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ACT INSTEAD OF RE-ACT

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# The new normal

30 in-depth interviews with CEOs and HR Directors  
worldwide on the future of “Training and Development”

By Helena Ståhl



*“Without the  
element of uncertainty,  
the bringing off of even the  
greatest business triumph  
would be dull, routine, and  
eminently unsatisfying.”*

J. Paul Getty

STAHL & PARTNERS

[www.helenastahl.com](http://www.helenastahl.com)

## Authors words

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In the void that was created during the COVID-19 pandemic, I decided that I wanted to be a person who supports others as well as brings our company forward to be ready for what will come next, which I call “The New Normal”.

I am quite certain that we will never go back to what has been, so we need to move on to something that is unknown. Usually when we are uncertain, we keep on doing what we always have done, so one way to move forward and prepare for “The New Normal” is to understand how our decision makers are thinking about the future so Stahl & Partners can be ready and deliver what is needed and what that requires.

I decided to talk to 30 CEOs and HR directors all over the world and conduct a 30-60 min interview with each of them and summarize my results - for them, for us, and for others that want to transition into “The New Normal”.

Regardless of conducting in-person or digital meetings, the COVID-19 situation has taught us that we will have to learn to connect in ways that we have never focused on before. To my delight, the interviews are showing that there is a great need for leaders that can lead with their hearts, emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence, and find ways to connect in more real and authentic ways to drive business forward.

*Helena Ståhl, CEO and founder  
September 2020*

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The One-pager summary

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THE BIG FOUR

As you read the interviews, you will see that regardless of where the interviews have been conducted and the businesses the interviewees represent, there are clear patterns in the responses. The conclusion is that there are four distinct areas in need of improvement shown throughout the interviews:

1. Developing OutstandingCommunication Skills

Train leaders so they can speak with clarity and realism about direction. Offer a strong vision and communicate a motivational future that instills hope. Develop leaders’ skills to connect on a personal level in combination with communicating strategy goals and visions in motivational and inspiring ways. Communicate the importance of each-individual’s contribution and consistently communicate a sense of belonging. Lastly, train all leaders to be exceptional at conducting meetings, especially digital meetings.

2. Developing Humancentric leaders

If you not yet have the competence and knowledge about Emotional Intelligence and how

to foster and show great empathy in your leadership, we would strongly advise you to invest time and money in learning these skills. Learn behaviours and increase your adaptability so you can be prepared and confident for a modern world that will require a more human leadership.

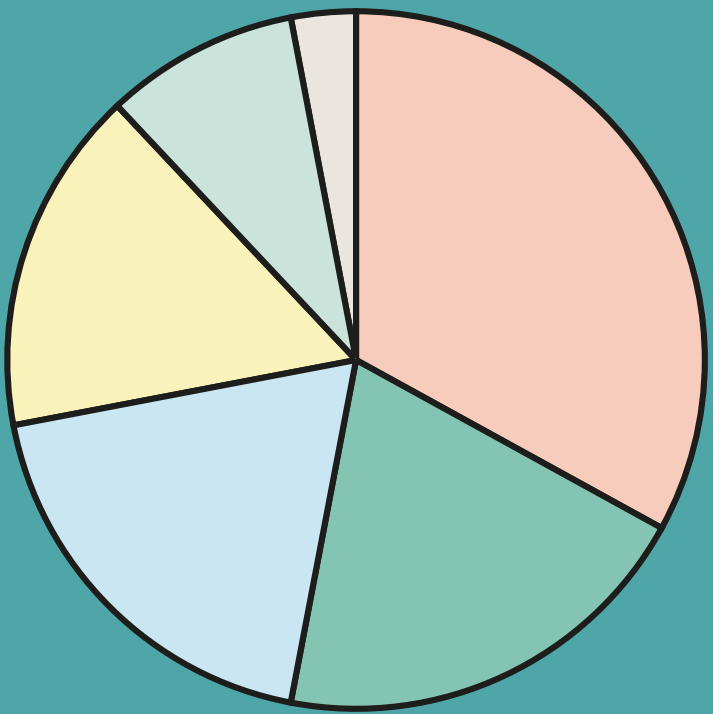
3. Focus on Engaged Employees

Keep engagement high, especially through challenging times, which will have a direct and proven effect on the end results. Share everything that is positive and develop a systematic way of consistently recognizing and appreciating your staff.

4. Upskill Leaders & Key Staff

Develop a systematic plan to be able to identify the right training for the right people. Tailor training to an individual’s or a group’s needs and circumstances, have a secure application and follow up method, and partner with vendors who can tailor and **secure application** and are licensed in ROI – the ability to measure the investment with the outcome in key targets and financial terms.

Humancentric Leadership	33%
Engaged Employees	20%
Outstanding Communication skills	19 %
Upskilling	16 %
Agile, Innovative teams	9 %
Other	3%





## The Background

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### THE PRESENT

“The old ways will never come back”. Most would agree that transforming work and business to “remote” has worked surprisingly well. Many executives we spoke to have been pleased with how well the sudden increase in working remotely has gone. However, remote will not be the answer for everything in the future, even if it is working well at the present time. CEOs and HR directors will need help and support developing skills that



foster engagement and inclusions for all their employees. Unfortunately, there will not be one solution that suits all.

Before COVID-19, even if one was not known for one’s outstanding leadership, we could manage thanks to the social environment we were part of. We also got natural support in our leadership from the break room, cafeteria, and natural pauses at work and regular meetings in the office where social interaction took place. Working remotely created another reality involving a few, or none at all, “live” interactions with people other than the people one lives with. That, in combination with expectations to handle “ALL of life” within the four walls of one’s home, especially for those in lockdowns around the world. Some of us handle it with ease, others not so well, and it is too early to see all of the effects of lockdowns like the ones many of us has just experienced.

Today most of us in leadership positions know how to technically handle a virtual meeting, but we are far away from how to comfort, support, challenge, and confirm our individual employees and teams in a virtual environment. Leading teams and creating a sense of belonging, a shared purpose, and an identity, is another challenge a leader will have to face moving forward in the new normal. Many are still not good at communicating purpose and culture,



connecting on a personal and human level, or instilling hope through various channels. And showing a high level of adaptability and emotional intelligence while leading agile innovative teams in a virtual world is yet to come.

### THE WHY

All of us want to be ahead of the game. As some say: “*Those who move earlier, faster, and more decisively will also do best*”. The ones that are strong and resilient will have better positions. Stahl & Partners (S&P) strongly believes that it has to be cultivated throughout time with a dual focus on business AS WELL AS people. From now on, more than ever success will come from focusing on developing leaders with the right skill set for the future of business and organisations in order to be ahead of the game and prepared for crises to come.



When COVID-19 started, we asked ourselves at Stahl & Partners: “How can we best support organisations, leaders and employees during and after a crisis? We decided to interview CEOs and HR directors around the world to find out how they planned for the future regarding training and development, and asked one question:

***What three areas of training and development will you and your organisation focus on in the future, and why?***

The objective was two-folded: First of all, we have always believed in a world of sharing knowledge and here we created an opportunity to do just that; “walk the talk”. We at S&P see it as one of



our missions to share our findings, as most people have very little time to collect and share knowledge themselves, and to be the vendor that is ahead of our clients and not behind. To be able to do so, we had to understand what companies will need in the future, and ensure that we have the competence to provide them with training and support. We hope that our findings will also help you to move earlier, faster, and more decisively in the future, because crises of both small and large scales will most definitely happen again.

### THE HOW

As we at S&P have a large network around the world, we decided to use it. Since Sweden is our prime market, we chose to conduct half the interviews there, but we also wanted to see whether or not CEOs and HR directors in Sweden differ in any way compared to the rest of the world, or if the different markets differ. The CEOs and HR Directors we have interviewed represent 14 different countries apart from Sweden: France, Norway, USA, Mauritius, South Africa, Holland, England, Canada, Denmark, South Korea, India, China, Switzerland, and Australia.

The interviewees represent business from the Manufacturing industry, Finance, Software, Travel, Hotel and Resorts, Non-profit organisations, IT, Sustainability, Pharma, Life science, Steel industry,



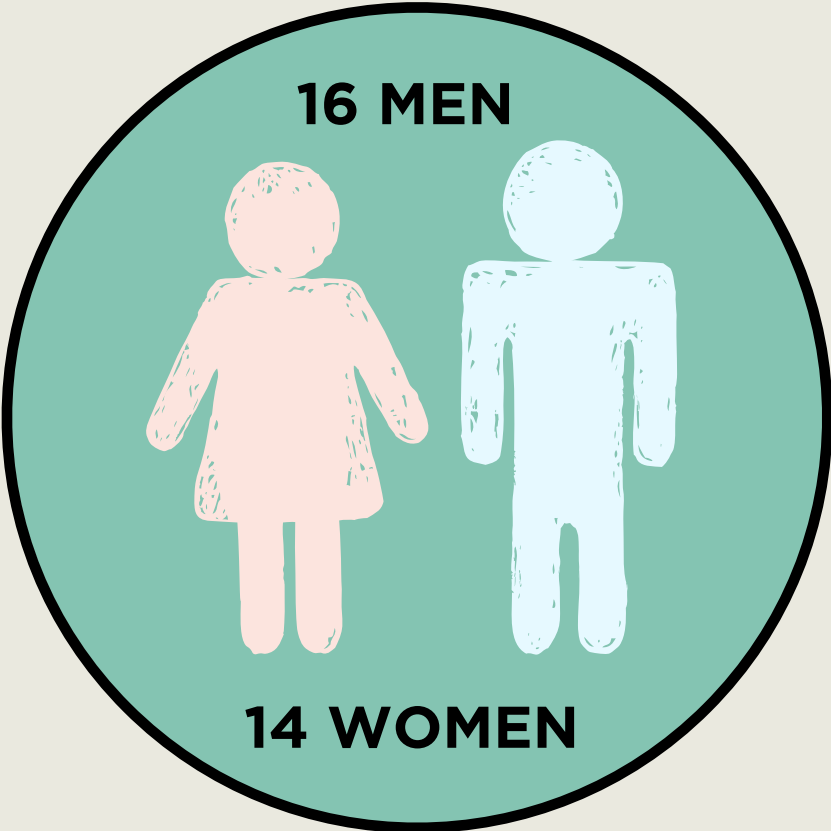
Investment companies, Recruiting and Executive Search, Fast food, Gaming industry, Energy, Training and Development, and Healthcare.

