The Resilient Security Leader

How to serve through times of disruption

Accenture Cybersecurity Forum Women’s Council
CONTENTS

3  A safe pair of hands
4  Leadership examined
5  Qualities of great leadership
8  Leadership values
10 Act now
       Fulfill your leadership potential
       Rethink leadership
13  Security + Values
A safe pair of hands

The Accenture Cybersecurity Forum (ACF) Women’s Council is an influential community of female chief information security officers (CISOs) who share their perspectives and initiate meaningful conversations. Founder and Chair Valerie Abend champions the forum, shortlisted for the Diversity Initiative of the Year for the Women in IT Awards New York 2020,¹ which meets regularly to discuss insights and approaches that can help women to rise.

Explore the values needed, and investigate the practical steps you should take, to serve as a resilient security leader through times of disruption.
Conducted under the Chatham House Rule, women CISOs and senior security executives from many different organizations and industries explored the challenges of how to serve as a resilient leader through times of disruption:

• What distinguishes great leaders who rise to extraordinary challenges during a crisis?

• What values do women call on in the middle of a major disruption—and how do these values relate to the ones they rely on day-to-day?

• As an individual leader, what values or behaviors do you need to strengthen to contribute more effectively to the success of your team, your enterprise and your community?

We took a closer look at the qualities of great leaders.
In this time of disruption, it is useful to consider what distinguishes successful leaders.

Women’s Council members pointed to leaders from a wide variety of backgrounds and experience who exemplify important values.

**Qualities of great leadership**

JACINDA ARDERN, PRIME MINISTER, NEW ZEALAND

Seen as decisive and relatable, the Prime Minister has been applauded for taking purposeful action with a human touch. She represents a new age of authentic leaders who lead with kindness, even when making tough decisions.
Qualities of great leadership

**QUEEN ELIZABETH II**
The Queen projects wisdom and stability, praising everyday citizens using storytelling to draw parallels between current events and history. She exhibits confidence and calmness by appealing to shared values while maintaining an enduring commitment to duty.

**JULIE SWEET, CEO ACCENTURE**
Committed to “truly human,” compassionate leadership, the CEO provides decisive and calm direction toward digital acceleration. She said, “My job is not to put stress in the system. So being calm at this time is really important.”

**ELIE WIESEL, NOBEL PRIZE WINNER**
Prolific author and a concentration camp survivor, Wiesel was an outspoken advocate for those who have suffered persecution because of religion, race or national origin. His humanity was viewed as his most significant attribute as a leader.

**MIKE ROMAN, CEO 3M**
Most recently, he has been recognized for responding with candor and integrity to criticism of the company during the COVID-19 disruption. Roman said that 3M’s purpose is built in part on “values around inclusion and diversity, along with sustainability.”
### Qualities of great leadership

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>HARRIET TUBMAN, ABOLITIONIST</strong></th>
<th><strong>GRETCHE WHITMER, GOVERNOR, MICHIGAN</strong></th>
<th><strong>MICHELLE OBAMA, FORMER FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES</strong></th>
<th><strong>RICHARD DAVIS, FORMER EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN &amp; PRESIDENT, US BANCORP</strong></th>
<th><strong>NELSON MANDELA, FORMER PRESIDENT, SOUTH AFRICA</strong></th>
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<td>Known as “the Moses of her people” for her work with the Underground Railroad during the 1850s and 1860s, Tubman operated with courage and compassion. A “servant leader,” she is recognized for her push/pull approach—pushing progressive ideas forward while pulling people toward greater equality.</td>
<td>The Governor is praised for “showing compassion, even to those who don’t agree with her” on how to manage during the COVID-19 disruption.</td>
<td>Several participants pointed to Obama’s quiet leadership, practical perspective, purposeful conduct and authenticity.</td>
<td>Noted for being compassionate and friendly, Davis’ leadership has influenced one of the nation’s largest banks and the entire financial industry.</td>
<td>Recognized for giving time to others without expecting anything in return, Mandela’s leadership values included passion, perseverance and forgiveness.</td>
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Leadership values

Workshop participants examined the following questions around leadership values for uncertain times:

• Should a leader apply new values to manage through a crisis?

