

The Vermeer Podcast – Episode 11

Leading Through a Crisis

Brianne Schulte:

Hi, I'm Brianne Schulte. I am responsible for our Enterprise Risk Management, our Corporate Strategy Development and Execution, our Market and Business Insights team, as well as our Financial Planning and Analysis group here at Vermeer. So in all of those spaces that I have the opportunity to help lead and work with, as we have gone through not just one crisis, honestly, two crises in the last two years and still going through the second one, it's been really apparent of seeing how we manage those situations and being able to rebound out of them some really key lessons learned that have resonated with me, that's created encouragement within me, and encouragement that I've been able to build off of and also share with my team.

A couple of things just off the bat that I wanted to share were first more of a tactical piece of having clarity and having focus. And the way that we were able to do that, specifically when we were in the midst of the tornado, was through our Enterprise Risk Management Program. Several teams had built out business continuity plans. Those are plans that just essentially lay out the rules of the game. So if something were to happen, who's in charge, what's the critical steps we need to do in order to move out of it, and what does that plan look like? And so those right away were pulled out, everyone from the EH&S team to the Communications team, and they started to use those and refine those.

Those were great kind of block and tackle tools right away that the team could hold onto, could use, and really start to move out of that crisis. So that'd be the first lesson learned of go after that. Put together those plans that seem vague. They seem, is this a good use of our time to create them? Does that make sense? Put together. Even if it's a general framework, it's going to be incredibly helpful when you're in the midst of a crisis to really organize people's thoughts, give them clarity, and give them that intentionality.

The other side of it, what I really have learned and witnessed through our teams, is the importance of having that alignment, that strong cross-functional dependency upon each other. And really looking at saying, "Hey, how do we move ourselves? Now that we've gotten through some of these first steps, how do we now look at this situation and see the opportunity?" So we were basically two weeks out, at the time the tornado hit, to going through our strategic planning process, and so that gave us a completely new framework and line of sight to start to have a really different conversation. We had a strategic path and intention, and it was solid, and it made sense, but in light of this crisis that had happened, did we look at those things in any new way? What did we see?

And instead of seeing all of the things that were incredibly difficult when we looked at it, we started to re-imagine what were the opportunities? How could we rethink how we were approaching some of our long-term goals? How could we rethink how we were going to partner with our team members and our dealers and our customers? Were there things that suddenly had come to light that we needed to re-imagine? And so, even though crises are incredibly difficult, and at first it feels very overwhelming, what I have appreciated out of the ones that we've been through and that we're going through is that there's always a new way to re-imagine, and there is always an opportunity on the other side of that.

So that's probably one of my biggest encouragements is get yourself ready from a tactical standpoint, but also be ready to flip that on its head and say, "What is the opportunity? What can we go do now? How do we see this thing differently that we haven't been able to see up until this point because we're always stuck in the way we always have done work."

So that has been some of the things that have driven energy within me, that I've been able to help inspire in my team, continue to look at the situation from a different angle and try to re-imagine how you can grow

and create strength out of what would seemingly be a really tough situation. So thanks for listening. That's all I have to share today. I hope you have a great day re-imagining what the future could be.