Reflections...of the way life used to be
Leadership in volatile times

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In these times there is the necessary and crucial step of reflection - a step that is often missed by leaders as we seek to pivot as quickly, simply and painlessly as possible from crisis to recovery. But in a complex, emergent environment it is those leaders who take time to pause and reflect that will be better equipped to guide the evolution of their organisations. Refer here to the full paper by Shamal Dass.

This work was informed by a round table of more than 60 board and executive leaders from across the for-purpose sector in Australia (alumni of the JBWere National Australia Bank Governance for Social Impact course).

The insights are timely and equally valuable for New Zealand for-purpose organisations. For your ready reference, the questions Shamal poses are set out below:

Reflections…of what we have we learned

- How well have we performed through the crisis? Against what measures? Have beneficiary outcomes been compromised?

- How does our performance in the last 3 months compare to what we state as our organisational strengths and weaknesses in our strategic plan? Have we acted in line with our stated values and behaviours during this period?

- What are the potential intended and unintended consequences of the choices we have made in the last 3 months?

- What have we learnt about our organisational Theory of Change (TOC)? Which assumptions have been shown to be weak or incorrect? Have there been changes in the beneficiary ecosystem (e.g. are there different barriers, additional levers, or new agents)? And if so, how must our TOC adapt to deliver outcomes?

Reflections…on the race we are in

- Are we going too fast? Are there programs being developed and delivered without due consideration of our mission to meet funder (Government) aspirations? If we get swept along and commit, will we end up with an unsustainable model or program? Are we focussed on the endgame?

- How are our people – management, service delivery, volunteers? Are they coping well? What are the levels of anxiety, if any? Are the management team fatigued? What should the Board be doing to assist them in this emergent space?