

# DTSE Talks Podcast – Episode 03

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## 02.2021 - #NewLeadership for the #NewNormal

In this episode, we talk about the key elements of the leadership we need during a pandemic, how to manage stress to maximize performance and finally how to sustain this mindset for the #NextNormal.

### TRANSCRIPT

#### [THEME MUSIC]

##### 00:09 Oumaima (Mai)

Hello everyone and welcome! You are listening to DTSE talks, the place to be to learn more and explore the life in magenta! You wonder what's going on in the company? Where do we excel and what's our lessons learned? Join me as I delve into the life in the DTSE and interview employees as well as guests to answer all your questions. I'm your host Oumaima Boussouab and today we talk about leadership in time of crisis. Therefore, I invited our colleague in our culture leader in DTSE Thomas Mombauer to share his perspective on this topic. So, stick around!

#### [THEME MUSIC]

##### 00:47 Oumaima (Mai)

Leadership is not just about bringing communities together, it's about making tough decisions and seeing opportunities where others don't. Now, with COVID-19 disrupting our lives in ways no one would have ever guessed, the leaders are facing even bigger challenges as new hurdles have been added to their agenda. During these tough times, we rely on them more than ever to care for the health of their employees, help build resilience within the team, as well as take critical actions to decide on what's best for both the organization and the society.

So today we tackle this burning topic and we will first start by reminding why the leadership role is important, then we will discuss the key elements of the leadership we need during a pandemic, how to mitigate stress to maximize performance and finally how to sustain this mindset for the #NextNormal. So without further ado, let's get started!

#### [THEME MUSIC]

##### 01:46 Oumaima (Mai)

Our guest today is Thomas Mombauer. He's currently the head of HR projects and Employee Transformation in DTSE with a passion for culture. He's going to share with us his insights on the leadership topic, during our current times. Hi Thomas, thanks so much for joining.

##### 02:05 Thomas

Hi Mai, thank you so much for the invitation. I really enjoy being with you here today and looking forward to our next 20 minutes or so.

##### 02:12 Oumaima (Mai)

Thank you, also looking forward! so you know why you're here today. We only hear about the new normal. Now we talk about new ways of working and we talk about new ways of collaborating also, so obviously we're talking about new leadership styles. And with this new normal, we are always emphasizing the leadership. So my first question to you is, why is it particularly now important to talk about leadership during this pandemic period?

**02:39 Thomas**

You know when it comes to leadership, I think the first thing that is important to know that being the leader is just having a certain role in a company. It is an important role, definitely, but nevertheless it's a role and in the end we all have to decide whether we are able or whether we feel able to fulfill that role or not. And especially in those pandemic times, there is a new element coming to that rule that makes it maybe even harder for some people to get along with the role, which is leading from distance or leading from home. Together with the situation everybody is in with the uncertainty on how life is going on and so on and so on.

And a leader is in the end a role model. So he or she has not to deal then only with the situation uh leading from from Home Office or leading from other locations. So being separated from the people you lead. But even to really support your people during the crisis and that makes it even harder now at the moment to be a leader, really.

**03:50 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah, and also, as you mentioned, the uncertainty and we are now living in the situation where there's a lot of fake news and a lot of conspiracy theories, and then also sometimes you have to make some tough decisions. And then what is the right approach to take tough decisions in these times and to also communicate these decisions.

**04:12 Thomas**

You know what? In general, I think to take tough decisions is daily work for a leader. Yeah, so it's nothing really you have to do only during times of crisis, but especially in times of crisis it's more complicated in a way. Because during such a crisis you have to show much more empathy than you have to show any way towards your employees. And transporting hard decisions in a situation where you as an employee are engaged with so many other topics around you not necessarily being in relation to your daily work, but being kind of well in the end, let me use that word "imprisoned" at your home because you're not allowed to go outside. You're not allowed to meet people. You are very tense in in that situation and now having a leader who's maybe not that empathetic in this situation, coming coming up with hard decisions or or harsh comments, maybe even makes the situation even worse for yourself.

So in in such a situation of crisis, you as a leader have to really fulfill your role towards empathy much more than you even have to do let's say in normal times, yeah. So definitely, therefore, empathy is one of the things or one of the leadership principles you should value as a leader very very much, especially during those times we are in at the moment.

**05:43 Oumaima (Mai)**

So basically, have a human centric approach and then think much more about the employees and their well being and be also engaged in providing this right environment for work. Right?

