

A lesson from a zoom bomber, an engineer and a face mask



Dr Charles du Toit

Yesterday I got Zoom bombed for the first time... An important book launch was destroyed by teenage anarchists. They took over the meeting and caused absolute chaos online. They had no respect for the 50 top business leaders who were on the call. Watching the mayhem, it struck me that the powerful people being zoom bombed in this meeting were as vulnerable to the impact of covert19 as anyone. That in this moment, there was a complete levelling of power.



This experience got me thinking. Could it be that Covid19 is the switch that moves us rapidly from one world order to the next? Pre Covid19 we lived in a world largely created by the baby boomers (1945 to 1964) and then computerized, made efficient and refined by the current leadership. The generation X's (born 1964 to 1985). But the wisdom of the world we created seems to be diminishing rapidly.

The traditional elements which give power to global commercialism, the dominance of big business and the respect for corporate authority seems to be shifting to a world where power is invested in new treasure, like agility, access to data, neural networks, the stability of systems and ultimately A.I. and machine learning.



Consider this.... Is there still wisdom in building the impressive chrome and glass monuments to corporate success that we see in our global business centres? What is their value when we become socially distanced? I am told that many of these buildings stand empty now! What is the point of them if their occupants are at home wishing for a cappuccino, a faster laptop, a second screen, better internet speed and instant IT systems support?

I think it is possible that in the post lockdown new world, our skilled young people will be much less inclined to seek job security and great benefits as we the boomers and X's did. The pandemic has shown that even some of the organisations which are household brands, are vulnerable.



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The lockdown has seriously damaged the financial security of our people and our businesses. At this time employees are comparing the companies they work for with each other. The big differentiator now is how did your company's directors respond to the financial meltdown. Did my organisations executive do everything they could to protect jobs?



In a new world order, what may be more important than the promise of corporate benefits, will be the quality of the current work experience and its contribution to the employee's life at the moment. To rely on an employer to protect your tomorrow's may be seen as a personal risk. People with real talent are likely to take personal responsibility for their own futures. Today's employer may be measured more by how current jobs reflects personal growth aspiration and sense of purpose, as opposed to the job security and benefits which attracted the boomers.

In addition, we are increasingly aware that the unemployed and the poor are no longer just an unfortunate consequence of history and the responsibility of government. In this new world, those who do not have access to the modern tools of income generation may be a threat to the very fabric of our businesses.

In this world we do not just face the danger of an Arab Spring but the danger of having all 4 seasons, across all 4 corners of the globe. I think increasingly wealth distribution will be understood, not as benevolence but logical, survival and real self-interest.

In a further shift there has been a refreshing impact of social distance on the environment. The worlds air and land traffic has stopped. As a consequence, our air is cleaner, wild animals are safer and roam freely in suburbs, and our water less polluted. The shifts in environment have exposed to individuals and organisations that placing a lighter footprint on the planet, is possible and is not just the domain of 'the greenies' but one of universal survival and future existence.

I have heard some amazing stories in the past week. Most of these stories are not in the press:

- Manufacturing Maintenance teams refurbishing hospital wards,
- Engineers manufacturing respirators,
- Communities mass producing face masks,
- Beer manufactures, shifting to hand sanitizers
- Sports grounds being turned into hospitals over night
- Young people volunteering to work in areas of high risk
- Communities collecting money and distributing food parcels
- People offering to be chat buddies for the lonely.

In this new world, many people and organisations are rediscovering their humanity and their purpose. Small acts of compassion and even great sacrifices are being made not for self, or corporate ego's but because they are saving lives.

We are discovering that such commitment is of deep value and gives our lives meaning and purpose, and less for tax breaks, PR clippings, and social media presence hits. Our people already aspire to, and are exceptionally proud to be, a part of such organisations. People want to feel like they are contributing. It certainly seems evident that in this emerging new world, the boastful, the self-serving, and those who fight for access to power are exposed.

In this new world order, we are beginning to recognize the authentic leader.

The leader who speaks from the heart. The leader who does not claim to be all knowing and who is not afraid to be vulnerable. The leader who demonstrates care and who takes time to engage, to communicate well and connect with everyone. These are the leaders who will be celebrated. These are the leaders with influence. These are the leaders who achieve the extraordinary.



In this shifted world, Leadership is transformed into what it really should be: An authentic relationship.

It is also obvious that in this new world we will need to rely on leaders at every level in our organisations. Senior leaders need to help their subordinate leaders make this shift. It seems obvious that the success of a gradual lifting of the lockdown will have much to do with the quality of the leaders who roll out strategy, and not only to do with the quality of our strategies, planning and speeches themselves.

It matters not how you wear your face mask; it matters that when you eventually get it on, that your people recognize you for what you do. That you are real. That you have their best interests at heart. That you are in this crisis with them. Not just for the short term but for the future.