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## **Look at How You Have Grown as a Leader** **By Ann Golden Eglé, MCC**

This year certainly has not turned out as planned. And while the challenges continue, let us pause for a moment to acknowledge the many things you have done right. Just how much you have grown as a leader through adversity and uncertainty.

As changing facts, statistics and governmental orders have bombarded you these past five months, you have made bold and instinctive decisions. You have known that with each decision came the risk of being wrong, yet you forged ahead courageously

As an executive coach working with business owners and leaders across the board, I have had a first-hand glimpse at how phenomenally challenging this year each decision, and interaction, has been for many of you. Let us break down some of your key challenges and how you have strengthened your leadership prowess through mastering each one.

**Leading through chaos, change and surprise.** Each day and many times throughout the day you have been exposed to changing information, never knowing what was coming next. Stock market hits, businesses closing with little to no notice, canceled contracts, postponed orders and conflicting news stories.

You never lost sight of the fact that you were the leader, the person your team needed to be steadfast, honest and present for them. In many cases, you needed to tell your people things they did not want to hear. Yet you had the courage to respect them with honesty.

**New definition of safety.** Out of compassion and concern for your employees, colleagues, customers and family, you changed your work environment with lightning speed. As stay-at-home orders emerged, you led your team in creating a positive, productive virtual work setting. You, along with your staff, moved from your dynamic work atmosphere to your kitchen and dining room tables, surrounded by family, dishes and laundry.

Now, as you begin to return to work you mastered a myriad of additional changes and decisions. How to make the work setting safe, how many employees to be present at any given time and who would be in the office. How to honor and handle customers. How to keep a powerful leadership presence through it all. Take a moment now to reflect on the hundreds of unprecedented decisions around safety you have successfully made.

**Vulnerability.** As top leaders (Prince Charles) and the rich and famous (Tom Hanks) throughout the world became ill, you realized how vulnerable life is—you, your team, business and society. Using more compassion than you have likely ever displayed, you showed your team that you are human, just how much you care. As a result, your team grew closer, more committed and loyal to you and to your business.

**Fear to motivation.** The first half of 2020 has brought about a sea of emotions that collided with one another—fear, grief, extreme sadness and anger for many. Acknowledging this in yourself and your team you developed new and creative ways to lift them up, keep them focused and motivated. Brilliant leaders increased their communication by constantly staying in touch. Through initiating daily Zoom check-ins, weekly update emails and one-to-one phone calls you kept your team educated, informed, inspired and on track. You were determined to be their dependable source of information rather than having them be influenced by negative outside influences.

**Criticism.** Criticism is an unfortunate yet natural part of being a leader. You are at the top and all eyes are on you. Some say that if a leader is not criticized, they are not leading their organization to growth. I do not know about that but do know that handling criticism should be written into every leader's job description. I say to any of your critics, walk a mile in your shoes. If you have received increasing criticism this year of angst and uncertainty, know that you are not alone. If there is any truth in it, learn from it. If not, know that it is likely that the criticizer is looking for someone to blame for their unhappiness and you are an easy target.

**Self-care.** The stresses placed upon leaders this year has been intense. While having an outward appearance of steadfastness, certainty and strength, you are still human. You have felt the emotions your team has felt while experiencing your own. The need for self-care has intensified. My clients have found new and inventive ways to care for their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

These leaders have created home gyms and discovered new ways to cook. They have demonstrated their creativity through incredible yard and home remodeling projects. While maintaining social balance through Zoom happy hours and dinners with friends and family, they also realize the importance of quiet, pensive time through pending abundant time outdoors to enjoy the works of nature.

Why, during a worldwide pandemic, would I ask you to pause and acknowledge yourself for your growth as a leader? Because I want you to recalibrate your thinking.

Changes, never-ending decisions, emotions, financial losses, friend, or relative losses have taken a toll on everyone, especially leaders who carry the weight of the world. Isn't it time for you to focus on 'you' for a change? This year has been a year of growth and mastery for you. Congratulations.

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