**05:55 Thomas**

Definitely, we say in our cultural it is important for us and one value for us is that we communicate. And communication means not only that I'm communicating to somebody else, but is I'm listening as well. So listening is very important when it comes to abilities a leader should have or should bring with him. Because people really, really need that communication even more now as they do not see each other. Yeah, we we do see people only via video chats or whatever, but we're not yes, yeah, and we're not allowed to meet them. So in this in those times it's even more important that I, as a leader, really listen to what people need to say and we simply, as human beings, we simply do need those social contacts, yeah. And so it's definitely important that I, as a leader, am able to to listen to the employees and support them during those times.

And this is applicable not only in times of crisis honestly, but even when crisis is over. It's very important that you as a leader really show empathy and have this clear communication, but listening at the same time towards your employees.

**07:09 Oumaima (Mai)**

We will get to this question later about how we sustain the leadership. For now I want to more emphasize about this style of leadership you mentioned, this new mindset. So what do you think about applying this style of leadership in our company?

**07:25 Thomas**

Well, you know, I think the important thing or the thing we should have in mind is that each and every leader in our company has, to a certain degree a very individual style of leadership. And we have, everybody of us has maybe a role model in mind, how he or she could really do leadership. If you ask me, the most important thing when it comes to leadership or one of the most important things is that you are authentic to a way but authentic in a in a way that you are on a base with the employee, you are still able to communicate. So, I would not say if you are if you are in kind of a leadership style that's very aggressive, Yeah, I wouldn't necessarily say OK stay authentic, yeah, but.

**00:08:11 Oumaima (Mai)**

Not a good advice

**08:13 Thomas**

No, not really, still then.

**08:11 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah, true.

**08:15 Thomas**

Maybe you should... You should rethink your... your way of leading people. But one point is really that people need to really trust. Yeah, that they need to trust. And if you do not offer that honesty towards your employees and if they really cannot rely on what you're telling them, it's not so good. So, be authentic in in what you say and how you lead.

And then when it comes to the leadership style. So, in general I would say situational leadership is important, means you have to deal with a certain situation in a certain team and every team is different and every situation is different and according to the situation and to the team you might have to adapt your leadership style. But if you ask me for a general leadership style that would work in such situation, it's cooperation. So, cooperative leadership style. Which means in the end you are

taking your employees to the, into your boat you are discussing with them really, what what is important when it comes to our results. For example, what is important when it comes to certain decisions?

It is important to give your employees the feeling, and to meet it as well, that they are important and that their opinion counts really in the end, because then they will be much more involved. And we, the mindset, will be the right one. So, you do not need people who simply execute. Yeah, you need people who really collaborate with you and who support you. You know in the end, in the end in employee involvement is good in every regard. So the important thing is that you on a regular basis, come really together with your team and discuss things even if you are already quite sure in which direction you want to go. But what you need in those times at the moment is more than maybe even in other times: the social aspect. So, you're not only in regular, you should not only be in regular exchange with the individuals yeah being one to ones or whatever, but you should really bring your team together. And when you have your team with you then why not use this big big resource of knowledge and and mindset and so on. And you together, if you think together for solutions for your team for for certain workload, whatever, yeah, then you can come in the end really to good, to good results. And it means a lot with the employee when she or he really realizes OK, I'm heard by my superior and I can really contribute to the success of our company. And that's, especially in those times, it's really, really important that we have the feeling that we belong to something and that we are important.

**11:02 Oumaima (Mai)**

True, it's true once you feel like you are heard and listened to, you actually want to maybe say more And you want to be involved more and you want to contribute more, once you see that you're not just taken for granted or you're not just discarded. That's a good point.

**11:20 Thomas**

Yeah, because engaging employees is key. What I would not want to do is simply give a certain task towards the employee saying just do it. An employee is better the very moment he knows why he's doing things, when he, when he or she is engaged in a certain topic. So, try to share the idea with the people. Try to share why they have to do something and then they will be better and then they will start really developing their own ideas. And that's something that is really important that people are not only conducting things yet they're not only executing what you suggest them to do. Of course it's necessary to a certain point yeah that you execute what you Superior tells you to execute, but don't stop thinking, that's the important message I want to bring in. And if you have an idea, if you share an idea with your with your team, then this team will really be better. Yeah, they will be better in really collaborating with you, in working on the topic and that is for me the key and it is for me very, very important that you are able to take your team with you that you are able to motivate your team by simply telling them OK what is necessary for our work? What is necessary for us to survive in in our business and where we have to go?

