

LOCATION SWANSEA

LLEOLIAD ABERTAWE

LEVEL 7

LEFEL 7

**EXAMINATION PERIOD
JAN 2022**

**CYFNOD ARHOLIADAU
IONAWR 2022**

MODULE TITLE: LEADING, MANAGING AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

MODULE CODE: BMHR7008

TIME: 3 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:

A clean copy of the article will have been provided three weeks prior to your exam. Copies previously received, whether clean or annotated should not be used in the exam.

Answer the first three questions in section 1 in addition to A or B in section 1.

Answer either question A or B for each question in section 2.

**You should answer a total of 8 questions, 4 in section 1 and 4 in section 2.
You cannot pass the exam if you do not answer 8 questions**

All questions in section 1 are marked out of 15 and questions in section 2 out of 10.

SECTION 1:

Article:

Leading into the Post-Covid Recovery

An HBR article by Merete Wedell-Wedellsborg, published August 11, 2020

“Our business is coming back faster than I had ever imagined. That’s really good news, so I should be thrilled. But why am I not feeling relieved?” a senior leader asked me recently.

When governments relax restrictions and begin stimulating economic growth, the recovery phase of the Covid-19 crisis starts unfolding for businesses. On the surface, this phase is about returning to normal, restarting operations and getting back to offices, production lines, and shop floors. In Europe, where I live and where many countries are reopening, many leaders I speak with are surprised both by the speed of the recovery and how rapidly everyday life has come to resemble the way it was before.

Below the surface, however, there is still turmoil. Intuitively, I would have expected leaders to be driven by the victory rush that naturally follows when the tension of the regression phase is released. But many report having mixed emotions. Their sense of optimism and clarity is laced with withdrawal, loss, and doubt. Even among leaders who have weathered the crisis well, the absence of relief is the rule rather than the exception.

Recovery presents new challenges for leaders and teams. What can you expect and how can you navigate?

Facing the New Reality

Speaking with leaders and their teams in recent weeks about their experience with managing the recovery, three themes emerge:

The unexpected high points brought on by the crisis are waning. Quick decision-making. Efficiency of meetings. Honest, concise, and frequent communications. Freedom to organize your day and work from home. Informal and authentic team interactions.

Several teams mentioned that they actually miss the stimulating rush of the emergency and the profound feelings of significance and community that they experienced during the lockdown. They wanted to sustain these new ways of working and maintain the urgency and intimacy of the crisis. But any good intentions slipped through their fingers as 9-to-5 back-to-back meeting days have made a surprisingly quick comeback. The “new normal” is not so new after all — and that feels like a lost opportunity.

Further, even though it is an overstretch to compare the emotions of the recovery phase to post-traumatic stress disorder, there are similarities. One of the most common reactions from soldiers returning from battle is that everyday life seems absurdly inconsequential and insignificant compared to the combat situations they have left behind. Standing in line in the supermarket or listening to people complain about the weather can be provocatively ordinary when you have been dealing with emergencies for weeks.

The unresolved tangle of emotions. The leaders I talk to report that they have learned so much new about themselves and their closest colleagues: Who rises to the occasion, who loses faith, who supports, who snaps, who dares, who falls silent — and how do these behaviors evolve as the crisis unfold?

A leader in the media industry stressed how proud he was of his coworkers. “I don’t think I ever appreciated my colleagues this way before. When corona, hit we all stepped up and covered for each other. We were all fired up by the greater cause and churning out new reporting faster than ever. We had to be brutally honest about our own capacity and energy. Frankly, it was really exciting.”

Indeed, it’s like the “emotional operating system” of many teams has been reset. Such a reset is psychologically intense: it exposes both strong ties and weak links in the team, and all this requires recalibration of both your own self-image and team dynamics when things return to normal.

The burden of the work ahead. It’s dawning on leaders and teams that the lockdown phase was in fact just the acute part of the crisis. Now they need to engage with more profound and adaptive challenges in their businesses and the way they lead.

The paradox is that during the emergency, the sense of purpose seemed crystal clear: Act now. Safeguard the business. As the recovery unfolds, more fundamental and nagging questions arise: What comes after? What parts of our business and organization will even be relevant in the future? What must we do to prepare for a second or third wave? What is the new big picture?

