



Report on Resilience First Webinar

9 July 2020

'Leadership in a pandemic'

Speakers:

Basil Scarsella, CEO, UK Power Networks

John Deverell CBE, CEO, The Prepared Mind

Professor Denis Fischbacher-Smith, Research Chair in Risk and Resilience (Management) and Visiting Professor of Risk Management (Crichton Institute)

Seth Schultz, Global Executive Director, Resilience Shift

Chairman:

Simon Collins, Chairman, Resilience First

Key Messages

- Providing clarity and assurance when the situation is chaotic, as with the pandemic, has demanded a higher level of leadership. Being able to manage the tactical details while at the same time providing strategic direction is a dichotomy that organisations need to address.
- Leadership requires a 'mini-maestro' (a concept based on the work of Westrum) who has the ability and understanding to orchestrate the resources and capabilities needed to manage in the uncertainty of a crisis situation. Leaders should be able to recognise the control gaps that can be generated as an organisation evolves from its established 'designed-for state' to an 'emergent system state'. These gaps in controls are often a precursor to a crisis and reflect the embedding of vulnerabilities within the organisation.
- Those individuals who lead the organisation into crisis may not be the best people to lead it out of that crisis as their assumptions and worldviews may blind them to the actions that have to be taken.
- There is no one size that fits all. 'Battle hardening' of leaders requires training and testing to stretch capabilities in the face of uncertainty.
- The issue of speaking 'truth to power' was highlighted. This required the confidence of staff to be honest with their managers at the same time as the acceptance of the managers to receive potential criticism without imposing penalties. It requires an open and supportive culture.
- Leaders should be willing to admit failings and learn lessons. A good leader should admit that s/he does not have all the answers and needs different perspectives from others, preferably not from the last voice in the room. It is necessary to avoid the instant experts who often emerge within a crisis and who offer untested solutions to the challenges that the crisis generates.

- There is a need to take risk registers more seriously as a foundation for contingency planning. Time invested here is well spent and at relatively low cost in the face of potential losses connected with a crisis.
- At the same time, it is important to understand and act upon the limits of risk calculations (as both the probability and consequences of hazards causing harm).
- It is important to train for known events but organisations should have the agility to deal with the unknown(s) in order to develop capabilities, trust and an open culture in an organisation.
- Going the extra mile to look after employees and their families properly will pay dividends: leaders now need to be more inclusive given their dispersed (WFH) workforces.
- Leaders should be prepared to 'do your bit' and take some weight off the authorities and help support communities – the social good.
- They should have the flexibility to deal with the 'new normal' around the pandemic. The future 'normal' state may not reflect the previous notions of normality. In addition, the supposed new normal is likely to be a transitional state to a new equilibrium as the organisation adapts to a changing environment in the future.
- 'Fortune favours the prepared mind' (Louis Pasteur). Being able to balance preparedness with resourcefulness, both of which are requirements of resilience, is a key asset.
- Leaders should not assume goodwill in good times will extend to bad times. This includes the attitude of families.
- Education at an early stage is important to develop critical thinking and resilience. Three aspects are important here: inquisitiveness, initiative and imagination.
- Clear and frequent communication to staff based on trust is essential, especially when they may be mixed and multiple messages coming from different sources.

The speakers answered a series of questions from the participating audience.

The full video recording can be found [here](#).

References:

- See this [link](#) to an academic page that describes some of the issues of resilience and leadership. (Kindly supplied by Professor Fischbacher-Smith.)
- As part of the work of The Resilience Shift to make resilience tangible and relevant, every week for four months through the Covid-19 pandemic, the same 12 senior decision-makers and professionals have been interviewed for their evolving reflections on what they are encountering. Their insights have then been distilled for sharing with the wider public. Details of leadership programme can be found [here](#).
- See this [link](#) to a Resilience First article on leadership in crises.

Speakers' Biographies

Basil Scarsella

Basil Scarsella is the Chief Executive Officer of UK Power Networks, owned by the Cheung Kong Group, which is the largest Distribution Network Operator in the UK, distributing electricity to over 8m homes and businesses across London, the South East and East of England. It has some 6,500 employees in its regulated and non-regulated areas. UK Power Networks has been ranked in the Top 25 Best Big Companies to Work for the years 2015-

2020 in the *Sunday Times* annual list and awarded Utility of the Year in the UK in 2012, 2015 and 2016.

Immediately prior to taking up his appointment with UK Power Networks in 2010, Basil was the CEO of Northern Gas Networks for five years. Northern Gas distributes gas to 2.5m homes in the northeast of England and also falls under the ownership of the Cheung Kong Group. Northern Gas Networks ranked as the most efficient gas network in the UK. Up until 2005, Basil was CEO of ETSA Utilities (SA Power Networks), the electricity distributor in South Australia.

Basil holds a degree in Economics from the University of Adelaide and is a Certified Practising Accountant. He is a Life Member of Football Australia and former Member of the Executive Committee of FIFA. He received the Australian Sports Medal in 2000 and in 2003 became a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for services to sport.

