



**FEMALE
EXECUTIVE
SEARCH**

**CONNECTING
BUSINESSES WITH
FEMALE LEADERS**

Women Leaders Insight Paper published by CEO Worldwide

A global crisis that enjoins us to sort to get rid of waste and to create an "after" that respects the Earth and the Human being.

As a human being and inhabitant of the Earth, since the beginning of this pandemic, I have been asking myself a question.

What is the message that the universe wants to send us? One of the answers seems to me to be: the planet is taking revenge. It is taking revenge on the way we treat it or rather the way we mistreat it. And it's taking revenge on the one species that can destroy it. But the planet is self-cleaning. It will always get away with it. Which is probably not the case for mankind. In whose name have we come today to question our own lives?

This major crisis that we must live and go through carries with it a danger or risk and an opportunity as expressed in the Mandarin ideogram "weiji". While it raises the question of the survival of humanity, the risks it highlights are also economic, political and ethical... This crisis questions what many people have long favored: immediate profit, forgetting the price of life.

Let us be clear: this is not the case for all human beings. Those who struggle daily for survival are numerically far more numerous than those who have made choices in favor of short-term profit. This is not the thread of my reflection here.

A crisis therefore exposes a risk. Here it shakes, to say the least, a model in which the economy prevails over people and life in general.

What about opportunity?

Etymologically, crisis comes from "sieve" in our languages of Greco-Latin origin. Crisis thus speaks to us of choosing, discerning, judging, distinguishing, sorting. More precisely, sorting consists, on the one hand, in getting rid of everything that no longer has a place or a reason to exist, in removing waste and, on the other hand, in keeping everything that brings good, the positive.

In other words, it is a question of distinguishing what is superfluous and what is important, better essential.

What is superfluous and what is essential in our current lifestyles, in the functioning of companies, in the policies of States? What must we discern? What certainty must we let go, because we are in a period of major uncertainty (one of the sieve senses)? What are the new criteria that we are going to have to highlight on which we will have to base our decisions? This is also one of the meanings of sieve.

What part is the long-term vision of the planet going to play in the decisions? And that of the life, in good conditions, of each human being? How much of it will go to the immediate enrichment of some? What are dividends worth if we have to die younger because the conditions of life are not guaranteed?

Even though the current health crisis undoubtedly affects the poorest more quickly and more strongly, it does not spare the rich or the powerful. A virus, however crowned it may be, has a very egalitarian approach in its action.

© Viviane Strickfaden • FE # 62099

Contact us! Phone: +44 203137 2581 Email: search@female-executive-search.com

Website: www.female-executive-search.com

Female Executive Search is a brand of: CEO Worldwide Ltd - 9 Queen's Yard - White Post Lane, London E9 5EN, ENGLAND



When you lead a company, whether as a member of the executive or the non-executive board, one of the key elements that you consider is sustainability and with it, sustainable development.

At the current time, we hear a lot about continuity plans. It is indeed vital to be prepared and to know how to keep the company going. What are the critical functions? Who are the critical people as well? What is the acceptable downgraded mode? For how long? What must be anticipated to last? etc.

There is also the question of security: what is implemented upstream to avoid being confronted with a crisis, to have the capacity to respond to it in the best possible conditions and thus ensure the company's sustainability?

How do multinational groups, mid-size companies and family-owned SMEs address these issues?

One of the very first rules I learned was that you have to divide up so that you don't depend on one customer or a very small number of customers, or on one supplier, or on a very small number of suppliers. Avoiding dependency means limiting the risks of loss of turnover (a customer lets down the business), of production (which leads to a drop in revenue) if a supplier fails. It is not uncommon to have to explain and prove to public or private structures what part they could represent in the business. This comes down to assessing the risk that their provider-supplier would run if the relationship were to be terminated (or reduced). Not assessing this risk constitutes a fault.

I have been wondering about this for some time and the question has become more pressing with the situation we are currently experiencing ...

How many times have company leaders who have decided to relocate everything to a single region of the world asked themselves this question, analyzed their risks? Have they arbitrated for immediate profit and then "we'll see"?

