



# WHAT THE HELL DO WE DO NOW?

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AN ENTERPRISE GUIDE TO  
**COVID-19** AND **BEYOND**

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*An extract from...*

# What The Hell Do We Do Now?

*An enterprise guide to COVID-19 and beyond*

*By*

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# Connect

*Celeste Halliday*

**W**e're all being called on to do something significant right now. Something that takes us out of the current chaos and ambiguity of the COVID-19 pandemic, and into a brighter future. We're all looking for a key. Luckily, a key is right in front of us – hiding in plain sight.

Every single significant achievement throughout human history has been accomplished through people sharing a vision and working together to bring it to life. This holds true for us, as leaders, now. Connecting with a vision. Connecting to each other.

Connection is the key that's hiding in plain sight – right in front of, and inside, each of us. We already have the key but somewhere along the way we lost sight of how deeply important it is, and how to use it.

A friend recently told me about a radio interview with a remarkable older person named Edna. Edna is 100 years old. She's already lived through two world wars and now two pandemics. She knows a thing or two about shifting out of surviving and into thriving, which is what we want to do with our teams. Edna emphasised the power of human connection as our way through;

“ *Hang in there –together, we'll make things better*”.

The COVID-19 pandemic is stripping away many things, yet it's also shining fresh light on this most human of skills. We're seeing beautiful examples every day of neighbours helping neighbours, and we're being invited into the lounge rooms of our teams and colleagues, and meeting their children and pets in a way we never would have before. We're all in this together. That's our power. The leaders who embrace it, and master it, are the ones we will follow to a better tomorrow.

We need to remember that whilst the pandemic is new to us, there are many examples of leaders who've led through similar times before that we can look to and learn from.

Andrew, a high profile Australian CEO who I work with, is one of those. Andrew is super smart, hard-working and a great leader.

Some years ago, he and his team had just put an ambitious strategy in place, when their market began to decline rapidly. The writing was on the wall, just like it is now, that troubled times were ahead.

Andrew was doing all the things a 'good' leader should do to guide his team through the change – new plans and priorities, all executed at pace, in response to the market. Yet it felt overwhelming. Every day his team were pulled into back-to-back meetings, gasping for space between waves of tasks. Their work hours blew out and when they were with their families they were distracted with the chaos of work. It felt disjointed from their strategy, and they felt isolated and disconnected from each other as they each tried to turn their own areas around.

Fast forward a year and they'd crossed over to an entirely different space. They'd delivered the seemingly unachievable, building a bridge out and delivering astounding business results, where others failed. They were closer than ever, their stakeholders gave them brilliant feedback and they reported great work-life balance and sky-high engagement.

The 'bridge' Andrew had built out of the chaos into calm, was connection.

## Connection Powers Performance

Connection is the bedrock upon which extraordinary cultures are built. It's the foundation of all great leadership and, in fact, any relationship. It's the glue that holds our teams, families and communities together. It's the key to creating more human leaders and high-performance results.

## Connected leaders build connected teams and create connected cultures

At the individual level, connection is the number one predictor of whether someone will thrive both professionally and personally. Several decades of research on social connection have confirmed it's the greatest predictor of long-term happiness and success.<sup>[1]</sup>

At the group level, in a study of over 80,000 interactions among college students published in the journal *Nature*, the highest achievers were those who formed the most social connections and shared information in more ways. Conversely, research by Ozcelik and Barsade showed how workplace disconnection is directly related to lower job performance.<sup>[2]</sup>

It makes sense - the more connected we are, the more we achieve, together.

## Disconnection

As the pandemic unfolded we all saw the consequences of disconnection in real-time.

Toilet paper and pasta sauce disappeared from supermarket shelves overnight. Fear and blaming – the very human reactions we can all have to ambiguity, chaos and change were rife.

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1 Achor, S, 2011 'The Happy Secret to Better Work', TEDxBloomington, [https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn\\_achor\\_the\\_happy\\_secret\\_to\\_better\\_work?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en)

2 Ozcelik, H, Barsade, S, 2018, 'No Employee an Island: Workplace Loneliness and Job Performance', retrieved 14th July 2020, <https://journals.aom.org/doi/10.5465/amj.2015.1066>

We saw the elderly and vulnerable in tears, unable to buy basic weekly staples. It was heart-breaking, and we all played a role. Let's be honest, we've all sat in judgement of others during this period.

Disconnection starts in fear; when we judge, when we blame or scorn, when we see ourselves as different to or better than others. We forget in our own stress and anxiety that it's our role, as leaders, to stay calm and show compassion. To be curious about other peoples reactions and what might be driving them.

To build bridges to, and between others.