We have interviewed a total of 30 CEOs and HR Directors. The companies and organisations represent employees sizes from 100 to 10 000 employees. We have decided not to show the names or photos of the people we have interviewed nor the name of the companies they represent, in order to exclude the possibility of preconceived opinions when engaging in the study. It is their background, position, and place in the world that is of interest in this study. The interviews were conducted between April and August of 2020.



83% want leaders that  
are authentic,  
empathetic and  
can lead with:

100% ENGAGEMENT



More than

60%

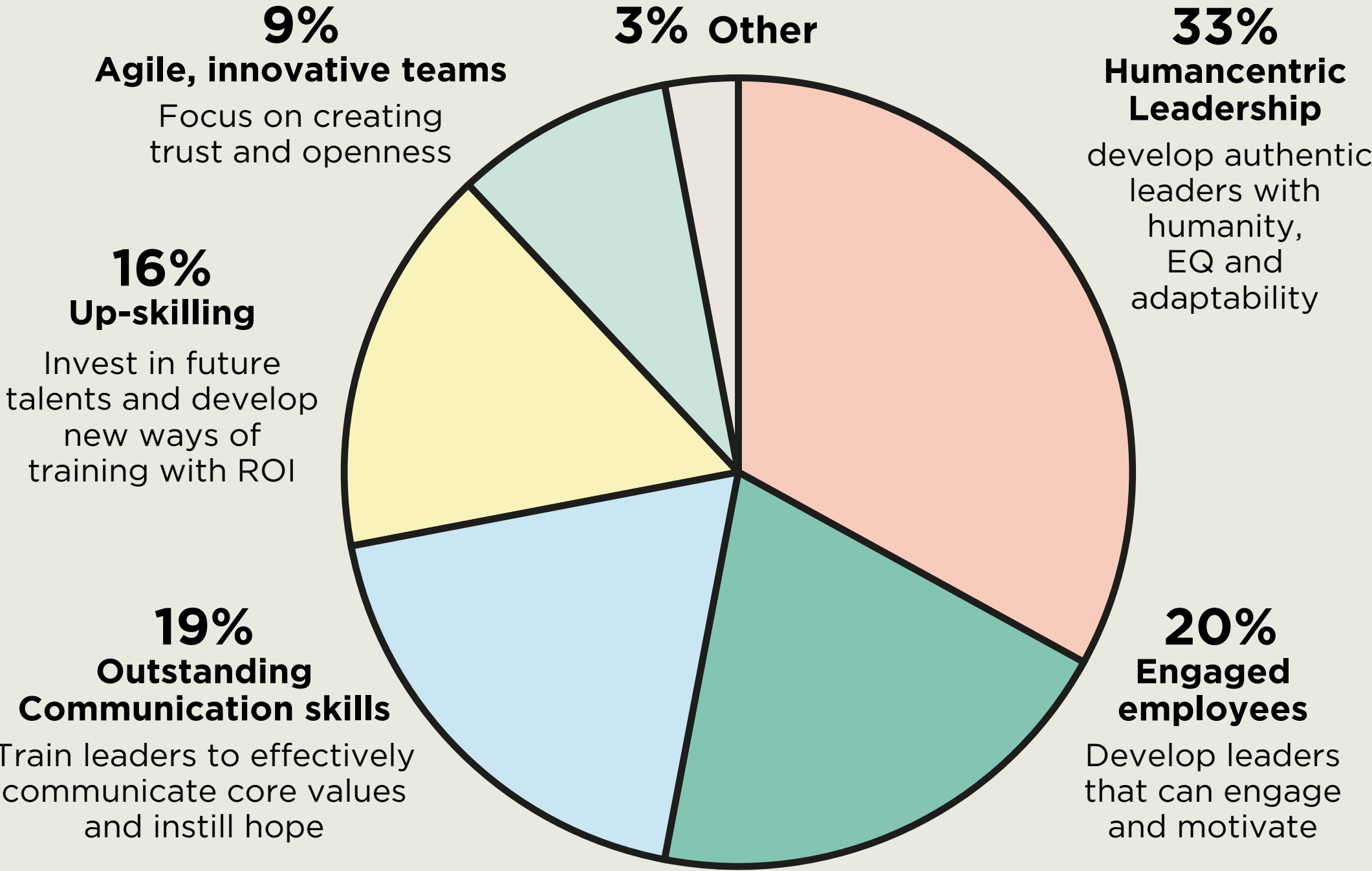
say that "Effective Communication" will be a key factor for success in the near future.

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Do you have the right skills?

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"I truly believe that we all need to develop into "learning organizations" where we set goals and communicate values which thrives and lives throughout the whole organization."





## The Conclusions

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Presented below are the four focus areas based on the responses from the 30 interviews, as well as numerous articles, science, and research to complement the study's result. As the world keeps on developing more and more sophisticated technology, human skills like compassion and EQ will define the competitive edge of workers and entire organisations. In addition, as the world becomes more high-tech, there will be a desire and opportunity for more "high-touch". The more artificial intelligence we will use, the more EQ it needs to be delivered with. The skill that will be of the foremost importance in a remote or semi remote world is the ability to show empathy, as in: offering a way to connect, show inclusiveness, create a sense of community, create ways to socially interact, install hope and optimism, and keep morale high.

1.  
SHOW  
HUMANCENTRIC  
LEADERSHIP

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2.  
ENGAGE YOUR  
EMPLOYEES!

-

3.  
DEVELOP  
OUTSTANDING  
COMMUNICATION  
SKILLS

-

4.  
UPSKILL  
LEADERS  
AND STAFF

-

## 1.

## SHOW HUMANCENTRIC LEADERSHIP

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From now on, it will not be enough to just achieve financial results. Working remotely in different contexts, places, and situations has made many isolated and confused. As a result, many feel unsafe, uncertain, and frightened at times. For managers, the challenge will be to lead, inspire, and direct their team in their daily course of work, while sometimes, or always, being physically remote. The boundaries between work and life will continue to blur. People are bringing more work home, and more personal life is spilling into work. We cannot flip a switch and leave our pain, joy, and excitement at the office door. Emotions travel with us.

We will need CEOs that are “Chief Empathy Officers”, leaders that can show compassion and empathy. As one of our interviewees said: *“The focus in the next couple of years will be to build an environment of trust. We need to understand ourselves better and get a better self-insight into how we are perceived by others, to be able to act from a place of trust.”*

We will need leaders that show a high level of Emotional Intelligence, which refers to the ability to identify and manage an individual’s personal emotions and the emotions of others as a group. Emotional intelligent people gain social aptitudes such as the ability to resolve conflict, teach others, and manage teams. Increased rates of loneliness, insecurity and depression gives us as companies and leaders the opportunity to embrace the power of displayed EQ in order to recreate and reinvent organisations where people thrive, regardless of whether they work remotely or in an office. When we slowly begin moving towards a new kind of normality - that we in Stahl & Partners call the “New Normal” - we have to be prepared for burnouts, lack of work-life balance, or tired employees. When there is little or no stability in the work environment, we managers need to improve and adjust. The ability to “read others correctly”, in combination with showing an optimal level of adaptability, will be key for what we call successful “humancentric leadership”.

**Lesson 1:**

to foster and show up with great empathy in your leadership, we would strongly advise you to invest time and money in learning this. Learn about behaviours and show the adaptability to be ready for a modern world, which will require a more human-focused leadership.

## 2.

## ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES!

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We predict that the importance of achieving employee engagement will continue to grow at a robust rate. Especially as many pandemic-related practices might become permanent, such as working remotely for many employees. This is the time for companies to move forward and to get strategic with their learning and engagement efforts. According to a white paper called “The Science of Care” at [www.limeade.com](http://www.limeade.com), employees who feel cared for by their organisations are twice as likely to be engaged at work. It will be important to create opportunities for sharing best practices, success stories, and challenges, especially in a remote setting, as well as developing a culture of engagement and inclusion. As one of the interviewees said:

*“Moving forward, we need to develop better skills in how we can deepen the relationships with one another.”*

Digital transformation will help define employee engagement initiatives. This is the moment for companies to get strategic with their learning and engagement efforts, and move forward better and more equipped. One of the strongest predictors of employee engagement is meaningfulness.

Ask yourself: Are you as a leader making work more meaningful and are you creating a culture of respect and interest for colleagues regardless of whether you are at the same workplace or working remotely?