How Can Leaders Tackle the Recovery Phase?

The absence of relief is a telltale sign that you have vast psychological work to do as part of the recovery phase, too. As a leader, you need to be aware of what is going on in your team and on the front line in the recovery phase and adapt your leadership accordingly.

First, the recovery marks the onset of a broader challenge, not the end of the crisis. One of the hard things about the Covid-19 crisis is that there is no liberation day when it’s gone and done with. It’s *not* gone and done with in most places, and the aftermath can be longer and harder than turmoil of the first response. Leading with this aftermath in mind is key and you need to confront yourself and your team with this somewhat harsh reality.

How? Don’t think of recovery as just going back to work and adopting your old habits. Create new meaning. Ask questions: “What was the point of this crisis? What will we do if this happens again? What did we learn from this case? How can we move faster next time?” Find a realistic sense of optimism — “What should we change?” Priorities need to be reset, plans must be adjusted, and resources must be redirected. “Renewal, not return” has become the rallying cry for leaders like Siemens Chairman Jim Hagemann Snabe. That’s the essence of recovery leadership.

Second, recalibrate your team. A crisis often reorders the informal hierarchy of a team, both because what’s urgent and who’s important changes, and because new heroes emerge and new relationships are forged. While the formal structure may be unchanged, the informal structure has been disrupted under the surface and needs to be realigned or rethought. Think of the

recovery phase as an inflection point for the way your team cooperates, not as a U-turn that leads back to familiar routines.

Here's an example of how one team moved forward. The CEO of a company that had been hit very hard by the lockdown summoned his leadership team to reflect on what they had learned during the months of emergency, lockdown, and early recovery. The CEO capped off the session by asking: "Would you rather have been without this experience?" Surprisingly, the overwhelming response from the team was "no." The crisis had been costly from both a business and personal perspective, but on balance the benefits outweighed the cost.

One team member summed up the paradox of the crisis. "Looking at the numbers, our business has been set back years. But culturally, we have been catapulted ahead to a future we could not have imagined, and strategically, our transformation has gained a momentum we could never have created on our own."

A central lesson of *why* this happened was that the crisis revealed hidden talents and unseen qualities. And the final outcome of the leader's session was a formal reset of the roles and responsibilities of the executive team based on the new business needs that the crisis surfaced, but also based on the particular qualities that individual team members had demonstrated.

True, not every team or leader will reach the same conclusion. But all teams can benefit from conducting a targeted search for the positive outcomes of the crisis and reflecting on how their relationships with each other and their work has changed. Carving out time for this kind of debriefing can both be therapeutic for the team and propel the forward motion you need.

Third, reopen with attention to the small stuff. Many leaders are realizing right now that reopening is harder than shutting down. Coming back to the office is trickier and requires more finely grained choices and decisions than asking people to work from home. Why? The issues related to reopening don't really concern abstract problems, acute crisis intervention, or big strategic moves. Instead, it's about practical and everyday stuff, a radical change of scenery for many leaders. It feels like having to tidy your room after having fought a major battle.

Even though the "how to reopen the office" discussion can feel like a chore rather than a challenge, you should take the small stuff seriously and be clear about the details: Respect ground rules for social distancing in the office – people have very different ideas of how "close is too close." Make clear commitments, and keep up your online presence when working from home, so it doesn't become odious when some people do and other don't. Make sure that you continue easing into the new digital routines that your partners, coworkers, or customers have found useful. Try to find joy in routines again and invest in the informal settings

Avoid the actions of a highly charged leader in the financial sector who, fed up with discussing when their coffee and juice bar would reopen, burst out: "Who cares about coffee and juice now?" In fact, the free haven that the bar represents had never been so important: People need places and spaces and opportunities to reconnect, share experiences, and have all those little conversations that rekindles social life at work. This is where you ask your colleagues what they are going to do in their vacation and how their spouses or children are coping? Who has children graduating from school? Who has sick relatives?