On a broader scale, beyond companies, what systemic interpretation have States, or even groupings of States such as Europe, had? Have they had one at all? As a corollary of the overall reading, what systemic continuity plan have they defined? How did they seek a balance between security of supply and the resulting independence and total entrepreneurial freedom of economic operators?

On what issues and risks did they base their decision? What prevailed in their decision? Taking a step back and trying to get a 360-degree reading, what actions were taken?

What about strategic interdependence? Interdependence between states, between states and companies.

In companies, it is an obligation to draw up and keep up to date a risk map.

And for States? I hypothesize that risks of armed conflict, terrorism and population displacement are identified and monitored. Probably also systemic risks in the financial sector, for example. What concerns state independence, energy, defense, etc. is surely mapped and dealt with. But what about industrial independence, including that of health?



For many months now, we have been facing disruptions in the supply of products such as medicines because manufacturing has left the so-called rich countries to be carried out in so-called emerging, poor countries. This is the case for a great many manufactured products, technologies, automobiles, clothing... Not all goods are of strategic importance. A break in the value chain of certain sectors does not jeopardize the population or the capacity of public authorities to intervene. It will only affect companies that have chosen to produce cheaper elsewhere.

On the other hand, running out of certain products can be tragic and raise the question of their strategic structural (always having them available) or cyclical (having them available when needed) importance.

The etymology tells us that the crisis is both a risk and an opportunity, a great moment of sorting. What opportunity(ies) will this crisis unleash?

By taking up the idea of risk mapping and control actions, I wonder about the relevance of having an overall vision of production capacities.

A global vision of production capacities at the local level: it is necessary to manufacture locally again. It's true that this limits carbon dioxide emissions. The obligation to reduce the carbon footprint in the hope that the planet will remain liveable for humanity has already led business leaders to consider manufacturing in greater proximity. Not so much for the sake of humanity as for reasons of financial sanctions, of course, and probably for reputational reasons.

It also gives greater agility: the time needed to change its products, to receive its products, to adjust its supply to demand is reduced. In this matter, the responsiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises is exemplary at the moment.

Above all, it limits its dependence on a single large supplier country that is out of control because its weight is disproportionate to its customers. In any case, the increase in labor costs in countries of mass production makes them less attractive as suppliers, even if the increase in living standards makes them potential customers.

For companies, a relocation is therefore being considered, or even underway, for reasons of profit. The expected increase in production costs and certainly in sales prices could perhaps become bearable if new industrial jobs were created, broadening the potential customer base.

A global vision of national and continental production capacities.

On an economic and industrial level, we are already witnessing a massive and agile redeployment of the production tool of several national industrial companies to produce other goods, as shown today by perfumers with gel and textile companies with masks without forgetting 3D printing... When there is still an industrial fabric, production lines, they can adapt.



Beyond the interests mentioned above, this time it would be a question of identifying on the one hand the core products (what the company exists for and what allows it to be profitable) and on the other hand the goods that could be produced in relay. To define the trigger conditions, the necessary resources and to prepare and test, in a continuous improvement basis, the decision-making processes to solicit these companies.

When the health crisis is over, when the economic dynamic resumes, it would probably be useful, in the light of experience, to identify which companies have been able to adapt their production tool, what they needed to do so. Always in return of experience to analyze the circuits of decision, which facilitated vs slowed down the industrial dynamics, etc. If the public authorities need to carry out in-depth feedback, as the armed forces and law enforcement agencies are very good at doing, it would be interesting for companies to also draw lessons. How have they joined forces, white collar and blue-collar workers, to serve the common good? What coverage of strategic needs can they ensure, either in core production or in redeployment? What global value chain do they need to be part of for this? What can they maintain for the next health crisis, because the probability of a new epidemic is far from negligible given what is still the behavior of humanity? What do they need for that? Elements of stability, points of reference in a very uncertain environment? Competencies trained throughout life, resources? Already, in parallel with immediate crisis management, executive and non-executive directors can document the time for feedback, strengthen their monitoring of their wider environment, identify their pillars, qualify degrees of uncertainty, etc. They will thus be ready to make the transition from emergency to novelty without delay.

