

CHARMAINE ENGLAND
MANAGING DIRECTOR, JOHNSON & JOHNSON CONSUMER HEALTH ANZ



As COVID-19 lockdown restrictions ease around the world, leaders are preparing to take their people into the next stage of the greatest health and economic crisis since the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. Technology has enabled teams to continue working closely together even while they're apart and old-world ways of working have been jettisoned – including by those who previously clung to them for dear life. For most organisations, the voyage through the crisis has revealed hidden treasures and unique possibilities. Now the challenge is to ensure the lessons learnt transform into better ways of working for all.

Five of Australia's most senior leaders share their insights with Joint Managing Director of Maximus, Brent Duffy.

ON SHIFTING VIEWS

For J&J, it's enhanced our ability to evaluate the market in a more agile way. We are introducing products to the market to provide access where there is a high demand, in some instances for products we would have never considered. I've seen my team's predetermined beliefs shift about what we could do. I've also seen industry associations and government take rapid action to ensure access. It's been a reframe overall about what we can do as an industry.

ON LOVING LOCKDOWN

I've never spent so much time with my children! I'm loving it – family night, watching a movie every night after dinner. Yesterday I chalked hopscotch squares

on my driveway. The kids did competitive sport and I had loads of things on the weekend. Now I talk to my neighbours more, it's not that I didn't talk to them before, but I was always so busy. I'm connecting. For global humanity, I want Coronavirus to be gone, but from a personal perspective, I'm not bursting to get out of this bubble.

ON REMOTE CONNECTION

I have never felt more connected to my regional colleagues and after this, we have to maintain 'cameras on'. Unlike phone calls, you can see people's faces and read their expressions on video chats, which is far more helpful to know what everyone is thinking. I don't think we'll all be in the office together anytime soon, so 'cameras on' definitely stays.

BENJAMIN POLLACK

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, URBIS

ON REMOTE WORKING

Pre-COVID-19, in reality flexibility only happened on the fringes. Our ways of working were quite traditional, and we typically worked in the office, at our desks. Our transition to remote working wasn't without its hiccups, but we really haven't missed a beat. In the space of a week to 10 days, we moved to a complete remote-working environment. I don't think people realised the power of the infrastructure we'd invested in, and the capability it provided us. That's been the truth that we've tripped over: we can work remotely and we're doing it. We can be productive anywhere. Technology aside, the true enabler though has been the shared leadership, accountability and commitment of people. We've unlocked another level of autonomy and flexibility.

ON CULTURE

It's emphasised the strength of our collegiate culture, the way everyone has rallied around each other. I have regular virtual coffee catch-ups to stay in contact and keep a sense of the sentiment at various levels within the organisation. Now I consistently hear stories about staff being contacted by multiple senior leaders from various teams, who are just checking in. We don't see each other in the kitchen anymore, so people are calling to see how others are. That really emphasises the heart and soul of

the organisation, which sometimes we take for granted. The sense of personal connection and empathy has only grown, that's something we want to hang onto in the new normal.

ON THE FUTURE

One of the other delightful things has been the lift in cadence. We had a tendency to be perfectionistic – to want to take everything through to 95 per cent. Now there's an implicit need to just get something done – it's more of a solution on the run. I'm seeing our leaders leaning in and taking ownership of challenges as they appear. Decisiveness within the organisation has grown, and we're amplifying our client focus.

Our Future State team is actively looking at what a post-COVID-19 normal will look like and how we can seize opportunities to develop more resilient communities. What does it mean for the urban landscape, including property assets and public spaces, and the communities they support? How can we shape the future of our cities for the better using evidence-based metrics? ➤

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LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

JOHN BANFIELD

GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, BPAY

ON FLEXIBILITY AND TRUST

We're lucky that we have a great culture where our employees feel empowered to come up with a working arrangement that suits them. Some of those with families have adjusted the way they work because it works better for them and their families. We trust them implicitly and support them however we can, to make sure they can continue to work effectively. We've also worked with our people leaders to help them better manage the flexibility in their teams. Supporting our people through this period is the most important thing for me.