**Lesson 2:**

If you want engagement to grow, develop a systematic way of consistently recognize and appreciate. Share everything that is positive and communicate the importance of each individual’s contribution and consistently communicate a sense of belonging. Being able to deliver just-in-time training to employees whenever and wherever, ensuring that achievements don’t go unrecognized and/or unrewarded — and being able to offer these things in a scalable and automated way, will ensure that employee engagement continues to skyrocket.



## 3.

## DEVELOP OUTSTANDING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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There is an enormous potential to inspire people and strengthen the bonds through how we as leaders communicate. Future leaders will need to energize the whole company, and that requires skills that so far have not been required by all top management. Consistently connecting with the bigger picture will influence engagement. And we have found that it will be essential to foster an outcome-driven culture that empowers and encourages open, honest, and productive communication. Instilling hope and motivation for the future will be key in forming a successful organisation.

Deliberately choosing “HOW you show up” will determine how you communicate as well as what is being said. It needs to be done confidently, consistently, and reliably. Communicating psychological safety so people can openly discuss ideas, questions, and concerns without fear of repercussions will be a key area to improve on. As one of the interviewees said: *“I need a Communications Advisor for myself! Someone who will help me to learn what to communicate, how, and in which channels. The world is more complex now.”*

When our leaders drop their glossy professional presentation, we are much more likely to believe what they are telling us. We feel connected to the people around us. We try harder. Perform better. And we will be kinder. As another interviewee said: *“We need leaders that have the ability to connect and push us forward with hope and security into an unknown future.”*

Whoever was mediocre and not outstanding at leading meetings (physical or digital) before COVID-19 will have to sharpen up. As we will not always have the natural opportunity to interact on a “human level” with the attendees, we will not be able to “wing it” or come unprepared. The focus for preparation will also have to shift to a more “human” focus, as the demand on interaction, the expectation of being seen, the requests to develop, to be inspired, and confirmed by meeting attendees will be greater than ever. Time can be saved, as online meetings usually are shorter and more effective than physical meetings - BUT, well-conducted online meetings will require very good and thorough preparations!

**Lesson 3:**

Train leaders to speak with clarity, offer a strong vision, and communicate a motivational future that instills hope. Develop their skills to connect on a personal level in combination with communicating strategy goals and visions in motivational and inspiring ways. Developing excellent skills in using digital media to connect will be key!

## 4.

## UPSKILL LEADERS AND STAFF

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The definition of "upskilling" is to provide an employee with more advanced skills through additional education and training, and the ones that will invest in upskilling competence will most definitely also engage and improve future performance. It is going to become very important to integrate the right tools and resources to upskill the present workforce, as many companies today are unable to hire due to the circumstances. Organizations that will develop methods of accessing data on present performance and key areas to improve on individual basis that are fun and engaging will also have more success. Being able to offer and deliver "just-in-time" training, i.e. training when it is needed, to employees, whenever and wherever, will be one of the keys to ensure that employee engagement continues to rapidly increase.

Behavioural change can really only come about by addressing specific behaviours. By driving behavioural change, training managers and leaders ensure more dynamic employee engagement. Cultivating your company culture, its mission and vision should be a central focus for all team members. By instituting more relevant learning experiences and more engaging training opportunities, leaders can help bring everyone together for the greater good of the business.

Learning through a positive frame and providing coaching that encourages introspection and self-discovery is to be recommended. Repeated studies have shown that when "training by doing" workers retain approximately 75% of what they learned. One of our interviewees said: *"Clients will be more demanding on follow up-application as well as factual outcome in numbers of the investments in training"*. Pragmatic methods that are easy to apply and will benefit the participant as well as their organisations will enhance application. Finding effective methods to follow up on "real time" application, as well as better ways to evaluate training, will be essential.

If you as a vendor have not yet become licensed in measuring ROI, now is the time. "To boost training ROI, the training that training leaders produce needs to solve specific problems that contribute to the bottom line and overall company goals. And when training is aligned with business goals that are measurable, training leaders can clearly see in what ways and how much training impacts every single business KPI. In such a way, Learning & Development is taking more of a strategic role in the company." ([www.rallyware.com/blog/training-distributed-workforce-for-tomorrow](http://www.rallyware.com/blog/training-distributed-workforce-for-tomorrow))

**Lesson 4:**

Develop ways to connect performance, engagement, and results on group and individual levels. Tailor training to individual or group needs, use a proven application and follow up method and also partner up with vendors who are licensed and experienced in ROI – the ability to measure the investment in training and development with the outcome in key targets and financial terms.

## The Interviews

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We asked one question:

**What three areas of training  
and development will you and  
your organisation focus on  
in the future, and why?**



## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #1:

**Develop excellent teams.**

**Build a culture of excitement  
and team spirit.**

**Train our people in EQ and  
behaviors.**



*A Frenchman now living in Sweden,  
leading an organization in the  
Nordic countries.*

**1.** As the state that we are in right now is becoming a “New Normal”, we will need to focus on building great teams (which we never really got around to in our merger before the COVID-19 pandemic started).

**2.** However digitally savvy we have become, we need to spend time together and have “fun”, for example through social events, to be able to connect better, trust one another, and work better together.

**3.** We also need to train our people in Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and human basic behavior, especially when working together in digital formats, both internally and externally.

**P.S.** I need a Communications Advisor! Someone who will help me to learn what to communicate, how, and in which channels. The world is more complex now, and the effectiveness of my communication depends not only on what I say, and how, but also on what channels I use.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #2:

**Work smarter – not harder.**

**Sell changes with uncertainty  
and yet with hope.**

**Human and empathetic  
leadership.**



*A recruiting expert who  
turned into a HR expert  
and has built a digital  
Training Academy.*

**1.** We need to get our employees, especially our managers, to work with our Office 360 platform in order to work smarter instead of harder. One of our challenges is that many are stuck in old working methods, like pen and paper. We are driving an internal project around this that we call “100% reach” and that we will manage to achieve by ourselves.

**2.** We need leaders that can sell change, especially after the coronavirus crisis, as we have previously had a tendency to focus on the negative in a change. To achieve this, we need training in how to present and communicate, how to build pride and courage and how to be better at storytelling, both digitally and in person.

**3.** There needs to be a paradigm shift in our leadership, especially when everyone is coming back to work in our factories and offices. We need leaders that can lead with motivation, authenticity, empathy, and 100% engagement – 5 days a week – and embrace employees that have the courage to bring something new to the organization.

**P.S.** We are only looking for training partners that can adapt to the new world and are able to offer the same training digitally one day and in person the next. It’s “adapt or die!”.

### KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #3:

**Greater focus on real life  
application and ROI.**

**New ways to train  
others online.**

**Leaders with  
good self-insight.**



*A true entrepreneur that builds  
and turn around new companies.*

**1.** We believe that most training and development initiatives in the future will be online and that clients will work with consultants that offer both - training live as well as digitally. As an effect of that, training online will require more and better skills than at present as the clients will be more demanding, especially on pedagogical tools online and follow up on application in their real lives as well as factual outcome in numbers of the investments in training.

**2.** Many manual professions will disappear and that will have an effect on our whole society. A lot of professionals need to learn new skills, many digitally. Therefore, there needs to be an effective new way of learning that is not based on our former and present general methods, but much more interactive and engaging.

**3.** As an effect of both of the above, there will be a higher demand for leaders with good self-insight that can easily create trust and lead agile and diverse teams. This will be as important as leading towards financial goals.

**P.S.** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is now taking a giant leap towards a more digital world. If your business isn't online now (or very soon), you will be out of business before long!

### KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #4:

**Leaders that can  
communicate core values.**

**Leaders that can lead  
through crisis.**

**Methods for conducting  
ENGAGING digital meetings.**



*She became CEO for a large  
international staffing and  
recruiting firm 2 months before  
the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**1.** We are in an extremely exposed business and especially during hard times we need to focus even more on our business' core values and be even better at communicating our vision, our mission, and our purpose.

**2.** We learned the hard way that leaders need to work much more with the "black swan" theory and be prepared and able to get out of a crisis faster to be able to develop and improve. We need to collaborate instead of compete during a crisis.

**3.** Digital is here to stay and we need to learn how to conduct digital meetings that are compelling, exciting, and memorable. We also need to be able to present in front of a screen just as well as in front of a live audience.

**P.S.** We are discussing HOW we can be an attractive workplace in the future. It will be in flexible office environments since we all will be much more mobile. We need to be able to communicate that you should choose our company because you have a passion for the business and for us. The demand for leaders that can communicate effectively in a remote business world will increase tremendously.



## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #5:

**Sustainability focus with  
client value.**

**High degree of adaptability.**

**Zest for developing new  
ways of learning.**



*Starting as a one-man consultant in the training industry, he is now a strategist for a company with 1 billion SEK in revenue last year.*

**1.** The new generation is looking for sustainability and we need to be at the top in our industry. So technically we need to be able to offer advanced solutions that work for the environment and be able to communicate the client value to our buyers. Client value is key here.

**2.** Everyone needs to be much more adaptable. The work environment will change and we all need to use our core competence in various ways and be able to work in different settings and not be hooked on positions and titles. Being able to work together in agile teams smarter and quicker and in a more digitalized world will require a great deal of adaptability!