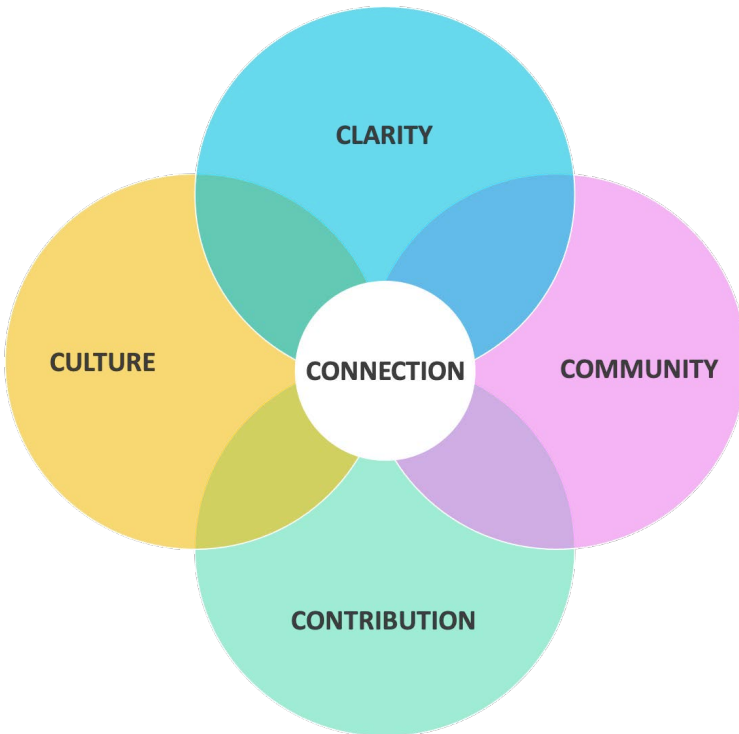
We forget that just like the oxygen mask on a plane, we need to first connect with ourselves as a priority, every day, before we can effectively connect outside.

In our workplaces, we're seeing people struggling with leading and working remotely, feeling uncertain, anxious and alone, not necessarily having the skills to support people from a distance. We're seeing people's energy flatten, despite them still often being productive, and we know that they're starting to disconnect – from the organisation, from our team, from us.

It's hard work to lead through this when we're overwhelmed and over-worked ourselves. It takes a great deal of reflection and thoughtful self-management. In order to solve the meaningful problems we're currently facing, however, connection is our bridge out. Focussing on building connection smooths difficult conversations, it sparks innovation, and builds engagement, discretionary effort and resilience.

So, how do we build this connection bridge, practically?

The 'Connected Leaders System' is built on years of coaching and training leaders and teams like Andrew's. It shows you how to build your bridge into a brighter tomorrow, brick-by-brick. It starts with understanding that we need to connect ourselves and our teams not just with other 'humans', but also with clarity (*your 'Why'*), culture (*your 'How'*), contribution (*your 'What'*), and community (*your 'Who'*). We also need to remember that at each of these levels, we must learn how to connect remotely, now, as well as in person.



*Figure 14: The Connected Leaders System*



## Connected Leaders System: Part 1: Connecting with Clarity – Your Why

“ Clarity & simplicity are the antidotes to complexity & uncertainty ” - General Andrew Casey<sup>[3]</sup>

Stuart is a senior firefighter. He told me that on reaching the chaos of an active fire, before the team ‘do’ anything, they stop. They assess the situation and get complete clarity on their plan and their roles. Years of life-threatening work has taught them that the only way to save lives and beat the fire is to first get clear about what they’re dealing with and aligned on who is doing what.

In times of change, we also need to get laser-focused and aligned, completely clear on how new priorities integrate, and update our strategy, as required. It means continually reviewing what’s important and cutting out what’s not, focussing on only the most important things to get us where we need to go now.

There are three steps to connect with Clarity:

### 1. *Crystallise:*

Clarity isn’t a process you can ‘set and forget’ once a year. It’s a discipline we create on a quarterly, weekly and daily basis.

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3 Hogge, T, 2014, ‘What I Learned About Leadership from A 4-Star General’, retrieved 6th July 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/leadership-lessons-from-a-4-star-general-2014-11?IR=T>

Take the time to review where you and your team are actually spending your time. Understand your 'one most important thing' – and do it, first thing, every day.

## ***2. Course correct and cut:***

Keep track to see when you and your team are getting caught up with 'noisy', urgent priority changes and keep ruthlessly re-prioritising. Now is a great time to re-invent meetings, streamline processes and cut out what doesn't count. Especially when working remotely, make meetings short, sharp and human.

## ***3. Communicate:***

Many of us assume our teams know what they're doing and why, but in periods of change it pays to invest extra time ensuring our thinking, direction and communication are 100% clear. Connecting your team and the work they're doing to the purpose of the organisation – the why – is a critical driver of engagement and high-performance. We need to make this connection with every person in our team, every day.

