

# Why transparent leadership is more important than ever...

 By [Michelle Moss](#)

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If we're learning anything from the current crisis, it's that legacy authoritarian-style leadership has no place in businesses constrained by the Covid-19 virus.



Michelle Moss

Even before the pandemic, the world was demanding a more collaborative and consultative style of leadership based on transparency. Today, transparency is so much more critical to an organisation's survival, as an attribute of both those who lead it and the creative culture that drives it forward.

## Open communication

The most obvious requirement is open communication. This is especially true when it comes to allaying the fears of employees and suppliers who are uncertain about the company's ability to pay them. Or clients who are unsure of the business's ongoing satisfaction of their needs. It's essential to keep these parties informed. Yet, relaying every little fact to stakeholders can create confusion about what is actually being said, inevitably hampering transparency. So communication should be structured to deliver only relevant facts in a timely manner.

If the new way of leading people is by collaborating with them, then collecting and considering their ideas becomes a natural part of the process of developing business solutions. This is another area in which transparency is vital. Employees who feel they are involved in their company's future will often contribute their suggestions and time enthusiastically. But if the final decision appears to exclude their input, they may feel undervalued and withhold further participation.

Why should employers care? One 2017 study suggests that the more transparent leaders are, the more creative their employees will be. Further, in times of uncertainty, like the current period, companies that are creative are more able to survive a crisis and emerge stronger afterwards. So it benefits leaders to be open about how they arrived at their decision and how each idea helped, even if it wasn't incorporated into the solution.

## Emotional intelligence

True transparency calls for emotional intelligence (EQ), not just in considering employee concerns but also in the courage

to face one's own limitations and accept assistance. When leaders admit that they don't know what will happen and what the impact of Covid-19 will be, they can build rapport with their workers and gain their support. Those who "stay strong", ignore input and stonewall employees will not enjoy the trust they need to push forward.

High EQ leaders show integrity by not pretending to have all the answers and embracing the strengths of the entire organisation to find creative solutions. They're consistently open about their policies for managing people and evaluating performance, choosing suppliers impartially, communicating with staff and stakeholders, and much more.

## Creating a culture of transparency

The most important outcome of transparency in leadership is a culture of transparency in the workplace, physical or virtual. This means that people can express themselves without fear of judgment or reprisal, because a confident leader uses even conflicting opinions to ignite creativity and uncover new business opportunities.

However, employee transparency must be offered and not demanded. Employers should respect that, especially under work-from-home conditions, staff have other roles to fulfil and should not have to sacrifice their privacy or private information. By recognising this, and even developing policies to protect employee privacy, transparent leaders show they care and will enjoy respect and loyalty in return.

## ABOUT MICHELLE MOSS

Michelle Moss is a director at SigniumAfrica (previously Talent Africa), a leading South African-based executive search and talent management company servicing sub-Saharan Africa.

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