So really transport the idea, transport the vision, transport where you want to go and where the whole team wants to be in the future.

**12:58 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah, so basically just don't think of yourself as a one man show. You're not just doing it on your own, but you have to also keep other people around you involved and also listen to them. Right?

**13:11 Thomas**

Definitely yeah.

**13:13 Oumaima (Mai)**

So, in this time of crisis we're all stressed, right? We all have a difficult time. So, as employees we don't really have an extra stress because we all look at our leaders and expect them to make decisions, expect them to help us, expect them to guide us. So, for the leader, as a person they're already stressed. So how do they manage to just get over this panic over this stress and act as a leader and not as a person that is as impacted as everyone else with the pandemic or with the crisis?

**13:45 Thomas**

Well. So that's hard yeah, tough question. And tough thing to really think about. So first of all, first of all when it comes to my role as a leader, I think the most important thing I have to realize for myself is do I really want to do that role. Yeah, is that something I really want to do because honestly spoken, there is a certain point in the career development of people when we make our best experts a leader because we simply do not know how to promote them anymore. So that has, in the worst case, the result, is that we lose a good expert and get a bad leader. Really. So yeah, as... being a leader I should be honest enough to myself to really check against the role. Do I really want it? to be clear to yourself: Is it something I want to do? And if you realize, yeah, especially in those times that you're not willing or able to do so, be brave enough to step towards the expert role again because it's not bad, Yeah, it's not bad being an expert. So definitely, you do not need to be a leader in your career.

And back to your question, how can I handle this situation? So I should be aware that being a leader, I'm kind of a role model, so people are looking at me and looking OK, what does he do? So how is he go on in that situation? Is he meeting all the regulations? Is he violating the rules? Whatever... So be aware people watching at you and be aware that people might even copy you Then in the end. So in this situation, it is important that you, as a leader should act as a role model for your employees. And that you will need a lot of strength to do that. Yeah, because you have to cope not only with the leadership role, but you have to cope with your private life as well. Being a father and husband, whatever, yeah. And in that situation you can find the strength in yourself and you can decide for yourself, OK? Is that enough? But if you do not find to strength in yourself, I would recommend to try to be in exchange with your fellow leaders.

Yeah try to be an exchange with people who have the same, or face the same situation. Because believe me or not, but it helps. Yeah, if you are in contact with others. If you talk about the problems. If you talk about OK, the life is hard for everybody of us then it it gets or immediately easier. Yeah, the very moment you start talking about the challenges, the challenges you're facing and the difficult situation. But you realize, OK, it's not only me having that situation. There are a lot of other people having the same situation. It gets easier and you can get along with that situation better.

**16:35 Oumaima (Mai)**

That's actually true even if you're leader, you're still a person and admit that you can be vulnerable and show this. And once you do this then you realize I am as everyone else and I am allowed to be also panicked, but we can move on and we can think about, and focus about the good and what we can do to make things better, right?

**16:55 Thomas**

Yeah, I mean, even in the end a leader is a human being, right? So, we have the same problems like everybody.

**17:02 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah, more uh what you share with people should be more calmness. And then you have to think about composing yourself and not stress other people around you but still admit that it's OK, right?

**17:15 Thomas**

Take a deep breath, take a deep breath and it's OK to, even in that situation, it's OK if you do, if you make a mistake yeah because we all make mistakes too. The important thing is to learn out of it and realize for yourself it's important to calm down to really take a deep breath to really think about certain situations, and then it will get easier. Yeah, so maybe you have a walk, yeah, get out if you allowed to get out of the house and and walk a bit, it helps already.

**17:47 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah, that's great. And what would you say like, what are the lessons learned from this situation? For us in DTSE?

**17:55 Thomas**

Ah for us in DTSE, it is important that we are more than we are even today, maybe towards caring. Yeah, so caring leadership style. I said, cooperative leadership style but caring is included in there. Yeah, we have to care about the employees. We have to care of course for results. Yeah, that's that's another another thing. But we have to care about the employee, and especially in such times of crisis, we have to listen to them and we have to trust them. Trust is one of the most basic important leadership principles in such a situation.

Now what helps to trust the people is that you have established a clear communication within the team and then in the end to be result oriented. It doesn't matter whether you have a presence culture or not. So we don't need a presence culture, so I don't need to people just... I don't need to look into their eyes and have them sitting just opposite of myself. I can be result orientated even without seeing the people. That's possible. And that's that's something that comes with your role as well that you are able to enable people and that you are able to motivate people.

