

## **Special Leadership Skills Needed for the Academic Library Professional during Covid-19 Pandemic Uncertain World**

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**Abstract:** The current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has sharply prompted and made awareness regarding how it would inevitably continue to be in the World. Changeability, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity are the realities of today, and leaders of the society must accept this reality and have to make decisions anyway while facing the challenges that have no solutions. Leadership is a long journey that never stops and the institutions and other organizations, which can turn the challenges into opportunities, will be the ones who succeed in the ensuing pandemic uncertain world. The global outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID-19) has created important challenges for leaders at all levels in the Educational institutions all over the World. In this article, special Leadership activities to be undertaken, during this uncertain pandemic period, what kind of special skills are needed, why they are important and what are the healthy habits to be followed to overcome the problems during this Covid-19 pandemic etc. are discussed and explained in details.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Leadership Skill, Academic Library, virtual skill, pandemic.

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### **1. Introduction:**

The current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has sharply prompted and made awareness regarding how it would inevitably continue to be in the World. Changeability, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity are the realities of today, and leaders of the society must accept this reality and have to make decisions anyway while facing the challenges that have no solutions. Leadership is a long journey that never stops and the institutions and other organizations, which can turn the challenges into opportunities, will be the ones who succeed in the ensuing pandemic uncertain world. Leadership plays an important role in the Educational institutions and the activities are associated with benefits to the institutions including increased performance and research outputs. In these uncertain Covid-19 pandemic times, there is an urgent reliance on academic leaders to maintain the well-being, health and safety of their workplace.

### **2. Leadership Activities:**

Leadership activities are an effective way for individuals to practice and strengthen their leadership skills to face and manage the present Covid-19 pandemic crisis for the benefit of organizations. The sign of a truly successful leadership is a happy, healthy workplace environment. Csenti, 2018 says that “leadership is not only a position in the workplace, it is the journey to become a leader and the leadership activities are valuable on the journey to becoming an effective leader, and develop confidence in leadership teams”.

Leadership activities are helping individuals to learn important skills to become effective leaders and to promote the growth and development of the organization or institution. The activities improving teamwork, better communication in the workplace and develop team cohesion. During the COVID-19 crisis, leaders need to tap their own emotional intelligence with extreme pressure on physical and mental health to make sure their institutional members come out of the pandemic stronger.

### **3. Leadership in Covid-19 Pandemic:**

It is important for Leaders and managers to take self-care while supporting and responding to their employees' mental health needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Extreme stress may affect the leaders the way by which they act to manage the works and the employees may suddenly tired out and the quality of the workouts may become less predictable [Figure 1].



**Figure 1: Leadership during COVID-19 pandemic**

- ❖ During this pandemic time, allotting tough works to employees is not advisable to get a good team functioning.
- ❖ Social support and a healthy understanding are essential for helping the academic employees to reduce stress and adjust work life expectations.
- ❖ Providing Emotional health support to the team workers for overcoming the pandemic crisis.
- ❖ Leaders should be an example and role model for their teams.
- ❖ The leader should convey that they are very sensitive to the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic, which has on employees' works and lives.

#### **4. Emotional Health Support Techniques:**

Emotional health support involves letting the employees of the institution to know that leaders are taking care of them, and that they should feel comfortable while discussing about works related challenges during COVID-19 time.

In his research work regarding COVID-19, "Leslie Hammer reveals that following emotional health support techniques are essential for providing support to the professionals: [Hammer, L/[www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)]

1. Providing comfort and monitoring for signs of struggle such as distress, social withdrawal and poor performance, and knowing when to refer an employee to professionals.
2. Recognizing that some employees may have families and loved ones who are requiring additional attention, so openly asking employees how they are managing both work and non-work.
3. For those without others in the house, during physical distancing ordinances, offering check-ins and encouraging them to connect with colleagues, friends, and family virtually.
4. Reinforcing to your employees that you are sympathetic and that you will maintain an open-door policy–virtually online, for them to talk through issues when needed".

#### **5. Role Model Healthy Works:**

Leadership activities should be a role modeling healthy work habits, through their own behaviors and guidance, healthy ways to integrate work-life obligations and engage in self-care during pandemic time. Effective role modeling behaviors and healthy works include the following:

1. Making sure, you stay up-to-date on safety and public health COVID-19 responses relevant to your team.
2. Knowing about the most up-to-date wellness resources available to you and your workers. Remind people of these resources regularly in meetings and consider posting information about wellness resources in your virtual workspaces, employee websites, and other shared spaces.
3. Defining your own boundaries and preferences regarding work hours, response times, and disclosure around family obligations. Then, projecting consistency in your ability to adhere to these boundaries.
4. Using paid time off and sick leave when needed, and encouraging your staff to do the same, or helping your staff to find state and national level resources to assist with leave.

#### **6. Employees Work Life Balance:**

Leaders can support employees' work-life balance and reduce undue burden include identifying projects with flexible deadlines, helping to prioritize the most important tasks, removing irrelevant tasks, and discouraging newly remote employees from feeling like they need to be come in time constantly to overcome the problems in pandemic time.

Research shows that employee with home-based caretaking responsibilities of children and aging parents also performing better and maintaining higher levels of well-being when work and family issues are changing into policies and protocols.

## **7. Skills Needed For Academic Professional During Covid-19 Pandemic:**

Leaders of academic professional, when communicating with staff during this time, it is critically important to lead with empathy; strive for flexibility, and model ways to prioritize health and well-being. The following skills are very much essential for the leaders to overcome the problems during the pandemic.[Figure 2]



**Figure 2:** Leadership communication skill

### **7.1. Communication Skill:**

The foremost and essential skill needed for the leaders of academic library professional during this time is Communication skill. Leaders need to develop their ability to explain the present pandemic crisis, clearly and succinctly to employees through online communication techniques to avoid COVID-19 pandemic problems. Effective communication in time only can help the leaders to perform better and take care of the employees' life during this pandemic.

