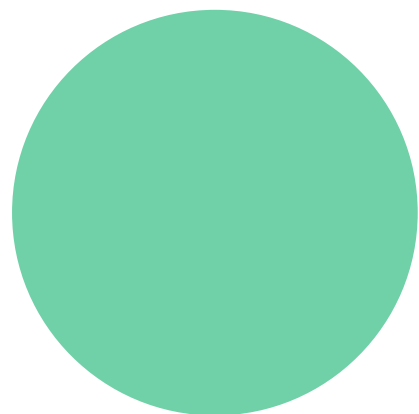


**EDGE CUM BE**

*Caroline Gourlay Consulting*  
Psychology for business

## Primary Colours® Covid-19 Leadership Survival Guide



# Primary Colours® Covid-19 Leadership Survival Guide

## About the Primary Colours® Model

The Primary Colours® model of leadership is Edgumbe's map of the territory of leadership; it defines the tasks which leaders need to perform in order to create the conditions for people and organisations to thrive, in three overlapping domains. In addition to the tasks shown here, leaders also need to look after themselves and remain fit to lead – we call that task Coping with Pressure.



## What is this guide for?

This guide is intended for anyone with leadership responsibility for an organisation or a part of an organisation during the pandemic. It does not contain any solutions – we do not presume to know what is right for you or your organisation. Instead it gives a series of questions to prompt your thinking. The aim is to give you:

- An opportunity to stop and take stock
- A structure to help you work out where to focus your attention
- A checklist to ensure you don't miss anything

It is likely that you will have thought of some of this yourself, perhaps much of it, but we believe it is useful to have a reminder at times when you may be overwhelmed by competing priorities. It is possible that some of the things we suggest you pay attention to are not issues you typically think about. This may be an opportunity to change the way that you lead in response to these challenging events.

*We offer this document free for internal use only; please share it with others who you think may find it useful but please note that it is not for commercial use.*

## How to use this guide

The guide is designed to be used multiple times as the situation progresses. We suggest you:

- Read through the guide once to familiarise yourself with the ideas
- Put aside an hour to go through it again identifying areas that need immediate attention. You may think you don't have an hour, but the time spent taking stock now is likely to save you time dealing with problems later.
- Go through the guide with other leaders in your organisation – the board, your boss, your peers or your own team as appropriate. It's useful to get others' perspectives and there will be some tasks that others are better suited to doing than you are.
- Identify the things you will need to monitor on a regular basis and how often you need to track them. These could be anything from cash flow to sickness levels to staff morale. There is likely to be something in every domain. For some organisations there may be less in the strategic domain but be wary of putting all your attention in the operational domain.
- Use the guide to review your organisation on a regular basis, perhaps weekly or fortnightly. It could form the basis of leadership team meetings. If you have a coach, you could use it with them.

## How this guide uses the Primary Colours® model

The guide starts with the tasks of leadership which affect all three domains – Coping with Pressure and Leading. It then goes through each domain in turn. Those tasks which straddle two domains pop up twice with a different focus each time. Although logically many people would start by focusing on the Operational domain, we have deliberately chosen to start with the Interpersonal domain because you will not get through this without people you can rely on – and who know they can rely on you.

Each section starts with a brief outline and then two sets of prompt questions. The first set is for your initial engagement with the guide and is broken into two parts: a set of core questions and some more detailed ones to help you address the topics in more depth. The second set is for you to review on an ongoing basis. There is a summary of the ongoing review questions at the back of the document as a handy reference guide. We have probably not thought of everything for every situation, so you may wish to add your own review questions.

We intend publishing a supporting document with links to further resources soon.

## Coping with Pressure

The whole world is under pressure right now. Being able to take care of yourself and others has rarely been such an important part of leadership. You are of no use to your organisation if you burn yourself out, so do not spend 10 hours a day on video calls with no break. Look after your physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

It is common to experience extreme feelings – anxiety, frustration, helplessness, fear, sadness, rage. It is ok to feel these feelings. It is useful to know what your particular triggers are and how to manage your emotions when they arise.

