

General Stanley McChrystal on communicating in the current environment

G100 hosted a call with 80+ CEOs and members of High Lantern Group, The Miles Group, and SSA & Company. As part of the agenda, General Stanley McChrystal shared stories about keeping people organized in the midst of the “fog of war”. Formal takeaways will be published shortly, in the meantime here are a few raw insights.

- People resist doing video calls from home. Get over it. Visual connection is even more crucial now.
- CEOs: don't let a day go by without at least 2-3 video calls with key people: customers, employees, investors...
- Instead of walking around the halls, schedule 1:1 or up to 1:4 meetings on video with senior team.
- In crisis, everyone reverts to command and control. Resist this. You have to push communications and decision making down to lowest appropriate level. Get comfortable with lots of improvisation.
- Top leaders make critical policy decisions and communicate principles. Don't bore people with long town halls. Create a process and information flow that is designed for others to communicate without seeking approval.
- Everyone will have a list of 15 urgent things to do. Help them identify the top 3 and then help them decide what items can be put off or ignored.
- On video calls, leader has to stay focused. Don't be doing anything else. Look in camera. Respond to whomever is speaking. Exaggerate positives, give praise to people speaking. Otherwise, calls quickly become a burden when it is clear the leader is disengaged.
- What team wants to hear from leader: the “so what” – what does it mean for me, for the business.
- Every employee cares more about their family and their personal situation more than they care about the business. Get used to it and make it easy for them to engage with colleagues.
- Organize online celebrations.
- For most decisions, geography and location trumps everything. You can't have one part of a location doing one thing while the people across the street are doing something else.
- This is the time to try new things. Waiting “till this is over” means your competitor will be ahead of you.
- Advice to teenagers/young adults at home: schedule your day. This is not a weekend. Schedule time for online classes, video games, time for chatting with friends, etc.