John Deverell CBE

John provides what are considered by many leading professionals to be the best crisis preparedness and recovery plans in the business. He is founder and CEO of The Prepared Mind (www.thepreparedmind.net).

After leaving government service 10 years ago he spent two years on the Executive Leadership Team of Invensys plc, a FTSE-100 global technology company, personally responsible to the CEO for security and for dealing with all crises and business continuity.

Subsequently, he was an employee of King Worldwide / M:Communications for whom he developed and marketed client-orientated reputation and crisis-management solutions.

As a senior Army officer, he was Director Defence Diplomacy in the Ministry of Defence. He was appointed OBE and later the CBE by Her Majesty the Queen for his leadership in particularly challenging situations. As an Army divisional commander, he was accountable for administrative support to a third of the British Army.

He has appeared many times on TV and radio, advising on strategy, risk and security. He has an MPhil from Cambridge University in International Relations and a diploma in negotiation and mediation from Kent University.

Professor Denis Fischbacher-Smith

Professor Denis Fischbacher-Smith is Research Professor of Risk and Resilience at the University of Glasgow where he is also Deputy Head of the Business School. He is a graduate of the Universities of Manchester, Glasgow, St Andrews, Glasgow Caledonian, Derby, the CNAA, and the Open University. He holds Bachelor's degrees in Geography/Environmental Science (BEd) (Manchester) and Science (BSc) (Open), Masters degrees in Pollution Control (MSc), Applied Psychology (MSc), Public Health (MPH) (Manchester) Psychology in Forensic Settings (MSc) (GCU), Management (MBA) (CNAA), Ergonomics (MSc) (Derby), Terrorism Studies (MLitt) (St Andrews) and War Studies (MLitt) (Glasgow). He holds a DLitt in Crisis Management (Glasgow) and a PhD in Science and Technology Policy (Manchester).

In terms of professional affiliations, he is a Chartered Security Professional (CSyP), a Chartered Ergonomist & Human Factors Specialist (C.ErgHF), a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Personnel and Development (FCIPD), and a Chartered Manager (CMgr). In addition, he is a Companion of the Chartered Management Institute (CCMI), a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences (FACSS), a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy

(PFHEA), a Fellow of the British Academy of Management, and a Fellow of the Emergency Planning Society.

He has held professorial appointments at the Liverpool John Moores, Durham, Sheffield, and Liverpool Universities prior to his appointment at Glasgow. He has also been a visiting professor at the Universities of Kobe (Japan), Innsbruck (Austria), San Diego State (USA), Edge Hill (UK) and at the Crichton Institute. He was the Director of Liverpool Business School (LJMU) and the founding director of the University of Liverpool Management School.

Outside of his academic activities, Professor Fischbacher-Smith has been a director of HARM Consulting and CSC Ltd, as well as a non-executive director of JMU Services, Mersey Regional Ambulance Service, St Helens RLFC and Aintree University Hospital NHS Trust. He was seconded to Scottish Government and Police Scotland for work around resilience and he also worked extensively with Sefton Borough Council on work relating to organisational design and child protection. In terms of policy development, he was a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee that produced 'An Organisation with a Memory' for the Department of Health (England and Wales) in 2000 and an expert advisor to the Grenfell Inquiry in 2020.

Seth Schultz

Seth Schultz is Executive Director of The Resilience Shift. He has a long track record of building consensus and initiating change in the field of sustainable development and of raising international awareness on the role of cities in tackling climate change.

With over 20 years of experience, Seth's background is as a geologist and environmental scientist. Driven by the need to create change in urban sustainability, he has worked with leading and innovative organisations in this space including the Louis Berger Group, the US Green Building Council, the Clinton Foundation, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, the Global Covenant of Mayors, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), where he was Co-Chair of the Scientific Steering Committee for Cities IPCC and served as a lead author on the ground breaking IPCC Special Report on 1.5 Degrees.

His recent work has focused on turning theory to practice, whether developing a global standard for Greenhouse Gas Emissions in cities, founding new organisations such as The Coalition for Urban Transitions, or a hard-hitting report on Mayoral powers and the ability and need for city leaders to become global change makers.

Seth sits on various boards and advisory councils, is a sought-after speaker and guest lecturer, and has authored numerous articles, reports, blogs and thought leadership pieces around the world. He has a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science from Binghamton University.

Simon Collins

Simon is a Chairman and C-suite adviser. Until 2017 he was the UK Chairman and Senior Partner of KPMG and a member of the KPMG Global Board and Executive Committee.

Simon qualified as a chartered accountant before moving into banking at SG Warburg & Co, then NatWest Markets where he became a Managing Director and Head of the Global Debt Structuring and Private Placement Group.

After a number of years in investment banking, Simon founded KPMG's Debt Advisory practice. Since then he has advised major corporates, private equity houses and governments.

Simon is a Trustee of Pancreatic Cancer UK and chairs the RAF100 Appeal.