And if you manage that one then they will be result oriented and they will bring their their solutions in the end.

**19:20 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah, that's that's a good point. So, with this pandemic we learned how to behave better and how to, yeah, collaborate better and how to lead better. But now the question is how to sustain this leadership style for, not this #NewNormal, but also for this #NextNormal? What happens after the pandemic... How do we sustain this mindset?

**19:42 Thomas**

You know what? It's simply. It's simple and it's easy. We just have to do it. And that means everybody. Everybody ongoingly has to do it. Yeah, that means the Board has to do it, every leader

has to do it really. We need to trust in our employees, we need a clear communication, we need to show empathy. We should be result orientated but we do not necessarily need a presence culture. We should have a clear role understanding. We should make sure what expectations we have towards a certain role. And we have to be true to ourselves as well when it comes to that role. And we need to take time for active listening, understanding and so on and so on. And use, if you follow those principles, Yeah, then then we can make really a difference.

An important thing like you said, how can we? What should we do to simply keep that momentum and to simply simply keep those principles? We have to go on establishing our Culture because it's all in our Culture. You know in our culture we say we need to take our time, we need to communicate, we need to live appreciation. It's all in there. The only thing is we need to go on living it and therefore we will go on promoting it. Yeah, we will go on promoting the culture and we will go on promoting our leadership principles and the more people who really do that, in the end, the more people who follow those principles and follow our culture, the better the company will be, will be in the end.

**21:10 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah, and you also mentioned appreciation, and that's also an important point there: to celebrate our wins, whether they're big or small. Because in this situation it's very important to show appreciation and recognition to the employees, right?

**21:25 Thomas**

Definitely, appreciation motivates employees. I think it's very important to show your appreciation and especially in those times of crisis. We need something positive in our life, yeah, so try to show that towards them and then you will get the rewards definitely.

**21:44 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah, and since we talked about the stress of a leader and this will be my last question and it's a personal question to you.

**21:49 Thomas**

Sure

**21:51 Oumaima (Mai)**

So how do you, as a leader, how do you unwind and how do you distress? What are your three favorite things to do to distress from the situations in your daily life?

**22:03 Thomas**

What I really try to do is to breathe. So that's something I already said, but but that is something you should, you should really do not by accident. But you should just take a few seconds and say, OK, let's just breathe. Yeah it helps because it helps you to step back from a certain situation. Yeah, to have have another view on a certain situation, that's something.

And then, at the end of the day, I really try to recap that day a bit. Yeah, I'm thinking OK what was good what can be better in the future so but but really make sure you have something positive you can go to bed with. Yeah, make sure that you have something positive for yourself that gives you a good feeling for the next day.

And if you always try to find and that's maybe the third thing, if you always try to find something good in each and every situation, even if it appears not so good at the first moment, I'm quite sure you will find a benefit in even bad situations.

And if you come to a certain point where you are able then in the end to find that benefit even in bad situations, then you're very far already.

**23:14 Oumaima (Mai)**

That reminds me of one of my favorite cartoons, Ruby Gloom. Yeah, and it's in the generic. It says look at the bright side of the dark side so.

**23:24 Thomas**

Yeah. That's true, that's true..

**23:27 Oumaima (Mai)**

Yeah great! Great Thomas! Thanks a lot for this talk. It's really lovely to have you here with me today.

**23:35 Thomas**

Thank you for having me here. It was a pleasure. Thank you very much.

**[THEME MUSIC]**

**23:41 Oumaima (Mai)**

So that's all folks. Thanks a lot for tuning in to DTSE talks and joining me today along with my guest.

All in all, leading virtually is a hell of a job, but as we learned with our colleague Thomas, there are a few principles that can help guide you in leading your people and enabling them, specially when faced with a crisis. First act with empathy and kindness, remember that your employees need your human side now more than ever. Then stay authentic to yourself and communicate clearly and engage your employees. Also, don't forget that you are human too and it's OK to be stressed, so remember you are not alone and cooperate with your peers and your team. And most importantly take a deep breath.

**24:26 Oumaima (Mai)**

Make sure to subscribe to our podcast and leave us feedback.

**24:30 Oumaima (Mai)**

As we mentioned in today's episode, communication is an important element to ensure strong leadership. So, join us next month as we discuss with Andre Dybek, the head of communication in DTSE the ins and outs of effective communication and how to engage employees, especially nowadays where all collaborate virtually. We will also have a special guest from outside of DTSE, so stay tuned!

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