## Connected Leaders System: Part 2: Connecting with Culture - Your How

“ *When we feel safe inside the organization, we will naturally combine our talents and our strengths and work tirelessly to face the dangers outside and seize the opportunities.*” - Simon Sinek [4]

During difficult periods, we need to dial-up our focus on culture and values and be aware that building culture remotely takes extra work.

It's easy to lose sight of a declining culture when we're remote, and we need to be alert to the signals that we're losing connection.

One way to do this is to conduct an informal 'culture temperature check' using our 'Positivity, Trust & Psychological Safety' model below. These are the fundamentals of a 'Connected Culture'. You can do this as a self-reflection or even better, involve your team and discuss each area with them, individually or as a team.

### 1. *Prioritising Productivity:*

Research indicates that all performance and business outcomes improve when we're positive; our brains are 30% more intelligent, resilient and creative when we're positive, than when we're negative, neutral or stressed. [5]

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4 Sinek, S, 2014, 'Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe', [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=ImyZMtPVodo&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=ImyZMtPVodo&feature=emb_title)

5 Achor, S, 2011 'The Happy Secret to Better Work', TEDxBloomington, [https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn\\_achor\\_the\\_happy\\_secret\\_to\\_better\\_work?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en)

As Shawn Achor and Michelle Gielan, positive psychology experts and authors note, this is even more important during times of challenge and change, when; *"...leaders should be actively encouraging positivity because it will help teams weather the storm".*<sup>16</sup>

We can role model a hopeful, optimistic outlook, whilst also acknowledging that times are tough. We want our teams firmly in the space of looking for opportunities and improvements, not feeling helpless and hopeless.

Review the language in all communication and add a celebration/wins/recognition section on every team and project agenda – 'where focus goes, energy flows.'

## **2. Targeting Trust & Strengthening Safety:**

Think about your recent meetings, was everyone engaged and participating, openly discussing ideas, issues and failures, giving each other feedback and asking for help? If not, you need to understand why and what needs to change.

When people are scared, they can react in less than positive ways, shutting down the very ideas and innovations we need. Focus on actively creating a climate of safety and openness in your team. Encourage candour and input - and very importantly, respond positively when you get it!.

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6 Achor, S, Gielan, M, 2020 'What Leading with Optimism Really Looks Like'  
<https://hbr.org/2020/06/what-leading-with-optimism-really-looks-like>

To do this, we must role model authenticity and vulnerability ourselves – admit mistakes, ask for and listen to feedback and re-build trust where we've damaged it. We need to intervene where we see failures blamed on individuals, people shamed for speaking up or sharing ideas and cliquy noninclusive behaviour. This is even harder to spot when we're working remotely, so we need to take the time to ask each person in the team how safe they feel to share ideas and what we need to do to improve.

### Connected Leaders System: Part 3: Connecting with Contribution – Your What

“ *Genius is in the idea. Impact, however, comes from action.*” - Simon Sinek<sup>[7]</sup>

During periods of change, priorities can shift quickly. It's easy to lose sight of why we're doing what we do. Our days can become a series of tasks to tick off, as we lose connection with the meaning and purpose of our work and the impact our contribution makes.

Reinforce why each person's work matters to the vision. The more our team can see the direct impact of their contribution, the more confident they'll feel - and the more competent they'll then become. In his book 'Drive', Daniel Pink summarises this as improving 'autonomy, mastery and purpose'.<sup>[8]</sup>

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7 Sinek, S, 2014, 3rd December, <<https://www.facebook.com/simon-sinek/posts/genius-is-in-the-idea-impact-however-comes-from-action/10152902575386499/>>, retrieved 17th July 2020

8 Pink, D, 2011, 'Drive', 1st Edition, Penguin Putnam Inc, United States

Use the three steps below, inspired by this research, to connect your people to the contribution they're making in your next one-on-one meeting.

**1. Know:**

Focus on coaching each person in what they need to know to do their job well. Understand where they're trying to develop – both role specific and leadership skills - to help them improve.

**2. Show:**

Link each person's current work to the meaning and purpose of why the work matters to the customer, and the impact they are personally having. Make their progress and development visible to them and to the broader business.

**3. Grow:**

Encourage each person's ownership of their work, role and development. Believe and trust they can do it. Tell them and show them that you do.

## Connected Leaders System: Part 4

### Connecting with Community - Your Who

“ *If there is a single diagnostic indicator of a healthy workplace, it may just be the quality of connectedness and ease of idea flow that characterizes them.*

- Margaret Heffernan <sup>[9]</sup>

When was the last time you really thought about who you're connected with and who your team are connecting with?