**3.** Those who can awake the lust for learning and are able to develop new ways of learning and focus on “learning”, and not only checking off activities and “to do lists”, will be highly attractive in the marketplace. It will all be about working in learning teams and be able to let go of control in linear projects and instead create a zest for learning how we can deliver what the client wants faster and better.

**P.S.** I truly believe that we all need to develop into “learning organizations” where we set goals and communicate values that thrive and live throughout the whole organization and that we will leave the linear way of organizing a company.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #6:

**Leaders that can develop  
trust in the digital world.**

**ENGAGING digital meetings.**

**Leaders with a high EQ, CQ  
and skills in behaviors.**



*A modern professional HR director that went from a pesticide company to one of the largest chains of fast food restaurants.*

**1.** Leaders in the near future will have to have the ability to develop good relationships and trust in a digital setting – especially with people that they have no previous relationship with. How do we do that? We have no training in it and no previous experience.

**2.** We need to learn techniques in how to conduct digital meetings that are in demand and that people want to attend. There will be a risk that we think we know how to practically attend digital meetings, and therefore we don’t make an effort to improve them. The digitalization is great in many ways IF we learn how to conduct great meetings that are varied and can inspire and engage others.

**3.** “The New Normal” will require a new kind of leadership with leaders that can engage and motivate, and possess a high degree of emotional intelligence. The discrepancy between “bad leaders” and “good leaders” will widen and the leaders that need to develop need to be identified and trained, especially in topics like EQ, CQ, psychology, behaviors, pedagogical tools and methods, to be able to keep up with the rapid development that takes place.

**P.S.** “Looking good” will not be as important as we transition into “The New Normal”. “BEING and DOING good” will be of greater importance.

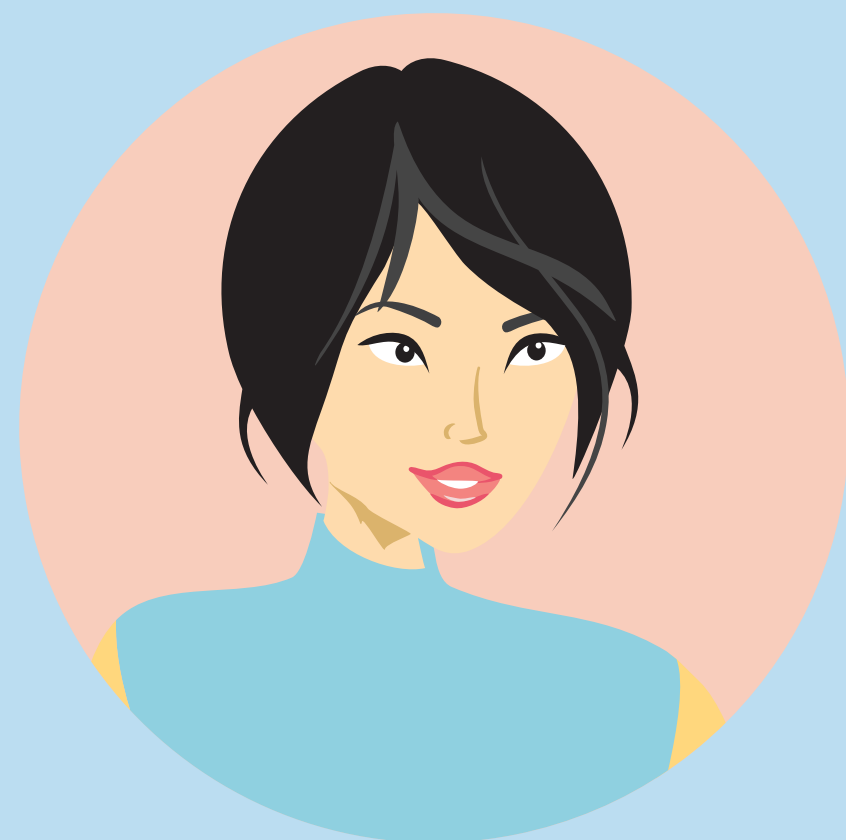


## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #7:

**Enhance skills to continue to develop great teams virtually through new technologies.**

**Leadership must adjust to ensure our teams maintain a culture of pride and mission.**

**Leaders must operate with a high EQ to lead through crisis & disruption.**



*Within her business she is world-famous for being a great leader.*

1. The challenge for leadership in this new era is to maintain a culture of teamwork, collaboration and trust in this new work from home and social distancing environment. Individuals need to feel a sense of importance, know that they are contributing to the business in a meaningful way and how they fit into the big picture and the future of the business. So how do we design remote collaboration?

2. It will be vitally important to continue to talk about our purpose. We must reinforce the sense of pride in the company our employees have chosen to work for by authentically demonstrating our commitment to society and the community. It will be vitally important for business to measure their environmental and social impact. More weight will be placed on progress of social wellbeing. Teams need to also be encouraged to look for opportunities that present themselves as a result of this crisis.

3. Our leaders must govern with high emotional intelligence, more so now than ever before. The absence of what was normal social interaction physically in our professional and personal worlds will have enduring negative effects that we need to understand and continually address. There has been a lot of talk about the health and protection of employees. We need to ensure we include mental health in that conversation. How do we effectively celebrate our successes and positively deal with our challenges if we are not in the same physical space?

**P.S.** The world has experienced two years of digital transformation in two months. How will we take advantage of this? What new tools will evolve?

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #8:

**Leaders with empathy.**

**Focus on Future Talents.**

**Leaders with “star” skills in conducting meetings with value.**



*Being a former professional officer he is now the HR head for a Steel factory site with 4500 employees.*

1. The most important focus for us will be to make ALL employees feel important. When they come back to work, some of them will not be as motivated as they were before. There is a risk that people will feel lonely and isolated since so much has happened in their lives as an effect of the coronavirus crisis. We leaders need to focus on making our staff feel important – which they are.

2. We need to continue our leadership development and work with our future talents. If we do not, it will have severe consequences for our progress.

3. Our leaders need to develop their skills to coach and support their staff and be able to create a working atmosphere where people are feeling safe and motivated. It will be especially important to be able to conduct better in-person as well as digital meetings. We need to develop a strategy on how to get our leaders to conduct more and better physical meetings.

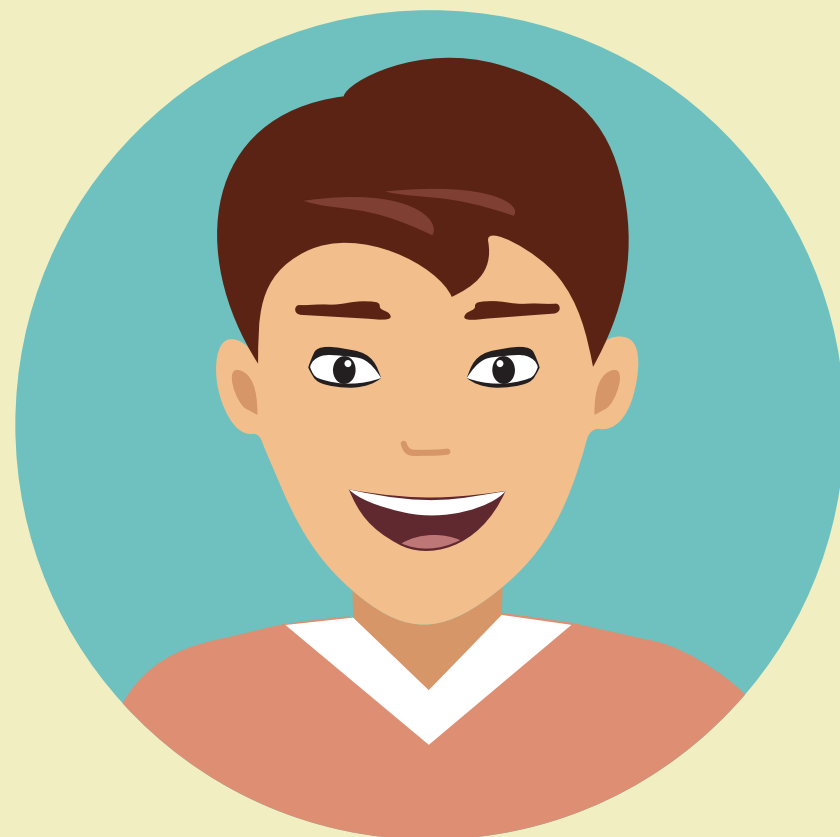
**P.S.** Digital is great, but we need to meet in person as well. It is in the in-person meeting we can connect, catch up, and understand the well-being of our staff. We need to be better at all meetings – period!

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #9:

**Leaders that boost, motivate,  
and instill courage.**

**Initiate “start over” for all  
executive teams.**

**Leaders with excellent  
communication skills.**



*A Communications and HR Manager  
who works from Sweden with an  
organization that supports 65  
countries around the world.*

1. As leaders, we need to understand the importance of, and apply the skill of, celebrations. All leaders need to understand how to boost, motivate, and instill courage.

2. As management teams, all of us need to “start over”. Whatever happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, it will now be a new team - with new experiences and insights - and we cannot only rely on what we were as a team before it all started.

3. ALL leaders need to communicate effectively on all levels and through all channels: town hall meetings, digital presentations, digital meetings, via emails, and in TV studios - simply everywhere, in all situations, and for all kinds of audiences.