Europe has been doing badly for years. More than ever, its members are tearing themselves apart, turning in on themselves. They forget how much they need each other. Because of and thanks to this crisis, Europe has perhaps found a formidable way of finding a *raison d'être* and a mission: to finally form groups of interconnected companies, cooperating on a continental scale. As competition is global, only supportive, interdependent groupings capable of producing locally, taking turns and cooperating to innovate and meet the challenges can exist in the long term.

And beyond the economic aspects, what do we want to live afterwards? To me, this is THE question. In Hebrew, the crisis "mashbèr" speaks of the delivery room, the birth room, a place of confinement where the possibility of a new world is at stake.

It seems to me that a key message of the planet is there.

What is this new world that we now have the possibility of inventing ourselves, of creating ourselves, of giving birth to?

It seems to me that a key message of this crisis is to take care of the living, in all its forms. Humans are interdependent with wildlife. The Earth carries within it its ills and its remedies. A marine worm is a hope of breath thus of life for the human being. Plants are poisons and anti-poisons. They nourish when the growth cycle and the soil are respected.



A new world in which there would be more balance between humanity, on the one hand, and all the rest of the living, on the other hand, preserving the planet?

The new world is thus one in which there will be more balance between humanity on the one hand and all other living things on the other, while preserving the planet.

In order to build this new world, what kind of sorting must we do? What waste must we eliminate?

Profit at all costs, the lack of respect for human beings, the demand for immediate satisfaction of every need, etc.? Moving from the (very) short term to the medium and long term.

This questions us about what it means to be alive as a person, as a company and even as a State.

An invitation to humility, to be anchored in humus.

How are we going to be more agile? How are we going to continue surfing on this magnificent wave of solidarity, generosity and creativity that we are currently experiencing? What do we learn from it? What are we going to do with it?

Are we going to go all the way and become fully aware of our interdependence?

Collectively, what values do we really want to live by? To continue to see the glass half empty, to criticize systematically, to be jealous of initiatives and successes? Or rather to be in the dynamic of change, to be mobilized to contribute to this new, to salute audacity and commitment? Let us listen to Gandhi when he says: "Be the change you want to see in the world".

At the enterprise level, how can we continue to take advantage (benefit) from the learning and experience of autonomy that is being established through telework? How will this real-life experience of autonomy be able to last? The risk is that an attempt to go backwards, presenteeism, over-control... will demotivate, disengage and harm performance. How will the rules of delegation experimented at a distance last? In other words, how will something that had to be implemented by forced march, which is based on trust and alliance, last and become stronger?

How (and when) will companies decide to mobilize all the resources at their disposal to make the new world that is in the making real? How will they assume their individual and collective responsibility in this regard? How are States going to promote what is respectful of living things, by joining forces? This may seem like a utopia. This particular time invites us to change the software in order to act differently.

Selfishness is completely powerless in the face of a destructive living organism.



I read this crisis as a war, far beyond the sanitary and economic war. It is a time, intense, that is reshuffling the cards, upsetting habits and challenging values. And after the war, it's not the same anymore.

The "After" this health, economic and human crisis will not be the same as the "Before".

The question to ask ourselves, individually and collectively, seems to me to be: what do we really want to do afterwards? The responses of States, companies and individuals are all parts of the system that will have to function interdependently.



About The Author: Viviane Strickfaden

PROFILE

CEO and Founder of 2 consulting firms; professional background in major international consulting firms.

Specialist of management and innovative & strategic change | Non-executive director | Executive coach | Emotional intelligence | Startups development

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Reorganization of a support function: 100 sites grouped into 30; more than 500 individuals impacted without social movement. Budget: 7 m€ - direct report team: 10 - 15 people - RFD won for 130 m€ with a team of 30 people; 1st contract won for 7.5 m€

Click here to [view Viviane's Short Bio](#)

ABOUT FEMALE EXECUTIVE SEARCH

Female Executive Search is a brand of the international executive recruitment company CEO Worldwide Ltd, operating since 2001. The intention of Female Executive Search is to actively support women leaders on their way to Top-Level-Positions bringing more diversity to company boards.

© Viviane Strickfaden • FE # 62099

Contact us! Phone: +44 203137 2581 • Email: search@female-executive-search.com

Website: www.female-executive-search.com

Female Executive Search is a brand of CEO Worldwide Ltd • 9 Queen's Yard • White Post Lane • London E9 5EN • UK