
Leadership and crisis: the role of being an innovative Leader

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Keywords

Leadership, Innovation, Creativity, Crisis

Abstract

Leading is not only about achieving strategic goals but also about confronting problems. Organizations and communities often face crises imposed by either internal or external circumstances. Many companies forgo creative opportunities when confronted with a crisis because of the time crunch and high-intensity pressure of the situation. A key hallmark of effective leadership is the ability to innovate during crisis situations. Mitigating or resolving an organizational or societal crisis invariably requires a leader that is capable of exploring new possibilities through creative thinking. Innovative leadership seeks to manage situations and confront problems through the introduction of new ideas, as well as, the re-formulation of concepts, procedures and methodologies. This paper examines the importance of the innovative leadership during a crisis and explains the organic nexus or relationship between leadership and crisis. Through a case study approach that regards the Sichuan (Wenchuan) earthquake that occurred in China in May 2008 it is shown that while business-thinking is based on research and evidence, innovative thinking is based on ambiguity exploring new ways and various options. It is shown that while leadership business-thinking is critical, executives have to look beyond traditional means exploring the possibility of incorporating innovation leadership into their approach. Specifically, they need to adopt an innovative approach to leadership bringing new thinking and different approaches to how executives lead and manage tasks. It has to do with searching whether roles and challenges can be thought about differently. Also, leadership that drives innovation to be introduced, creating an environment where others can apply innovative thinking to tackle issues and develop new ideas. It's about growing a culture of innovation.