To innovate our way out of chaos and change, we need as many, diverse experiences and ideas as possible. Great ideas can come from anywhere, and we need to focus on building connections within, and importantly, outside of the team and even the organisation to open up possibilities for new ideas, development and growth.

Sometimes people are unsure of how to start. Encourage them to use the below 'Give, Get, Grow' questions to expand their connections. Encourage them to answer them for their immediate team, the broader business and even wider, outside of the business to the broader community.

#### 1. Give:

- What skills have I got to share?
- Where could I provide a different perspective to help diversify someone's thinking?
- What help can I give? To Who?

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9 Heffernan, M, 2015, 'Beyond Measure: The Big Impact of Small Changes', 1st Edition, Simon & Schuster, United Kingdom

## **2. Get:**

- What help do I need? Who might have this?
- What interests do I have, or want to develop, that others might have?

## **3. Grow:**

- What skills do I need to develop? Who might help with this?
- How can I diversify my thinking?

## **Build Your Bridge**

As a leader, during challenging times, it's tempting to bunker down and wait for the storm to pass. To do your best to simply survive - and leave thriving for another day. However, the best leaders I've worked with have forged their skills during difficult times, like these, and you can too.

You already have the one skill you need most, right now. Connection.

### **Connection will power your performance.**

Just like it's powered the performance of leaders at some of the best organisations in the world.

Like them, you can use the Connected Leaders System, outlined in this chapter, as a practical brick-by-brick guide to build your own bridge, just like Andrew did, into a better tomorrow.



Connect with yourself first – get clear, centred and calm. Manage your emotions so your attention is focussed 'out' on your team, clients and stakeholders, rather than on the internal noise of our busy, and reactive, brains.

Make sure you're connected with Clarity - your own purpose, and the organisation's. Hone your vision until it's strong and inspiring. Communicate it so that it unites and engages different people and groups across the organisation and gives them clear guardrails to prioritise work and feel inspired.

Check in on how connected your team Culture is. Understand where people might be disconnecting, especially when working remotely, and connect them back with the vision, strategy and importantly, the Contribution they're making to the team and the customer.

Finally, look at who you could extend your Community to include. Connect with vulnerability and curiosity to the people you lead, your peer groups, stakeholders and clients. Keep those relationships strong and new ideas will begin to flow.

Every great accomplishment has been achieved by people sharing a vision and working together to achieve it.

Connected leaders, building connected teams and creating connected cultures.

## Summary:

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*We need to connect with ourselves, first, before we can  
connect anywhere else*  
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*Start with Clarity (The WHY) and then review the way you're  
connecting with Culture (The HOW), Contribution (The WHAT)  
and Community (The WHO)*  
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*The Connected Leaders System helps us power performance and  
harness the collective to think and innovate our way out, together*  
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## Questions:

1. How connected am I to the vision of the leader I want to be?
2. How clear am I on where we're going?
3. What am I doing to connect each member of the team, and the work they're doing, to our vision?
4. What would need to change to make it safer to have ideas and try new things in our team?
5. How am I enabling skill and leadership development to help my team stretch themselves and develop further?

## About the Author:

# Celeste Halliday

Celeste has been working with leaders and their teams for over 25 years, to achieve remarkable results by creating Connected Leaders, Connected Teams & Connected Cultures.

Celeste achieves breakthrough outcomes with the world's most progressive organisations by blending her background in psychotherapy, her fascination with emerging insights from the world of neuroscience and her practical Board & Executive experience in Australia & overseas.

This blend has seen her become a global expert in her field, working as a keynote speaker, facilitator, trainer and mentor.

# WHAT THE HELL DO WE DO NOW ?



*For all the talk about 2020 vision over the past few years, it turns out we had some pretty big cataracts. What the hell do we do now?*

2020 has been a year of significant disruption to organisations all around the world. By the end of February, bushfires, protests, riots, drone strikes, impeachment, and stock market crashes had shocked the world. Britain left the European Union, and the COVID-19 pandemic shook business, the global economy, and society to its core. The events of 2020 have profoundly changed our priorities and operations. In these times where business, society, and the economy are being reshaped, we have also seen people and organisations step up and forge their path into the Next Normal.

In ***What The Hell Do We Do Now?***, 18 authors explore the tools and frameworks that can help you and your organisation navigate and emerge from crisis in better shape than when you entered it. The contributors draw on their own research across a wide range of domains including Psychology, Systems Thinking, Genetics, Strategic Foresight and Neurodiversity. The book follows the narrative arc of Victoria Lynn Schmidt's Heroine's Journey, a journey of being thrust into chaos and returning transformed through the challenges faced.

If the events of 2020 have left you wondering ***What The Hell Do We Do Now?***, this book will serve as a blueprint to stepping confidently into our uncertain future.

To purchase the complete book - simply visit my website  
<https://www.celestehalliday.com/author/book>