### Initial core questions

- How will I maintain my physical health?
- What can I do to maintain my mental focus?
- How will I take care of my emotional wellbeing?
- What support does my organisation have in place to help people cope with pressure and/or what external resources can I direct people to?

### Additional questions

- How do I balance my work and home life, particularly if I'm working from home?
- How do I manage the amount of time I spend looking at screens?
- What situations trigger strong feelings in me? How will I manage these?
- What unhelpful things do I do under pressure (ask someone else if you're not sure!) and how can I moderate this?
- How do I support others to cope with pressure?

### Ongoing questions

- How well am I sticking to my wellbeing routines – exercise, breaks, mindfulness, etc?
- How much non-screen time am I getting?
- How much am I eating, drinking, smoking? What's my sleep like?
- How am I feeling now? How have I been feeling lately?
- Do I need to change anything in order to take better care of myself?
- How are others coping? Am I making things better or worse for them?

## Leading

Leading (as defined in this model) has a number of key elements:

- Taking responsibility for difficult decisions
- Acting with integrity and upholding the values of the organisation
- Being visible
- Being a role model
- Deciding where to focus your energy and attention
- Self-reflection and self-control

It is implicit in the model that no one is good at all aspects of leadership. Be honest with yourself about the areas where you shine and those where you do not. The temptation is to focus on the aspects of leadership you are naturally drawn to, but that may not be what the organisation needs. Be prepared to stretch yourself and to let others take a lead in some areas.

### Initial core questions

- How do I stay visible within and (if appropriate) outside the organisation during this crisis?
- What difficult decisions am I facing now? What is the right thing to do – morally, commercially, reputationally?
- What are the organisation's values and how do I ensure I act in line with them? What behaviours do I need to role model?
- What should the organisation be focusing on right now? (This is answered by completing the rest of the guide). Am I the right person to take a lead on this? If not, who is?

### Additional questions

- What difficult decisions can I see that I might have to make in the future?
- How do I/we strike the right tone in our communication within and outside the organisation?
- How do I maintain the organisation's reputation?
- Who takes over from me if I am too ill to work? How do I keep that person in the loop so that they could seamlessly step in?

### Ongoing questions

- Am I facing any difficult decisions now? What is the right thing to do – morally, commercially, reputationally?
- How visible have I been? Do I need to do anything more/differently?
- Am I role modelling the right behaviours? How might I be getting it wrong, and how will I know?
- Do we currently face any reputational risk?
- Are we striking the right tone in our communication?
- What should the organisation be focusing on right now? (Keep asking this question). Am I the right person to take a lead on this? If not, who is?

## Interpersonal domain

The interpersonal domain is all about people – people within and outside your organisation. It's about the human aspects of leadership and is *vital*ly important, particularly in a crisis. It contains aspects of the tasks of Teamworking and Creating Alignment, as well as the core task of Building and Sustaining Relationships.

### Initial core questions

- Who do I personally, and we as a team, need to keep in touch with? These may include:
  - The board
  - Other departments
  - Team members
  - Customers/clients
  - Suppliers
  - Investors/bankers
  - Professional advisors
  - Shareholders
- What is the best way for me/us to keep in touch with each of these people/groups? What do they need from me/us? Note that different people may need different things from you.
- How can I connect with people on a human level rather than just about work?
- How do I/we ensure that staff can ask questions and put their views forward?

### Additional questions

- What could our organisation be doing to support our local community during this crisis?
- How do I/we support people with their domestic responsibilities during this crisis?
- How do I/we support people if they or their families get sick or if someone dies?
- How do we maintain morale? What non-work online social activities would people value?

### Ongoing questions

- How are people coping?
- How connected does the team feel?
- How well am I keeping in touch with the key people I need to stay connected to?
- Is there anyone who seems to need additional support right now?
- Are there any relationships which seem to have gone off track, where I might need to put things right?

## Operational domain

The operational domain is about the present and is predominantly task focused. It's about organising people and resources to achieve results and monitoring those results. It has elements of the tasks of Planning & Organising and Teamworking as well as the purely operational task of Delivering Results.

