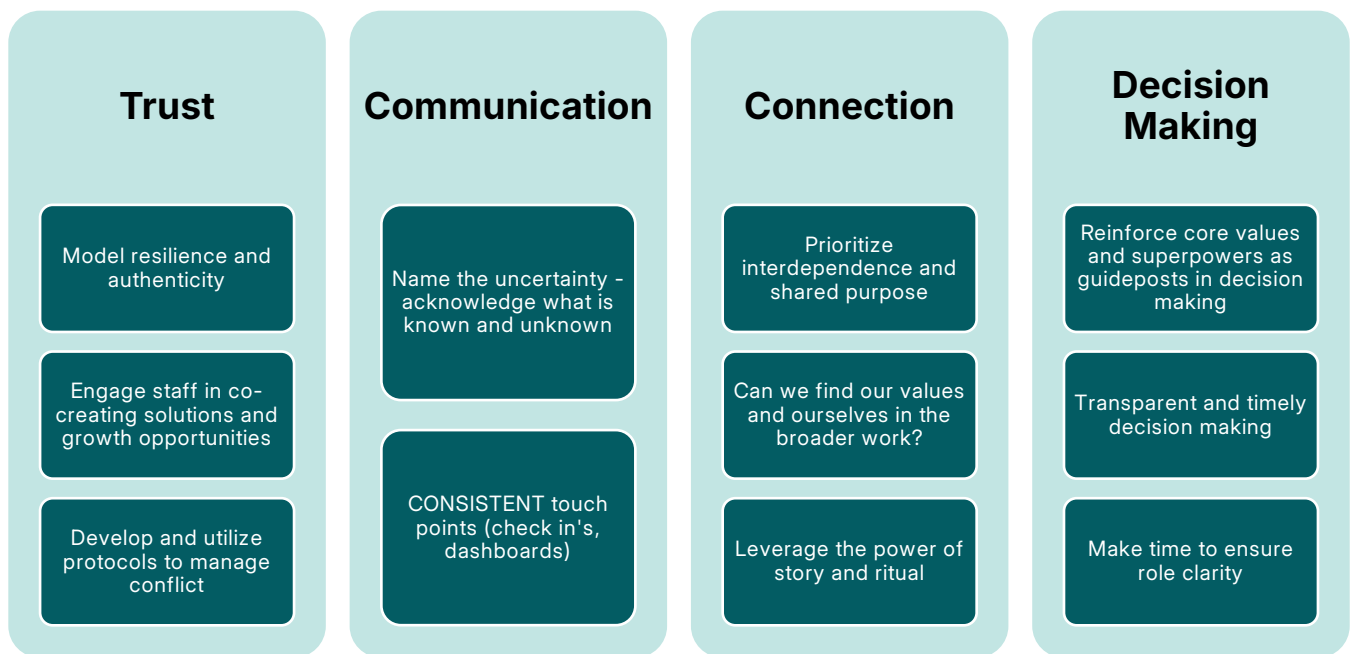


Leadership Strategies to Strengthen Culture in Times of Uncertainty and Change



Trust

It is important for leaders to model practices of resilience and authenticity in times of uncertainty. Doing so engages others into building the culture and demonstrates trust in the value of everyone's contribution. Secondly, leaders must be mindful of the way they engage with conflict or disagreement. Don't run from it or avoid it! Culture is as much about what is NOT done or said as what is outwardly expressed, so when leaders perpetuate cultures of silence or forced niceness it creates dissonance between how leaders *say* the organization operates and how it *actually* operates. The dissonance has the potential to plant seeds of distrust, and exacerbate the stress of uncertainty.

Communication

Leaders can use strategic and thoughtful communication during times of uncertainty to maintain a healthy organizational culture. Scheduling and delivering consistent messaging to staff is a powerful way to mitigate worry and offer folks important information about the current state of play as well as potential changes to come. Leaders can utilize weekly one-on-one, team check in meetings, or shared documents or dashboards to provide critical updates that support continued engagement and effective feedback processes.

Connection

Leaders who prioritize interdependence and connection create pathways and evidence that teams need each other to do good and successful work, especially in time of uncertainty. Frequently and explicitly connecting organizational values to day-to-day work and behaviors can also build resilience and engagement at all levels of the organization. Ritual and story are also powerful tools for culture building, shifting old narratives, and repairing relationships in tumultuous time. For example, taking a short time during a staff meeting to highlight a proud or important achievement or interaction can both foster human connection and center alignment to values.

Decision Making

When faced with stormy and complex conditions, leaders can ground themselves in their individual values to guide their decision making. Leaders can also use delegation and decision making tools to gather input from staff and/or partners and deepen staff engagement (see DARCI model). Making time to clarify the role and responsibility of each team member creates the conditions for clear expectations across the team where individuals know what decisions they are responsible for, and also supports efficient workflow and communication processes.