The "back to the office" move should not feel like musical chairs or a logistics manoeuvre. Instead, think of the process as if you were onboarding new members to the team with similar

attention to (re)introducing the company culture and stimulating professional social life. In some sense it's a unique chance to get to do the first 90 days all over again.

Getting Through the Recovery Phase

Crisis leadership is a double-edged sword: The same skills and reaction patterns that allow you to perform well in an emergency may become destructive when you try to return to (something resembling) normal. The unequivocal determination that made you effective at first can develop into uncompromising micro-management. Constant watchfulness can generate tension and even hyper-vigilance. A prolonged productivity boost can slide into to uncurbed impulsivity. It's crucial to know when enough is enough.

At the same time, leaders cannot follow the natural impulse to withdraw, lean back, and just assume that the team will reset itself smoothly when the sea starts calming down. There is a need for continued visibility, purposeful reorientation, and sustained attention to detail.

As a crisis evolves, your leadership approach needs to change. In the emergency phase, leaders must move to the frontline and fight the fires. In the regression phase, leaders need to step back and contain the emotional turmoil of their teams. In the recovery phase, leaders must strike a new balance between guiding a smooth return to normal while keeping up the pressure to renew and rethink the future.

That's why you are not feeling relieved: Your work as a crisis leader is not done yet.

END OF ARTICLE

All answers should be justified as far as possible using appropriate theory and evidence

Section 1

Read the attached article. Answer all three of the following questions, taking care in each case to fully justify the arguments you make.

1. Write a blog style reflection on how the CIPD professional standards supported your delivery of an effective HR service during the pandemic crisis.
2. Critically analyse the leadership approaches thought to be best suited to leading in the context of the pandemic.
3. *“While the formal structure may be unchanged, the informal structure has been disrupted under the surface and needs to be realigned or rethought.”* Consider how the formal and informal structures in your organisation helped or hindered in the management of people during the crisis.
4. **Answer either a or b**

a) The article refers to ‘attention to the small stuff’. On returning to ‘normal’ was this something your organisation paid attention to? Critically reflect on the actions of the HR department and consider what you might have done differently to acclimatise staff back into work after the crisis.

OR

b) *“Looking at the numbers, our business has been set back years. But culturally, we have been catapulted ahead to a future we could not have imagined, and strategically, our transformation has gained a momentum we could never have created on our own.”*

In light of the above quote from the article, critically reflect on how the crisis has impacted the culture of your organisation and the impact this has had on strategic goals.

Section 2 (Not based on the article)

Answer either A or B in each section.

To communicate your answers more clearly, you may use whatever methods you wish, for example diagrams, flowcharts, bullet points, you need to provide an explanation of each.

2.1

- a. Precarity is fast becoming a major concern for leadership in organisations. Evaluate the concept of precarity and its impact on employee motivation and engagement, and how leaders lead.

OR

- b. What would you consider the biggest leadership dilemma facing your organisation and why? How will HR support the response to this challenge?

2.2

- a. CEO of Octopus Energy, Greg Jackson, made headlines when he said he didn't believe in having a traditional HR department. *"The key is no department. 'Parkinson's Law' is part of this—as soon as you have a function it creates a 'need' for itself. It sees the world through its lens and expands to meet the needs it sees"* (Unleash, 2021). In light of this, how can HRM and HRD demonstrate they have a critical role to play within organisations?

OR

- b. If the new way of working is *'freedom and responsibility'* (as per the Netflix Culture and the work of The Corporate Rebels) what role will HRM and HRD play in supporting organisations to adopt this type of culture?

2.3

- a. "It is alarming to see Boohoo's profits surge despite confirmation of allegations of endemic abuse at every single step of their supply chain" (City AM, 2020).

Should organisations concern themselves with ethics and sustainability at the cost of profit. Justify your response.

OR

- b. Critically evaluate the role of HR as the 'moral compass' of the organisation in the face of automation of work and the increasing pressure to act ethically and sustainably.

2.4

- a. According to Lewin, change is a process of unfreeze, change and refreeze. A major criticism of this model is that it is quaint and too simple for the modern era of constant and rapid change. Discuss.

OR

- b. Discuss two leadership skills required for effective leadership in complex environments and identify appropriate methods that can be utilised to develop these skills.