WORKLIFE

APRIL 2020

A Function of Culture
How culture is shaping the response to the coronavirus

Social Isolation
How to minimise its impact on our mental health

Fighting For Survival
How to handle workplace conflict while working from home

What Would Jeff Bezos Do?
How Amazon is facing the crisis

Your Career Vs COVID-19
Tips to ensure your career wins in the current crisis

CORONAVIRUS
Special Edition 2020

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COVID-19

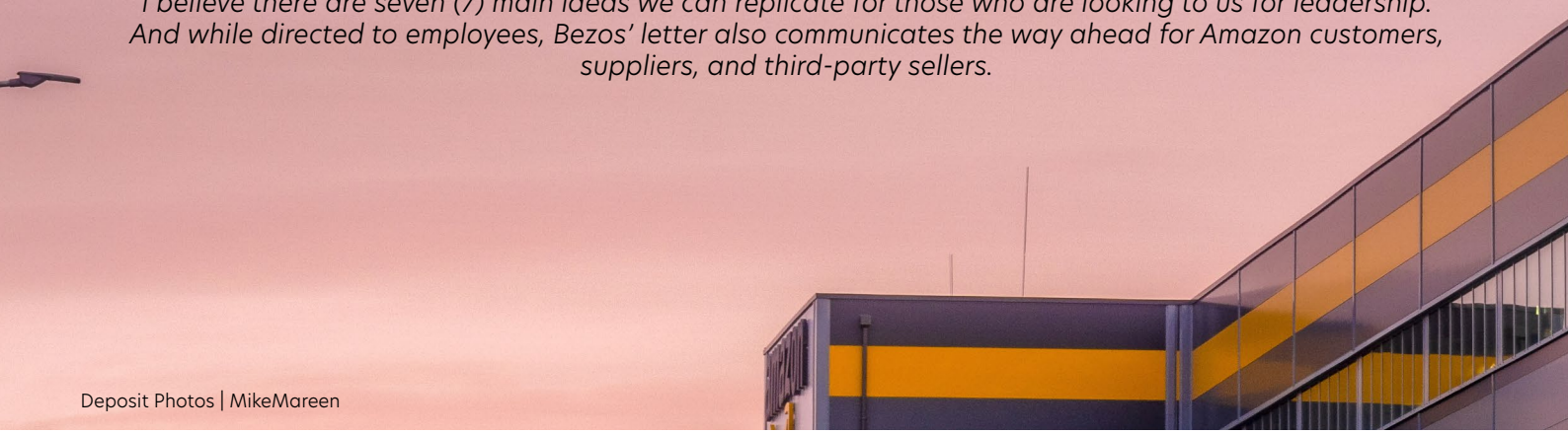
What is Jeff Bezos Doing?

by Steve Anderson

In times of crisis and uncertainty, we all know that leaders must communicate – and communicate well. Amazon has over 700,000 employees all over the world. On March 21, 2020, Jeff Bezos, CEO and founder of Amazon, sent a letter to all their employees.

So, what did Jeff Bezos say to them and is there a "template" we can follow to communicate with our teams, employees, and followers? (Go here to read the full text of his letter. https://bezosl.com/march)

I believe there are seven (7) main ideas we can replicate for those who are looking to us for leadership. And while directed to employees, Bezos' letter also communicates the way ahead for Amazon customers, suppliers, and third-party sellers.



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1. Acknowledge Reality

Bezos opens his letter with, "This isn't business as usual, and it's a time of great stress and uncertainty." Your employees know we are in uncharted waters. Platitudes won't work. All of us are under great stress. Bezos says, "Across the world, people are feeling the economic effects of this crisis, and I'm sad to tell you I predict things are going to get worse before they get better."

2. Reinforce the mission

When Bezos founded Amazon, he knew its core purpose and message. In his original 1997 Letter to Shareholders, Bezos said, "we are working to build something important, something that matters to our customers, something that we can all tell our grandchildren about." Bezos reinforces that original vision by saying, "It's also a moment in time when the work we're doing is its most critical. We're providing a vital service to people everywhere, especially to those, like the elderly, who are most vulnerable."

3. What we are doing now?

Bezos explains the steps Amazon is taking (and already has taken) to adapt to the dramatic increase in orders. He says exactly what Amazon is doing, "We've changed our logistics, transportation, supply chain, purchasing, and third-party seller processes to prioritize stocking and delivering essential items like household staples, sanitizers, baby formula, and medical supplies. They have prioritized delivering essential items to customers most in need.

In a time when many are fearing for their jobs, Amazon is hiring 100,000 new temporary workers to get orders out. "We hope people who've been laid off will come work with us until they're able to go back to the jobs they had."

4. Gratitude

Bezos says thank you. "I'm not alone in being grateful for the work you are doing." Let your employees know you appreciate their effort in continuing to help your clients or customers. And let them know when customers are saying thank you by passing along notes of thanks and encouragement. Employees need to feel valued, especially now. "Your efforts are being noticed..." Everyone is at risk these days, and being noticed and valued is especially important when people are working and feeling scared and unsettled.

5. Protection

Bezos explains the steps they are taking to protect workers who are not able to work from home, especially those vital workers in their fulfillment centers. Again, Bezos acknowledges reality, "When our turn for masks comes, our first priority will be getting them in the hands of our employees and partners working to get essential products to people." And he makes a commitment that it's not a "once and done." "We are meeting every day, working to identify additional ways to improve on these measures." Employees need to know this is a process that will have attention daily in this volatile time.

6. Reassurance

Let your employees know there is always a future. And leadership involves letting those who work for you, and with you, know that you are still looking toward the future and there is hope.

Bezos says, "My own time and thinking is now wholly focused on COVID-19 and on how Amazon can best play its role. I want you to know Amazon will continue to do its part, and we won't stop looking for new opportunities to help."

And, Bezos is personal. This isn't just theory or rhetoric. He rightly says, "There is no instruction manual for how to feel at a time like this, and I know this causes stress for everyone. My list of worries right now — like yours I'm sure — is long..."

7. Mindset - Believe It's Always Day 1

How has Amazon been able to react to this crisis so quickly? It all comes down to mindset. Day 1 is not simply a list of steps or strategies. It is the mentality through which all decisions are made. It is the anchor for acknowledging and remembering their beginning values and their dogged focus on serving the needs of customers and in "delighting" customers — even in turbulent times.

It is designed to keep everyone in the company focused on doing what is right in each situation, just like the first day you were open for business. Because, like a child's tower of building blocks, if the foundation isn't stable, the tower will come tumbling down. And then it's Day 2, which is "Stasis. Followed by irrelevance. Followed by excruciating, painful decline. Followed by death. And that is why it is always Day 1."

So, can we use Bezos' letter as a template for us to communicate well? I think Bezos' closing words are actually the most important and essential for all of us to remember.

"Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones. I know that we're going to get through this, together."

Steve & Karen Anderson

Steve is a Trusted Authority on Risk, Technology, Productivity, and Innovation.

Steve and his wife, Karen, are the authors of the The Bezos Letters: 14 Principles to Grow Your Business Like Amazon (Morgan James) a Wall Street Journal, USA Today bestseller, and Forbes Top Pick for 2020.

For more information, please consult www.thebezosletters.com