### **7.2. Motivation:**

Leaders need to inspire and guide the employees by increasing their self-esteem and will power, by recognizing and encouraging their effort and achievements. By motivating them with encouraging words, leaders have to guide them to work from home with self-confidence during this pandemic.

### **7.3. Positivity Approach:**

For creating happy and healthy working environment in this stressful pandemic time, Leaders of the academic professional should approach the workers with positive thinking and positive responsibilities to develop fearless working environment and to reduce the stressful or busy schedules among the staff.

### **7.4. Trustworthiness:**

During this pandemic time, building trustworthiness among employees is one of the most essential leadership skill. By explaining about the integrity and about the present pandemic crisis and problems, leaders must create trustworthiness among the staff by encouraging them using healthy and hopeful words and providing them needful leave facilities to overcome the problems.

### **7.5. Responsibility:**

Taking responsibility is very much essential for the leaders to face the pandemic problems in the working place and to save the life of the staff and students from Covid-19. Leaders have to guide the staff to take care of themselves and to avoid pandemic problems. A good leader should accept mistakes and failures in this time, and instead they have the responsibility of finding good solutions for the same to provide better services.

### **7.6. Flexibility and Commitment:**

In this pandemic time, to solve the problems of employees in a smooth way, leaders should have the flexibility to accept the present challenges, changes and other positive suggestions. Leaders should strive to follow through the guidelines provided by the authorities to take self-care and to take care of the employees. Commitment of leaders in the working environment only can solve any pandemic problems and save the life of the staff, and through which they can provide better educational services to develop the institution.

### **7.7. On-Line Leadership Skill:**

The coronavirus pandemic and its economic aftermath have disrupted nearly every facet of the organization, including training and development, which is a critical activity for organizations to stay

competitive and thrive. Giving proper training, virtually with most travel eliminated, face-to-face training programs by on-line leadership skills will help the leaders to overcome the pandemic problems. [Figure 3].



**Figure 3:** Virtual/Online leadership

Most importantly, online leadership development is a safe and effective way for your organization to continue its development efforts without disturbing the health and safety of your organization's top leadership talent.

### **8. Special Leadership Skills Needed For Academic Library Professional During Covid-19 Pandemic:**

The global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges for leaders at all levels in the academic institutions. The pandemic has caused uncertain, volatile, complex and ambiguous situations in each field of the organizations.

- Resilience, flexibility and the ability to manage change, both planned and unexpected, are special skills needed for the academic library professional to successful working and will continue to be sought after special online skills by leaders.
- The leaders must have the skill of leading the workplace functions in times of crisis and beyond that.
- Virtual coaching and online leadership skills are very much essential to overcome the crisis.
- Personal and organizational agility skills are having crucial importance for leaders to overcome the challenges.
- They should have proper training through various practical resources and should have special skills by virtual teams and remote works to meet the challenges.
- Leaders need not allow themselves to be overwhelmed, depressed or immobilized and instead they should have self-confidence, courage and responsibility to do more than just respond to the rotation of events, though respond they must.
- They must have the skill of positive approach to everything in the working environment, and act as a positive change agent in the midst of chaos, in creating the future in this pandemic time.

### **9. Extended and Revised Supports By Leaders During Covid-19 Pandemic:**

The educational leaders, academic library professionals and faculty are now in an urged and stressful working environment in extending their support for students' success in a fully remote teaching and learning environment during this uncertain COVID-19 closure of campuses across the world. They can support the academicians by providing the following services:

Leaders have to provide the strategies, safety measurements, tools and knowledge needed to adjust to the educational and social disruptions on the campus caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

The Library professional leaders can develop immediate needs, just-in-time resources and services to help the staff and students of the institution. They need to provide decision-support information services as follows:

1. Providing research data from multiple sources online in time.
2. Required and relevant information services to the users on-line.
3. Enabling remote access to e-resources and online tools.
4. Continuous access to data without interruption to be enabled
5. Effective and stress free working environment to be developed to provide better information service.

#### **10. Training and Orientation Programs by Academic Library Leaders:**

In this COVID-19 pandemic time, to follow the safety measures, instructions and guidelines to create stress free work environment, academic library leaders can provide the following educational information services to the users:

- ❖ Enabling Online/remote access to e-resources by the academic library leaders to promote research works.
- ❖ Arranging and conducting Webinars and online orientation programs for the users periodically for creating awareness regarding e-resources.
- ❖ Conducting On-line Workshops for enabling the users to learn well about access to e-resources and its copyright issues to promote research and development in the institution.

#### **11. Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the academic library professional leaders to think differently, as they adjust to social distancing practices and a new work environment that they have never imagined. Therefore, it is now time to re-assert and enrich their leadership skills to build new ways of work environment and providing special online information services to their academic people. Technology skills are important to lead effectively. Large numbers of workers may never go back to the office permanently. Managers who can not only get the best possible results out of their teams when working remotely, but also show they can still act personally with employees and ensure team morale is high, and flexible to overcome the crisis. If there is one thing Covid-19 has taught us, it is the importance of being able to adapt effectively to situations out of our control. The pandemic has caused a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous situation for virtually every single business globally, and those that are reacting and adapting to the crisis are set to be successful when businesses can begin to operate at full capacity again. Resilience, flexibility and the ability to manage change, both planned and unexpected, are key to successful working by leaders to develop the Institution.

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