• Is there a difference between a leader’s core and crisis values?

• What values does a leader usually draw on when leading an enterprise?

We took a closer look at the values that are useful during a crisis—and beyond.
Everyday leadership qualities

- **Humility**
  
  In a crisis, when uncertainty is the norm, leaders are wise to recognize that they do not have all the answers and to seek ideas and guidance from others.

- **Continuous learning**
  
  Effective leaders are willing, proactive learners and promote the same behavior among their teams.

- **Transparency**
  
  A commitment to transparency can build the good will and trust that teams need to perform at their best during a crisis.

- **Integrity**
  
  Doing the right thing regardless of personal consequences is a key attribute of leadership. Integrity is also fulfilling fiduciary responsibilities.

- **Stability**
  
  Younger team members, in particular, look to leaders for emotional and rational stability to remain confident in a crisis.

- **Empathy**
  
  Teams respect leaders who demonstrate that they understand and care about the personal and professional challenges people face in a crisis.

- **Action orientation**
  
  Resolving a crisis invariably requires tough decisions and a willingness to lead others in a new direction.

- **Trust**
  
  In a time of crisis, leaders must demonstrate that they trust others and exhibit value-based behaviors that engender trust.

- **Humor**
  
  Even in trying times, humor can have a place in helping team members appreciate the rewards of solving difficult problems.

- **Long-term perspective**
  
  The ability to look ahead can help teams focus on what is most important without being overly distracted by immediate concerns.

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Living your values with authenticity can be challenging at any time, given uncertainty and pressures from multiple stakeholders. Members agreed that knowing your core values—and those of your teams—is critical in a crisis and were candid in noting those areas they need to work on.

Women’s Council members acknowledged that in highly disruptive times, new values may be called for—and perhaps a greater reliance on several core values a leader considers essential. Also, it is important to identify people around the leader who demonstrate qualities where the leader may fall short.
Participants discussed several values they want to amplify in their leadership approach:

**01 Calmness**

Those around you (for example, a patient co-worker or spouse) can help instill a sense of calm with a perspective outside the pressures of the workplace.

**02 Courage**

Leaders are often called on to make difficult decisions that will have significant consequences for their teams, their enterprise and their own careers. Relying on others for guidance can make risk-taking more reassuring. We must accept that mistakes may be made and do something about it when we’re wrong. Share your point of view even when you are not the ultimate decision maker.

**03 Empathy and patience**

Leaders, particularly those with “driver” personalities, can go out of their way to check in with people and ask about their emotional and physical well-being.

**04 Decisiveness**

Leaders are confronted with a range of viewpoints. Many decisions must be made with incomplete information. Making the right decision will not please everyone. Being decisive can synthesize multiple viewpoints and data to do the right thing, even if it is difficult.
Fulfilling your leadership potential is an ongoing process of reflection, exploration, decision, action and evaluation.

Rethink leadership

During the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, leaders can take a number of steps to strengthen their leadership skills:

01 BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR CORE VALUES
Spend time thinking about your core values. What anchors your leadership? Write these values down and keep them visible. Reflect on how these values might support you daily—and what other values you might want to bring to the table specifically during a crisis.

02 IDENTIFY THE VALUES OF YOUR TEAM
Conduct a values exercise with your team members to identify and capture their core values so that you understand, as their leader, what they need from you. Even if you have conducted a similar exercise in the past, it may be useful to reevaluate values in the current environment.

03 ALIGN WITH YOUR ENTERPRISE VALUES
Identify how your values fit with your organization’s values so that you put yourself in context to the culture of the other leaders around you. Engage people who complement your strengths—and give them a clear role in your leadership strategy.
Security + Values

Having already helped their enterprises stabilize and normalize operations during a major disruption, women cybersecurity leaders are demonstrating that their values are essential assets. The Women’s Council encourages members to get involved in council activities, such as contributing ideas for roundtable topics, volunteering as a subject-matter expert, and reaching out to other members.

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