ON VULNERABILITY

As a leader, I think it's important to show a bit of vulnerability, especially through this period. We are all going through this for the first time together and working it out as we go along. People are opening up new parts of their lives to their work colleagues – their families and their homes. In one of our all-staff briefings over Zoom, someone noticed a photo of me in my home office and asked in the chat, 'What's that photo in the background?' Rather than dodge the question, I showed all 130 people on the call the photo of me in a bodybuilding competition – the result of a dare in my twenties. Awkward as it was, it showed a side of me that I hadn't previously shared but it's worth it to be able to bring your true self to work.



ALVA DEVOY

MANAGING DIRECTOR, AUSTRALIA, FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL

ON HUMAN CAPITAL

It's such an exciting time to be leading and managing an investments business; where human capital is at the epicentre of all that we do. We are very fortunate that ours is a high 'intellectual property' business and industry, at a time when the world is meaningfully stepping forward into the 'post-industrial revolution' phase of its development; where capitalism is shifting to a world requiring lower 'working capital' and higher 'human capital'.

ON DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

I have always placed huge value in the concept of 'team'. My belief is that no one person can do it all, see it all, make all the decisions etc. The world, and the corporate world in particular, has reached levels of complexity, that the true value of leadership is now not knowing it all, but instead is being able to co-opt groups of different people and skill sets, to achieve a common aim. To take this one step further, I see the current COVID-19-led shift, as a major opportunity to accelerate us forward into 'distributed leadership', further empowering our people and calling on us to work hard to help each individual on our teams, bring their best selves and their best brainpower to their work.

Large global organisations, such as Fidelity, require the 'spinal cord' of hierarchy and infrastructure, in order to provide classic functions

such as overarching strategy, finance, legal and compliance etc. However, a hard-coded spinal cord can keep complex companies wedded to the military-based command and control style of leadership and management. This was absolutely appropriate in the industrial revolution and beyond. However, as with many industries, our assets walk through the door every morning (or at least they did until COVID-19), and we are now being invited by external forces, as leaders, to 'let go without losing control', to harness the power of our people, wherever they work and however they do their best work.

ON TRANSFORMATION

Fidelity International is a global asset manager sharing a heritage with Fidelity Investments in the US. Between the two companies, we invest and/or administrate in total US\$7.5 trillion of assets from Rio de Janeiro, up through the US and Canada and down as far as Beijing and Shanghai. We have almost 100 per cent of our teams working from home (WFH) now and for Fidelity International, that has meant moving 8500 people to a WFH stance over a two-month period. We have had to do that during huge capital markets volatility, where we have been required to outperform from an investments standpoint, meet high service-level requirements of current clients and at the same time manage all our fiduciary obligations to regulators. I have to say, I'm exceptionally proud that we have achieved all three and that is due to both the agility of our teams and, in turn their resilience in the face of significant change.

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KEVIN O'SULLIVAN

CEO, UNISUPER

ON DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

The crisis has accentuated our leadership skills – we have the executive leadership team and then leaders throughout the business. The board has really given us a lot of support and said, 'do what you need to do, call us when you need, keep us updated'. I want us to retain this sense of camaraderie, that we are all in this together. We're making decisions across the organisation, not just business unit by business unit.

The empowerment of the people across the company fell to the senior leaders and then it fell to their staff to resolve things – to address the need for greater automation, or to make sure we had enough laptops for everybody across the organisation... The senior leaders have really stepped up and in coming weeks I want to accentuate the strength of having done that. Let's hang on to that. It's the demonstration which enables us to be able to say, 'It's not theory – it's a very practical

demonstration that working collaboratively with common goals gets us to where we need to be.' And we've shown that we can do it.

ON LITTLE REVELATIONS

The punctuality to meetings on video is exceedingly high. Typically, if a meeting starts at 2pm, 98 per cent, if not 100 per cent, of people are all there at two minutes to 2pm. Does that happen when we're in the office? No bloody way! People rock in five minutes late. It's not terrible at UniSuper, but it's a waste of time sitting around for five minutes until the last person shows up, but it hasn't been happening on the video conference calls. It's a little thing, but it's something that I would like to make sure we retain. (M)