**P.S.** Even before COVID-19, our management team started to prepare ourselves for the future because we knew that we needed to utilize our competence in new and better ways. All of the identified areas above require that one has built trusting relationships and, most probably, by now also have achieved a trusting relationship through digital channels. I personally cannot see us return to the same traditional physical offices we had before - but I’m sure that we will still need physical places to meet to be able to collaborate and build relationships.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #10:

**Build engagement through  
digital training.**

**Build Culture through role  
modeling.**

**Leaders that are good  
leaders with great social  
competence.**



*A very experienced Swedish  
HR director that has worked  
around the world.*

1. We notice that people have a hunger for knowledge, and we want to be able to offer more, specifically in e-learning. This is one way we can continue to build and develop engagement throughout our organization and reach more employees and leaders at the same time. This will also give us a better flexibility in learning.

2. We need to work on “CULTURE” by asking: What do we say and what do we do? What behaviors do we want to encourage, and what actions do we positively confirm? For example: to trust, dare, and take initiatives. More focus will be on leadership and to make sure that we live up to our values.

3. The difference between this and other crisis that we have experienced is that this crisis is reflected in people’s behaviors. We need new and better models on how to interact with one another – in general and on all levels in our organizations. Through this crisis the importance of being a good leader is even more crucial than ever.

**P.S.** The positive about being “forced” into having meetings digitally and work from home is that that we all now have exactly the same “conditions”. We seem to team up better, as we are more “equal” or at least have the same circumstances for the meeting.



## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #11:

**Authenticity and simplicity.**

**Thinking and working  
in new ways.**

**Leaders with a lot of EQ,  
adaptability, and optimism.**

1. I think people are looking for authenticity in relationships, and also for simplicity, less complexity, and to be closer to nature. Therefore, we need to sell experiences, ecological and pro nature, instead on focusing on things.

2. We will question how we have done things before and do things differently and better. For example, working differently with smaller staff, and getting the same amount of work done with fewer people.

3. In order to accomplish this, we need to learn to be more in “being” mode instead of “doing” mode: being authentic, being optimistic, and being adaptable (a lot of EQ). There will be lots to do on EQ - emotional intelligence - as there will be a much greater focus on, and appreciation for, authentic relationships.

**P.S.** We will be closer to the products and services we are selling. Less sophisticated products, more natural experiences, and fewer “things”. We need to reorganize what we sell, and sell experiences and sell to markets closer to us as well as nationally. And finally, we need leaders that can train our staff to do all of this.



*A French COO of one of the world's leading chain of resorts in the Pacific Ocean.*

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #12:

**Build relationships through  
physical meetings.**

**Develop staff through  
digital channels.**

**Leaders that can  
communicate the  
“North Star”.**

1. I don't believe that everything will be digital, even though it works well many times. I believe in a combo of digital and real-life training. Not everything can be achieved in digital meetings. Nothing can compare to a physical meeting when it comes to touch, charisma, collaboration and brainstorming. Transformation comes through a personal connection and cannot be swapped for a digital one. The actual physical meeting will become even more important where we need to learn how to BUILD a relationship.

2. My daughter started school a couple of weeks ago and it is all online and I am so impressed with how they do it! When that happened, I realized that when she is old enough for her first a job interview it will not be ok to say to her that we work 9-5 in this office... So how do we train our managers to not only work with digital equipment but to become leaders that can lead and develop our staff through digital channels?

3. We leaders need to be much better at leading with, and communicating, our “North Star” - the “why” we are doing what we do and what we see in the future that keeps us going. People want to work for people that can lead them to a brighter future.

**P.S.** We have given new roles for some of our staff – yet they are still in the same teams and we see that it is a challenge to break patterns when you feel safe. We need to learn how to better develop adaptability, flexibility, and the ability to develop your own behavior - not just your work results. This is especially important in new team formations and agile teams in order to utilize the employees' strengths in the best ways.



*Leading a software company with over 200 employees in India serving clients in Scandinavia.*

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #13:

**Leaders must be better  
role models.**

**EQ and CQ is a must,  
especially for the younger  
generation.**

**Work-life balance  
is very important.**



*One of the most prominent  
Vice Presidents within  
Executive Search in the USA.*

1. A lot of younger people are coming to me and asking me to be their motivator, asking for working advice, and asking for a voice of reason. A week ago, six of us did a training session for younger associates that see us as role models. My takeaway is that we all have to choose who we want to be in the world – especially in THIS world of COVID-19 and after. When we are experienced in the business in which we work, we need to become much better at turning around and helping the person who wants to be like us. And how do we do that?

2. EQ and CQ will be needed much more in “The New Normal”, especially for younger people. You can choose whoever you want to be, and younger people often have poor social manners and therefore have challenges interacting with others. I don’t think young people today are taught manners like, for example, how to greet someone, how to look someone in the eye, how to make a toast, and table manners – or virtues like poise, presence, expressing oneself, having a conversation with a group of people, and how to adapt all this to international settings. I do believe in the power of personal presence.

3. There are many people who would like to go back to how it was before the pandemic. Some people will come back to work being afraid, and that will affect their choices and how they work. Remote working is here to stay, and we need to improve and do it even better with better time efficiency; train ourselves to manage our time better, which also includes work-life balance as well as change our way to package our messages to allow people to think outside their old norms and paradigms. Because it will never be the same.

**P.S.** Another training is business training and how we need to do it in “The New Normal” - allowing people to think outside their old paradigms and outside their old norms. and the effectiveness of my communication depends not only on what I say, and how, but also on what channels I use.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #14:

**Consistent and  
authentic leaders.**

**Leaders with self-insight  
and self-confidence.**

**Leaders that can  
communicate what’s  
important.**



*An experienced board  
member from Norway.*

1. It will be even more valuable to understand the importance of making the right choices – tough choices and choices that will have an effect on people’s life, not only on work. Therefore, we as leaders need to be much more consistent and authentic with what we say and do.

2. We leaders also need confidence and courage to “say it as it is”... Which also means to have the courage to show that we are unsure and indecisive, and that this is ok. It is human. This requires GREAT SELF INSIGHT AND SELF CONFIDENCE.

3. The question over and over is: What is really important? And how good are we at communicate what’s important, and why, to our employees? We need to become much better at that.

**P.S.** In Scandinavia we are very occupied with what is politically correct. Maybe we lack the courage to go against the “norm” because the norm is always there even under these circumstances. Are we courageous enough to make the right decisions and the decisions that will make others grow and develop?



## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #15:

**Leading with EQ  
and empathy.**

**Leading with  
transparency in a crisis.**

**Employee ownership for  
their own development.**



*A Swedish Marketing Director for  
medical devices in Australia.*

**1.** When we return to the workplace, in a more normal capacity, we need to understand that our workforce has changed. Some will be stronger, others not. Some will be more motivated to work, others will question how much they work and why. In this new and unknown setting, we as leaders need to show much more empathy and emotional intelligence and display a healthy balance between financial results and humanity and wellbeing.

**2.** Mental health will be a much bigger focus – especially during and following a crisis. What do we as leaders do and what do we need to know about leading others in a crisis? We need to upscale our knowledge here.

**3.** Things have changed. Likely, many employees will question their professional choices and career development. Still, employees are responsible for their own growth and will have to employ full ownership for their own development, now and in the future, as well as identify what work-life balance means to them personally.

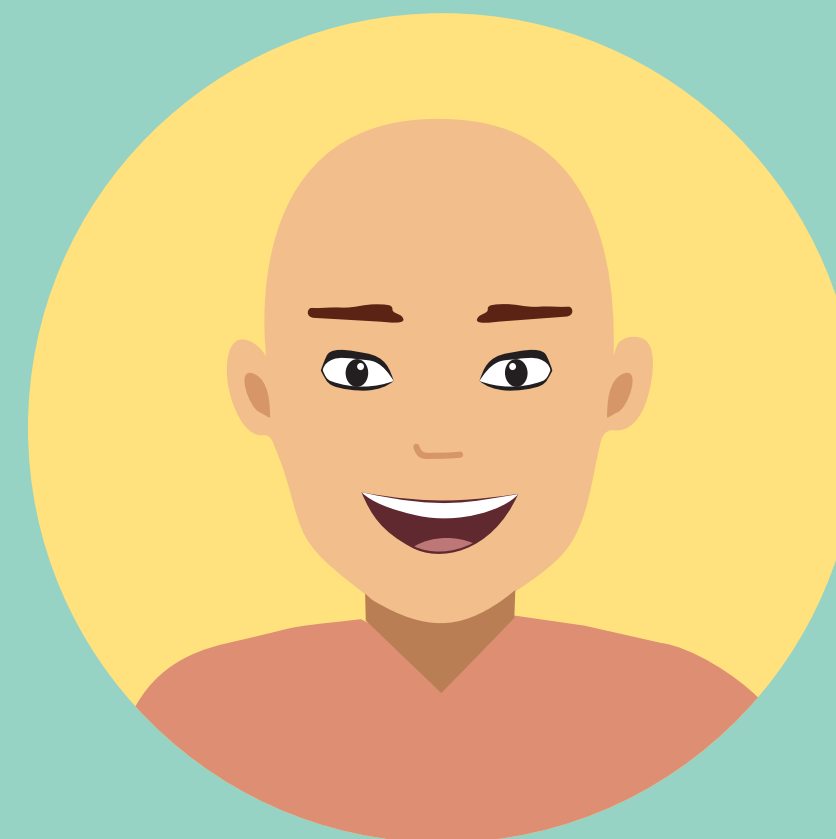
**P.S.** Lead from the front. Be visible and approachable. Use transparent communication and be genuine in this difficult situation and beyond.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #16:

**Reading behaviors  
correctly.**

**Interact better,  
especially digitally.**

**Training both digitally  
and physically and knowing  
when to do what.**



*An American HR Manager  
who travels the world for a  
holding company.*

**1.** I attended a seminar and my takeaway was: It's not just the space but it's the way we interact that will be different – not just “Jane working from home” but ALL working from home, and therefore we will be challenged in the way we interact with people – we will not solve it now – we have to work it out when we enter “The New normal.” And among many things, we will have to read people correctly and do it quickly.

