this have? Would the company, division, team be further behind its goals? If yes, would this sort of additional setback be recoverable?
- Reversely, if six months from now the health crisis hasn't improved, but we have embraced virtual development and coaching as the way we invested in our leaders, what impact on the business would this have? Would our commitment to our leaders have deepened their loyalty and engagement with us?

Risk or Reward, Action or Inaction

Although making this shift may feel like work, the question worth considering is, "Will doing the work now reap greater rewards in the long term than dealing with what the future may or may not hold if you just wait-and-see what unfolds?" Our reality right now is we don't know how long it will be before we can comfortably gather in-person again. What we do know is that each day, and week, continues to fly by, making inaction a guaranteed losing proposition for our leaders, teams, and organizations.

About Waldron Effective Organizations Services

Waldron's tailored coaching and consulting services are designed to build strong leaders and agile organizational cultures.

Lasting Transformation is Our Goal.

Whether a small shift in the way our clients work or a total disruption of the business model, we assist clients in driving greater results at the individual, team, and organizational levels. We are committed to providing truthful insights delivered discreetly, in a clear and concise manner. Our highly tailored engagements move individuals and organizations to achieve desired results and outcomes.

Contact us to learn about Waldron's approach to helping clients "learn by doing", using actual present challenges and opportunities to develop new ways of working, leading, and collaborating. This approach ensures our solutions make effective and efficient use of resources and equips clients to continue success after our engagement ends.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Kim Bohr is COO and Head of the Effective Organizations practice at Waldron. In her role, Kim focuses on working with Waldron's exceptional leadership, consulting, coaching, and project management teams, as well as its staff members across all offices. Kim's professional mission is to make organizations better from the inside out by helping leaders create alignment between people, processes, and an organization's guiding principles. Kim is a published author, speaker, and entrepreneur. In support of her passion for transformational learning, Kim is an adjunct faculty member at Seattle University, where she teaches MBA and undergraduate courses on business strategy, operations, and leadership. Also active in the community, Kim leverages her extensive professional experience in humanitarian work and volunteering, including serving as a national Board member of Susan G. Komen.



ABOUT WALDRON

Waldron believes in empowering organizations and individuals to realize their full potential.

For over 35 years, Waldron has helped high performing executives and organizations lead the process of change, individual and organization transformation, giving Waldron specialized insight into the complexity involved in adapting to rapidly changing business environments. Viewed as a trusted advisor, we partner deeply with our clients. We are committed to providing truthful insights delivered discreetly, in a clear and concise manner. Our highly tailored engagements move individuals and organizations to achieve desired results and outcomes.

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