Chapter 1
Leadership in the Digital Age:
Disruptions, New Rhythms, and the Beating Change

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the scope and focus of the new book. The reader is briefly introduced to the definitions and debates about leadership and management boundaries, differences, and overlapping responsibilities in the digital age. Drawing on both theory and practice, current issues and topics are covered in depth, providing an introduction and overview of perceptible trends and scenarios relevant to the current post-global financial crisis (GFC) and the emergent IR4.0 leadership outlook for global business. The editors then provide an outline and overview of the chapters, topics, and themes of each chapter and a coherent rationale for this new book as developing discussions and research from our first book in the series, "Dynamic Models of Leadership for Global Business: Enhancing Digitally Connected Environments."

INTRODUCTION

There is a well-researched and growing recognition amongst many commentators today that it is a axiomatic that 'Business as usual' is no longer a viable option, especially in the period of the surprise emergence of the Covid-19 global pandemic which has caused massive disruption across the global economy. The public health actions taken by governments has wreaked some havoc initially for those in tourism, hospitality and aviation industries but increasingly in other sectors and types of businesses as provinces and whole countries go into lockdown with people told to self-isolate and stay home. Thus, it is not useful to continue with some of the failing models of leadership based upon assumptions of business as usual. There is a new, more urgent rhythm of business and social life. The beat has changed, and the new high performers are playing a different tune and using new instruments. We live today in a world rich in digital resources but share a poverty of leadership competence in exploration and exploitation of these resources to their fullest it seems. We still also have emerging climate issues with environmental degradation and finite physical resources though some –but not all-of these ecological deficiencies might be attenuated with more judicious use of the digital abundance becoming more and more accessible to us globally. Thus, delivering a ´green dividend´ from lower carbon emissions from grounding of many airlines, expected reduction commuting by cars in lockdown countries in Europe and elsewhere and rise in virtual meetings globally. However, this green dividend may be partly offset by increased use of energy by those confined or working at home during the lockdown periods ranging from a few weeks to a few months in the current UK planning (Harvey, 2020)

Such emerging digital resources have brought demands for changes in many societies, which go beyond simply increasing access to the technology per se for consumers. For example recent research by Pew Global Researchers (2014) has noted that 20% of the world has mobile and online access and this has reinforced other social demands in particular from the younger generation who are usually the first to take up the newer technologies and access the web. As the report states:

"Majorities in 22 of 24 countries surveyed say it is important that people have access to the internet without government censorship. In 12 nations, at least seven-in-ten hold this view. Support for internet freedom is especially strong in countries where a large percentage of the population is online. And, in most of the countries polled, young people are particularly likely to consider internet freedom a priority." (Pew Global Research Center, March 19,2014)

These and other changes also beg many questions about what leaders must do to succeed and what new 'psychological contracts' need to be negotiated between

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