**2.** Also: How can we learn to interact with one another on a deeper level and do it with effectiveness? There is no “checklist” about how we deal with each other. Moving forward, we need to develop better skills in how we can deepen the relationships with one another.

**3.** When it comes to future training: Some parts you simply cannot do digitally, but most you can. We will be more selective in what we have to do physically and what we can do digitally. For example, doing a full training process can absolutely be done digitally. Time will be used more efficiently, but there will be a loss of fidelity. You have to learn what will carry the time and is adaptable to the digital world and what is not.

**P.S.** We have this typical way of thinking today: “When this is over – everyone will get back to work...” For example, space will change, more people will work from home... but if that is all you are thinking of, you are missing the boat.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #17:

**Leaders with high adaptability.**

**Leaders that can lead in crisis and maintain engagement.**

**Communicate more effectively.**



*A Training Manager for 5000 employees on an island in the Indian Ocean.*

**1.** The leadership is key - no doubt about this. We need leaders in the future that can change and adapt their leadership quickly, that can share their skills, train others to excel themselves, and develop new young leaders.

**2.** We need to learn how to manage crisis. How do we keep motivation up? How do we instill our values and our base for existence during crisis? We need to utilize smart phones and social media better and more, as that is accessible to everyone – many of our staff are not fluent in foreign languages and may only have 9 years of school. We have also learned that we have to be much more entertaining and engaging when we are training internally.

**3.** Communication – that was actually the first lesson we learned: how, and when, to communicate, and how we manage communication effectively.

**P.S.** We need to lobby better with key people, organizations and government and look for future cooperation's that will look different than ever before. We need to think out of the box when building our training plans for the future, and in order to accomplish all this we need to work with vendors that can match us.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #18:

**Social Consciousness, EQ and CQ will be vital.**

**Leaders that can communicate and demonstrate commitments.**

**Leaders that understand employee needs.**



*A Lead Organizational Consultant in the US working with a multicultural focus.*

**1.** Social consciousness will be more of a focus than ever before - what happens around us and how much we know and care is extremely important for the future. This is true for individuals and organizations. The need for emotional and cultural intelligence will be critical, especially for leaders.

**2.** CEOs and top executives need to not only communicate their commitment to change, but also demonstrate that commitment through actions. Recent events have made many uncomfortable, and leaders need to learn how to be comfortable with the uncomfortable so they can challenge the status quo and commit to sustainable change for greater success.

**3.** Employees are returning to the workplace and they are looking for new development opportunities to help them cope with the new normal. To retain the employees, we need to ensure that we are positioned to support their learning and development. How will you keep them engaged and motivated as they transition to a new way of working?

**P.S.** COVID-19 has allowed us to self-reflect and ask ourselves what is important for us. The only thing that remains the same after COVID-19 is change, and right now the changes are happening faster than ever before. Are you focusing on what is important?



## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #19:

**Leaders that informs and communicate effectively.**

**Cooperation on more advanced levels.**

**Leaders with exceptional meeting and presentation skills.**



*A progressive CEO for an expansive company in North America, Europe and Asia.*

**1.** Leadership is in crisis. And when it is - information is key. We have an identified gap when it comes to internal information. Intranet is fine but not sufficient. One example is that we have realized that key people in our organization are not informed. We need to develop our skills to inform and communicate in different ways.

**2.** I truly don't think that all our meetings will be digital in the future. For example, to brainstorm together for innovation has proven to work so much better when we are physically together as it also requires cooperation on an advanced level.

**3.** We will travel less for work and we will have fewer meetings. This means that the meetings we have will be of greater importance. The demand on exceptional presentation skills will be a key to our success, as well as exceptional meetings skills and the ability to evaluate the leaders' skills transparently for quick improvements.

**P.S.** It will take at least another 12 months until things will get back to some sort of normality, and yet it will never be the same as before.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #20:

**Adaptable and Agile Leadership.**

**Leading remotely.**

**High demands on Communication Skills.**



*A CEO from Holland working in Sweden for a power company.*

**1.** It has been very clear to me that we need to be better at "Adaptable and Agile Leadership". That is: To lead in a changing environment where some of us are in the office and others work remotely or from home. How do we do that?

**2.** Also, when we are leading employees from home, how do we specifically lead and give them freedom and at the same time ensure that they are doing what they should and on time? That they feel support and engagement from their employer, and that we as employer have a good grasp of if people feel well, do well, and feel part of their working context - especially when it comes to the younger generations? It requires a new dimension in leadership when leading remotely and via video.

**3.** "The New Normal" places higher demands on communication internally between colleagues and between leaders and employees. We need to rethink how we communicate, when, and what.

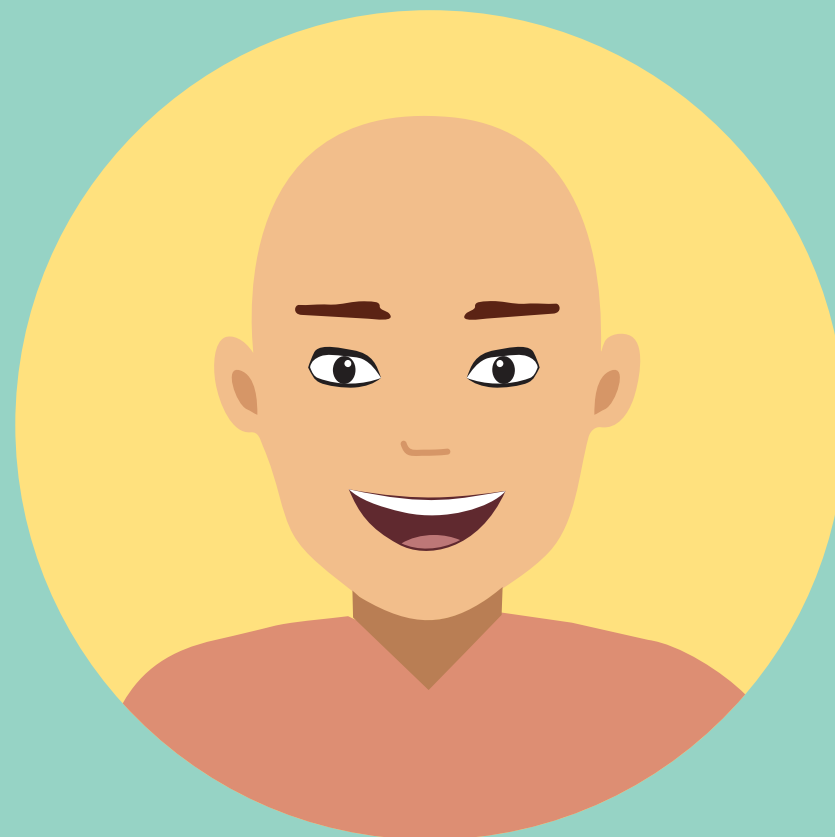
**P.S.** We are rethinking our future investments, for example, is a new big head office really what we should be investing in now? And if we do need a new office, how do we make it "future proof and effective"?

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #21:

**Making sustainability  
a priority.**

**Agile leaders that can  
lead with less hierarchy.**

**ROI on all investment  
is a “must”.**



*A Swedish investor  
experienced in turning around  
companies in Europe.*

1. The biggest and most important focus will be sustainability. All leaders need to make this a priority as THE strategy, and make sure it is an integrated part of the whole process at work. It needs to be prioritized and integrated throughout the company, and also a requirement for vendors. All companies should be able to communicate: “This is what we are doing to make this planet a better place”. For the companies that learn how to communicate this in simple, yet positive and effective ways, it will be their competitive edge and their window of opportunity in their interaction with new recruits, vendors, and clients.

2. We need to organize a company in a different way than before, with decentralized responsibility and with greater trust in the individual employee’s ability to manage. The majority has to want to do the changes, and the younger employees want to know why they do what they do and get full responsibility. Fewer levels and less hierarchy, and with the right people in the right positions. Organizations have to be more “simple” and with quicker decisions made by the people who are affected.

3. Pricing will be crucial. We all will need arguments for NOT reducing our prices and the key will be “Value Based Pricing and Selling”. We need to find ways to collect information which is so valuable that clients want to buy it, be licensed and experienced in measuring ROI - Return on Investment - and offer the clients more paying options than the current ones.

**P.S.** I foresee a future where we pay employees for the work they do and not for the hours they work. The future will be about working as smart as you can, independent of how much time it takes.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #22:

**Humble yet  
resilient leaders.**

**Demands on delivery  
with better quality.**

**Confident and secure  
leaders that cooperate.**



*A Scandinavian leader who  
leads with figures and empathy  
in the world of hotels.*

1. Everyone talks about handling the crisis, yet I truly believe that we need to focus even more on learning how to be more humble, empathetic, good listeners and learn from one another. We are too selfish – even more now than ever before. Excellent leadership will be “passing what you know forward” to others and share your knowledge so others can excel. Training companies that can offer training in developing humble, yet resilient, leaders will be attractive. It’s the mix of being human and genuine in combination with driving results that will succeed. Not one OR the other, but the combination of both.

