

SHIFTING MENTAL MODELS IN TIMES OF CRISIS

The COVID crisis has changed the world rapidly and we are faced with a future of confusion, instability and complexities. Organizations in search of innovative growth in times of crisis could look to their leadership's mental models as one of the answers.

A mental model represents how we perceive the world. Mental Models are how we reason, simplify complexity, and the framework for our decision-making. Using mental models increases your clarity of understanding, providing direction for the choices you need to make. Mental models are valuable tools for helping leaders think through significant disruptions. However, in times of crisis and transformation, mental models can hinder an organization's ability to succeed if leaders are stuck in old ways of thinking. A business leader's mental models can become a barrier to change and growth for an organization. Organizations are struggling to adapt to a situation that changes by the day, and when mental models are stuck or too rigid, organizations can fail instead of thrive.

It's imperative that leadership teams take the time to examine and understand their mental models during times of crisis. Tomorrow's strategy will not bring more efficiency and progress if we can't change and adapt our mental models to the COVID crisis.

The COVID crisis is disrupting old ways of life and exposing business leaders to the limitations and chaos in managing sustainable growth and operations. This moment has elevated the importance of leading in a crisis with an aware state of mind. The world is headed into more accelerated change and uncertainty that will remain constant with little stability and predictability. The most valuable tools to navigate the rough road ahead is through clearer insights that lead to better decisions. Leading in a crisis with an aware state of mind is only possible if we use and adapt our mental models.

The ability to recognize, shift and use mental models takes training.

A shift in mental models can help:

- Business leaders grow and innovate by breaking free from the "business as usual" mentality that causes stagnation and many companies to fail.
- Improve organization performance when business leaders have a clear perspective that allow them to see problems from all sides and make better decisions.
- Leaders become agents of change in their organization while teaching others and engaging their teams. Changing mind-sets in the workplace is possible once leaders train the entire organization to use mental models as an essential component of strategy to improve decisions and change company dynamics.

Taking the time to analyse mental models will help business leaders understand why they think, behave and react in a certain way, and how that mental framework plays a profound role on their decision-making processes, productivity and the outcomes of their company. Mental models are the catalyst for transformational change within organizations. Learning how to shift and use mental models can improve business decisions that lead to strategic growth. Having the ability to determine where models are creating obstacles for change and growth in the organization is the first step. Then, through learning new, top level thought tactics, outdated mental constructs will no longer hold organizations back from advancing in this rapidly changing world.

The key to unlock systems change and progress is knowing how to constantly enrich and update mental models to guide strategic thinking. Business leaders can spread this capability across their entire organization as a true agent of change.



A global executive education club pioneering hands-on courses in mental model strategy is CEDEP in France. They co-create personalized, custom and multi-company programmes that focus on leadership development.



Philippe Silberzahn



Béatrice Rousset

CEDEP is bringing two specialists in business transformation and co-authors of the book *Mental Models Strategy*, Béatrice Rousset, coach in organisational transformation and Philippe Silberzahn, EM Lyon Business School Professor and recognized expert in innovation and entrepreneurship, in a 2.5-day programme for a group of business leaders, managers, consultants, and public officials.



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