

The Five Truths

How to survive in uncertain times

BY RANDY G. PENNINGTON



“When will things return to normal?”

If by normal you mean a feeling of increased certainty about and control over the future, consider this: What if this is as good as it gets?

Depending on where you live and work, the right of way profession is great, lousy or somewhere in between. And, tomorrow it could all change. In fact, you may even feel like Alice in Wonderland—playing chess on a board where the characters move without any warning.

In times of uncertainty, people run toward value in their leaders just as they do in their investments. Here are five truths you can count on in good times, bad times, or in times, like today, of enormous uncertainty.

Everything is connected. Every decision we make has a ripple effect that is positive or negative for those we seek to influence. Decisions made in a vacuum are usually destined to end in the quagmire of unintended consequences. To succeed, we must fully embrace the magnitude, complexity and simplicity of our connections.

Past success proves you were right... once.

Continuous learning and improvement are not options. They are an obligation. In times of uncertainty, each of us must be better tomorrow than we are today. Now is the time to reexamine every process, procedure and system to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency. More importantly, now is the time to focus on your own professional development.

Relationships make the difference. Successful relationships require commitment, time and hard work. This can be observed in the way prosperous organizations relate to their customers, suppliers and employees. Reduced communication is often the first symptom of a relationship in trouble. Now is the time to invest more time in building and nurturing the relationships that will carry you through difficult times.

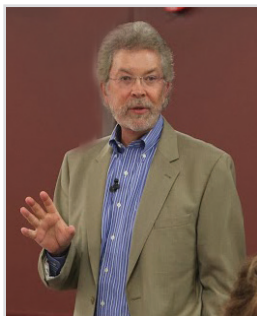
Integrity matters. Integrity breeds trust, and trust is the currency of successful leadership. When trust is absent, people look out for their own self-interests, even if doing so may hurt them or the organization in the future. But you can help others to look beyond their self-interests and focus on the team. And you can demonstrate integrity by telling the truth, honoring commitment, and doing what is right - even when it is inconvenient. Remember, everyone is watching.

Everyone leads. True leadership has very little to do with position and everything to do with your ability to influence others. Leaders help us move from where we are to where we need to be.

Here are some things you can do immediately.

- Focus on yourself. Make sure that you are worthy of the trust you will need to earn the respect of others.
- Create a compelling vision for yourself and your team. It will generate enthusiasm and create opportunities for ownership.
- Identify the gaps between your vision and reality. Comparing where you are to where you want to be creates energy for positive change.
- Pinpoint a few critical actions that will have the greatest impact and create a plan that focuses your energy and efforts on those. The best plans move you toward your vision, help you live your values, overcome a weakness or threat, or take advantage of a strength or opportunity.
- Execute your ideas. As Thomas Edison said, “Vision without execution is a hallucination.” Nothing changes until we change the performance and behavior that moves us forward.

The French novelist Marcel Proust said, “The real art of discovery consists not in finding new lands, but in seeing with new eyes.” The ability to see uncertainty as an opportunity to take performance to new heights allows you to discover the leadership potential that lies within each of us.



An expert in leadership strategies, Randy's latest book is *Make Change Work: Staying Nimble, Relevant, and Engaged in a World of Constant Change*. Follow his blog at www.penningtongroup.com