2. I don’t believe in being aggressive in the market either. But I do believe that the demands for quality of delivery – whatever we deliver – will be much higher in the future.

3. Within the same professional business we need to learn how to cooperate much better. We can save time, money, and resources by cooperating better. The future is not to win at any cost, but to have confident and secure leaders that can move organizations and people resiliently forward.

**P.S.** We have so far developed our unique trademarks within our organizations and competed with one another in the same business – though for the client we do look very similar. We need to be more lean and simple instead of complicated, and erase internal trademarks.



## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #23:

**Great communication skills.**

**Innovative during crisis.**

**Calm and confident  
leaders that show  
empathy and hope.**



*A Chinese HR Manager  
in Shanghai juggling  
worldwide challenges.*

**1.** We need great communication skills, specifically in how to transparently lead our teams to align and transfer uncertainty and yet instill hope. For example: how to ensure job security, make our buildings healthy and safe, and make our employees fully comprehend what happens now and in the future.

**2.** We need more knowledge on how to become innovative at work. We have these skills and use them in our private lives and free time - yet at work we don't seem to be able to be as innovative when it comes to our line meetings, our future challenges, or how to work digitally.

**3.** People are looking for strong leaders that are calm, clear, and can give others confidence. Leaders that can understand and influence staff positively, show empathy, and support - but who are still firm and resilient, and can handle uncertainty. A leader needs to be calm, people-focused, and innovative - and think out of the box about processes and products.

**P.S.** Right now it seems like the managers are focusing on survival and are not that interested in development or feel that they have no time to focus on it. Yet, it is right now, and in the near future, that we need leaders that are calm and people-focused and at the same time innovative and can think out of the box when it comes to processes and products.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #24:

**Empathetic leaders.**

**Leaders that show  
vulnerability.**

**Better self-insight and  
understanding behaviors.**



*An Englishman in South  
Africa training young  
entrepreneurs.*

**1.** There needs to be a much greater focus on empathy. When you manage people directly and in person, you can easily catch up with them, check how they are doing, and if they are doing what they should. In our new remote world, we leaders also need to start checking if they are in a good place, and check their mood and show compassion. To be able to do that, we need to develop our ability to show more empathy and to ask the right questions.

**2.** In the present state, none of us can plan ahead so the ability, for leaders in particular, to be vulnerable and actually be able to say "I don't have all the right answers" will be key. No one trusts someone who is bullet proof. You trust someone who is human and who can show vulnerability as well.

**3.** The focus in the next couple of years will be to build an environment of trust - as a parent and spouse, as a colleague and a manager. We need to understand ourselves better, and get a better self-insight into how we are perceived by others, to be able to act from a place of trust.

**P.S.** As we are becoming more digitalized, our colleagues and staff will see us in our home environment and our family will see us in our work environment. Are we the same person? If not, credibility will be built through being stable and consistent.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #25:

**Focus on developing  
soft skills.**

**Leaders that  
communicate trust.**

**We need to learn and live  
“social learning”.**



*A founder/ CEO from Denmark  
working with Digital Learning  
platform and Employee  
Experiences.*

1. Before corona it seemed like most companies had more focus on hard skills. Now there needs to be more focus on soft skills, a lot more focus on culture as well as physical and psychological health, and the need for the digital solutions has exploded.

2. The “remote working” is here to stay. As managers we need to become much better at communicating, as we will be leading remotely. Some company cultures micromanage. For example, the car industry seems to function through control, control, control – i.e. “if I don’t check in, they will not do it.” During the corona pandemic we have shifted away from this, maybe even a little too much, because in the void that occurs when we don’t regularly meet our employees in person we will have a challenge to communicate trust. Especially in industries where trust is not the greatest focus it will be a challenge to be present when you can’t be physically present.

3. One thing we repeatedly discuss in our company is something we call “social learning”, i.e. how to share knowledge. In the old times, we sat around the campfire and shared stories of knowledge with the younger generations. In our world thus far, we have shared through meetings and by physically working together. How do we do that in the digital world? If I am good at something, how do I share it? The better we become at social learning, the more motivated our organizations and employees will become.

**P.S.** Many companies are immature when it comes to digitalization, for example construction companies. We have learned a lot about working remotely during COVID-19, yet there is a risk that companies believe that as long as we work from home and have meetings on zoom or teams, we are fully digitalized - but there is so much more to engaging, learning, and developing with the help of digitalized tools.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #26:

**Leaders need to help  
employees finding  
work-life balance.**

**Lead with empathy as  
well as result orientation.**

**Build a culture of  
inclusion and diversity.**



*A Healthcare CEO based in  
San Francisco leading an  
organization of 4000  
employees.*

1. I have seen that our people react in three different ways to working remotely: The ones that love to work from home, those that are struggling a lot and may have health issues and a stressful family situations, and then the ones in the middle: “we are not travelling as much, but I am missing the professional face to face social interaction”. The biggest challenge for all of us, as well as our number one priority from now on, is “work- life balance”.

2. There has never been a greater need as a leader to understand other people’s needs and struggles, and at the same time follow up and see that work is getting done. “Command and control” and other rigid systems are out. Instead we need leaders to develop flexibility, adaptability, and agility skills.

3. The value of inclusion is key for a future organization. One of the things we will mandate for our leaders is that all of them have to go through a certain type of training, such as unconscious bias training. This will be mandatory for all “people” leaders.

**P.S.** A question I frequently get is “When do I, as a leader, know that I got it right?” No doubt that the corona pandemic has fundamentally changed the world and how we conduct business. Both from a social perspective, as well as a society perspective, it is highly unlikely that we will go back to how it was before. As we do not have a map or directions, we all need to redirect ourselves and frequently ask the question “When do I know that I got it right?”



## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #27:

**Road map to  
cross border teams.**

**Secure leaders that are  
good role models and  
show humanity.**

**Communicating our  
strategic areas.**



*CFO in an expanding  
sustainability company.*

**1.** We know that we need to organize ourselves in new ways and develop from traditional teams, for example from traditional finance teams to cross border teams that cooperates across departments to enhance creativity, innovation, and effectiveness - but how do we get there?

**2.** In connection to this, we need leaders that trust that the organization will deliver. Leaders that are secure, work with themselves, and develop. Leaders that are good role models and are humane, learn from their mistakes, and show a genuine interest in their employees and their wellbeing.

**3.** It will be vitally important to communicate our strategic areas and in what direction we are going. Not only to communicate that effectively in words, but also in visual ways - as we will be meeting physically less and less.

**P.S.** We are convinced that sustainability will become an even more important topic on all companies' agendas, and it will also have a greater impact on the organizations we work for.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #28:

**Stimulate innovation and  
creativity remotely.**

**Secure wellbeing while  
working remotely.**

**Become role models in how  
to communicate digitally.**



*Swedish president for an  
international financial  
company.*

**1.** One defined need is how to train managers in how to stimulate innovation and creativity in a remote working scenario. It will be easier if you continue with present project, but how do you start new ones in a creative and productive mode for strategies for 2021-22? Who can help us with that?

**2.** How can I, as an executive, see to that our leaders have the ability to recognize others and see others? How do we get our teams to feel recognized and have a sense of closeness to our core business when we might not meet physically or be in the same place? We have a need for a systemized way to "check in" to secure our employees and managers wellbeing.

**3.** We have had such a positive effect of our worldwide CEO's ability to connect and push us forward with hope and security into an unknown future. She has communicated through digital channels and has had the ability to connect with more employees than what has traditionally been done before. Now all of us in executive positions need to do the same.

**P.S.** How do we balance physical meetings, digital meetings, humane leadership, and productive focus?



## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #29:

**Tailor training  
to individual needs.**

**Leaders that can  
communicate  
a positive future.**

**EQ and CQ training.**



*A world traveler as well as  
innovative entrepreneur in  
South Korea leading a  
nonprofit organization.*

**1.** In the near future we need to tailor the training more to individual needs. To be able to do that, we need to better assess our employees consistently.

**2.** People are very confused and insecure in the present situation. Therefore, they have a basic fundamental need to understand the world and how to find solutions themselves. We leaders need to paint a future road map where people can find themselves in a brighter future.

**3.** We need leaders that can communicate better in a world of diversity. To be able to do that, we as leaders need better knowledge in emotional Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence, as well as in diversity.

**P.S.** In the world we need a more empathetic focus, also on governmental initiatives so they follow the development that is happening in the world.

## KEY POINTS FROM INTERVIEW #30:

**Clear values communicated  
and synced.**

**Innovative through  
young people.**

**ALL managers need to  
be better at feedback.**



*CEO for a 70-year-old  
successful family business  
in Switzerland.*

**1.** As we are very close to our employees we see that we need to flatten our organization and give the staff more freedom. The younger generation does not need or want to be supervised - AS LONG AS the values are synced, they will do what they are asked and they will need to be given more responsibilities.

**2.** Innovation is a priority for us. We will work with many schools and high schools, as students and younger people are much more creative. One change we already have done is to include ALL the staff in all our creative processes.

**3.** We need to work on better feedback. I myself need to work more on feedback and I want to be a good role model as my ultimate goal is to teach all of our leaders in the organization to do the same.

**P.S.** We have new products coming and we need to be better at communicating our family value system through social media.

Here we go again: "So to summarize..."

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THE BIG FOUR

As you read the interviews, you will see that regardless of where the interviews have been conducted and the businesses the interviewees represent, there are clear patterns in the responses. The conclusion is that there are four distinct areas in need of improvement shown throughout the interviews:

**1. Developing Outstanding Communication Skills**  
Train leaders so they can speak with clarity and realism about direction. Offer a strong vision and communicate a motivational future that instills hope. Develop leaders' skills to connect on a personal level in combination with communicating strategy goals and visions in motivational and inspiring ways. Communicate the importance of each-individual's contribution and consistently communicate a sense of belonging. Lastly, train all leaders to be exceptional at conducting meetings, especially digital meetings.

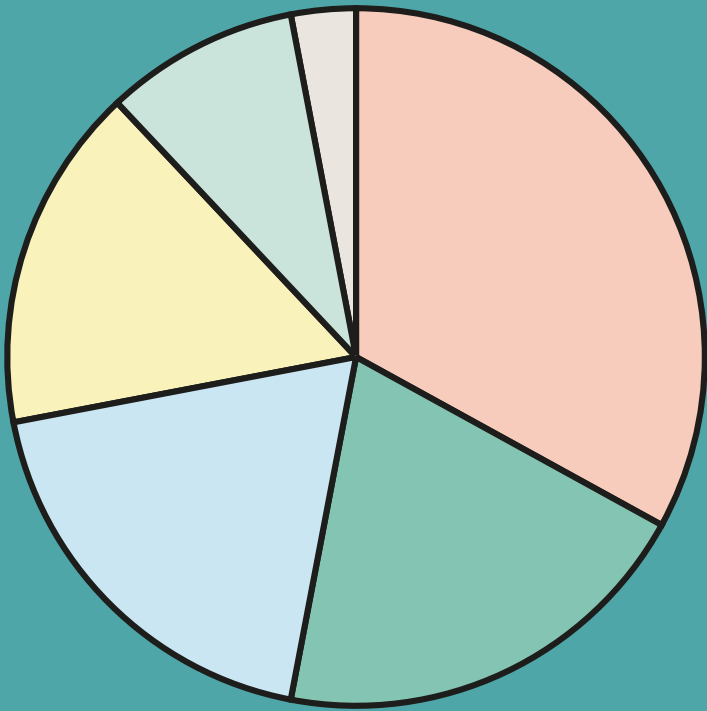
**2. Developing Humancentric leaders**  
If you not yet have the competence and knowledge about Emotional Intelligence and how

to foster and show great empathy in your leadership, we would strongly advise you to invest time and money in learning these skills. Learn behaviours and increase your adaptability so you can be prepared and confident for a modern world that will require a more human leadership.

**3. Focus on Engaged Employees**  
Keep engagement high, especially through challenging times, which will have a direct and proven effect on the end results. Share everything that is positive and develop a systematic way of consistently recognizing and appreciating your staff.

**4. Upskill Leaders & Key Staff**  
Develop a systematic plan to be able to identify the right training for the right people. Tailor training to an individual's or a group's needs and circumstances, have a secure application and follow up method, and partner with vendors who can tailor and **secure application** and are licensed in ROI – the ability to measure the investment with the outcome in key targets and financial terms.

Humancentric Leadership	33%
Engaged Employees	20%
Outstanding Communication skills	19 %
Upskilling	16 %
Agile, Innovative teams	9 %
Other	3%





## Moving forward

### THE KEY TO FUTURE SUCCESS

The study boils down to this; invest time and money to enhance your leaders' effective communication and presentation skills, both "real" as well as in digital formats. We cannot rely on "old skills" that have proven successful in previous years.

We need to develop new skills that will make us successful in the future. Because now more than ever employees are in need of encouragement, especially from their leaders. In our interviews we understand that the ability to show empathy and humanity is of great importance when organisations go remotely.



One major trend we have identified is the need of a shift to a humancentric mindset. CEOs and leaders must focus even more on their employees as individuals, and look beyond titles and roles and lead with more empathy and humanity. They need to think more carefully about their team members' well-being: mentally, physically, and emotionally. The probability is that the majority of leaders today are strong in achieving financial results, but need improvement in humancentric leadership.

The key to success will be to have leaders that are strong in both those areas. We call that "Dual Leadership".



## The Future buzz words

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"The Future Encyclopaedia" of buzzwords to be able to navigate and develop to a future successful organisation is:

### Digitally Native

*"We are only looking for training partners that can adapt to the new world and are able to offer the same training digitally one day and in person the next."*

### Instill hope

*"We leaders need to paint a future road map where people can find themselves in a brighter future."*

### "Out of the box"

*"We need to think out of the box when building our training plans for the future. In order to accomplish all this, we need to work with vendors that can match us."*

### The Ideal Vendor

*"Training companies that can offer training in developing humble, yet resilient, leaders as well as driving results and counting ROI that will succeed. Not one OR the other, but the combination of both!"*

### Be visible - at all times

*"Use transparent communication and be genuine in difficult situations. Communicate our North Star" - the 'why' we are doing what we do."*

### Communicate Core Values

*"We all need to be much better at communicating our vision, our mission, and our purpose."*

### EQ, behaviours and adaptability

*"Leaders need to train and develop skills like EQ, CQ, psychology, behaviours, pedagogical tools and methods."*

### Lead digitally & with empathy

*"Become leaders with the ability to lead and develop your staff through digital channels. As well as show more empathy and to ask the right questions."*

### Understand and engage

*"There has never been a greater need than to understand other peoples needs."*

### Dual Leadership

*"We as leaders need to show much more empathy and emotional intelligence and display a healthy balance between financial results and human well-being."*

### Motivate, motivate, motivate

*"All leaders need to understand how to boost, motivate and instill hope."*



## Finding the right vendor

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Especially at time of crisis, changing needs drive rapid shifts in leaders' and employees' mindsets and behaviours that play out a willingness to try new things. My recommendation is to not take on this task alone. Be sure to include partners, vendors, and suppliers that have made it their mission to become experts in adapting to change. Stahl & Partners' purpose is to collaborate with you and share data and learning to better ensure your success in the future to come. Also, after times of crisis, the collaboration with vendors is relationships built on trust and not only on transactions. Find vendors that live, breath, and display the qualities you want to develop in your own organisation, i.e. they have leaders that:

- Display a humancentric leadership by reading behaviours and showing adaptability and emotional intelligence.
- There are clear indications that they have developed an engaging workplace themselves.
- Use effective, modern, and digital methods to communicate with the heart and the brain.
- Develop their own employees by using their own methods.
- Successfully have adapted their methods and tools into a more digital world.

Little did we know at the time when Stahl & Partners started 20 years ago, that our way of working would be the world for almost everyone in year 2020. Whether or not you choose to work with us, it might be good to know that Stahl & Partners have been digitally native since the start 20 years ago. During this period, we have never had any offices, no printed material, no traditional marketing, and no kick-offs. We have been communicating with clients in more than 25 countries through digital platforms, and we mostly meet as colleagues when we deliver training as a trainer's team.

We would be delighted to show you how we run our own business and how we work together with our clients to:

- Achieve organisational success.
- Ensure measurable results.
- Engage employees.
- Develop humane and empathetic leaders.

Our aim is to lead the development of our business! Please contact us either by writing to me, Helena, directly at [helena@helenastahl.com](mailto:helena@helenastahl.com), or by visiting our website [www.helenastahl.com](http://www.helenastahl.com).





Thank you!

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We could not be where we are as a company today without our fantastic clients and our wonderful partners! They see that we constantly develop, whatever the circumstances are.

In March this year, when Corona hit and 90% of our business was postponed, "the black curtain fell down" and all of our business abroad vanished. I could hardly breathe but I called one of our fantastic clients who said: *Helena, find out what people in our positions are thinking about the future, share it and make a book!*

I am so happy I called a "life line" because it turned out to be a brilliant idea! Not only did it turn into a book, but a different kind of a book:

1. The design is a modern, colourful hybrid of a book and an infographic.
2. It is written so you can read any page chosen in your own order.
3. It is probably one of the thinnest management books ever written :-)

Thank you, all 30 of you around the world that has given us the time and attention to make the "New Normal" we are soon stepping into an even better workplace, and thank you partners for the design, text, layout and grammar. We want to stand out in the crowd as not only different and unique, but ahead of the game. You all have helped us to do that.



*I am so grateful for all the competence  
I am surrounded by, that makes our  
company shine, flourish and develop.  
So a special thanks to:*

*Helena Stendahl Hägg, Creative Director  
Hanna Ståhl, Project Manager  
Monica Vestergren Kruijssen, Linguist*

*&*

*all our fantastic clients and friends  
around the world.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Helena Stendahl Hägg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Helena" being the most prominent part.



*"The world has experienced two years of digital transformation in two months. How will we take advantage of this? What new tools will evolve?"*



*"Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is now taking a giant leap towards a more digital world. If your business isn't online now (or very soon), you will be out of business before long!"*



*"We are only looking for training partners that can adapt to the new world and are able to offer the same training digitally one day and in person the next. It's "adapt or die!"*

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STAHL & PARTNERS

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