### Initial core questions

- Which of these is a problem for us operationally?
  - Cashflow
  - Capacity/resourcing
  - Supply chain/logistics
  - Technology constraints
  - Maintaining standards
  - Ensuring a safe working environment
- What do we need to put in place to stabilise these?
- What levels of performance are realistic now? What can we realistically expect from staff who are trying to work while also looking after small children and/or sick relatives?
- How do we ensure that standards are maintained, and any regulatory requirements met?
- How do we adjust our metrics/KPIs and what else do we need to track?
- How well do our systems and procedures work for remote working? Do we need to adapt anything?
- What additional activities do we need to organise, e.g. additional meetings, furloughing staff, applying for funding?

### Additional questions

- How do I hold people to account for their performance if they are working remotely?
- How do we ensure that work is documented and shared sufficiently so that we can take over from each other if someone is ill?
- How well are our remote meetings working?

### Ongoing questions

- How are we doing against our new and existing metrics? Do we need to change the way we work or revise our expectations?
- Which aspect of operations (cashflow, resourcing etc) is causing us most difficulty now? How can we stabilise this area?
- If people have gone off sick, how easy has it been to pick up their work? Is there anything we need to do to make this easier?
- How well is remote working going now?

## Strategic domain

The strategic domain is all about the future. It involves identifying trends, weighing up options and setting a direction for the organisation around which people are aligned. That direction needs to be reviewed in the light of changing threats and opportunities. This domain contains elements of Planning & Organising and Creating Alignment as well as the core task of Setting Strategic Direction.

### Initial core questions

- How clear is the situation as it affects our organisation? How quickly is it changing?
- What is the biggest threat to us? What is our survival strategy?
- How will we know if we're on track?
- What opportunities does this crisis present for us? Are there options we once considered outlandish or irrelevant that seem more realistic now?
- What information will we need to make key decisions about changing direction and when are we likely to have that?
- What was our long-term strategy? Which elements of it are still relevant?
- Do we need to put some strategic projects on hold?

### Additional questions

- How do we close down projects neatly so they can be easily restarted? How will we know when it's appropriate to do so?
- Who do I need to align around key decisions? Who do I involve, who do I inform? How will I influence them?
- Are there any strategic alliances we can form with other organisations?
- To what extent can I do my own thing? When do I need to ensure I'm taking a consistent approach with other leaders in the organisation? How will we agree on that consistent approach?
- If people have free time, is this an opportunity to research new ideas or develop new skills?

### Ongoing questions

- How has the situation changed? Do we need to change direction?
- Is now the time to close down or restart strategic projects?
- Are we acting consistently across the organisation when necessary?

## About us

Caroline Gourlay is an independent business psychologist based in Bath. She predominantly works to support the leaders of mid-sized, privately owned businesses. She also works as an associate of Edgumbe Consulting Group and is very familiar with the Primary Colours® Model. You can find out more about Caroline at <https://www.carolinegourlay.co.uk>

Edgumbe is one of the UK's most respected leadership consultancies. As business psychologists we conduct research, teach and provide consulting services on leadership; our mission is to help people and organisations thrive. You can find out more about Edgumbe at <https://www.edgumbe.co.uk/>.



## Ongoing questions

### Coping with Pressure

- How well am I sticking to my wellbeing routines – exercise, breaks, mindfulness, etc?
- How much non-screen time am I getting?
- How much am I eating, drinking, smoking? What's my sleep like?
- How am I feeling now? How have I been feeling lately?
- Do I need to change anything in order to take better care of myself?
- How are others coping? Am I making things better or worse for them?

### Leading

- Am I facing any difficult decisions now? What is the right thing to do – morally, commercially, reputationally?
- How visible have I been? Do I need to do anything more/differently?
- Am I role modelling the right behaviours? How might I be getting it wrong, and how will I know?
- Do we currently face any reputational risk?
- Are we striking the right tone in our communication?
- What should the organisation be focusing on right now? (Keep asking this question). Am I the right person to take a lead on this? If not, who is?

### Interpersonal Domain

- How are people coping?
- How connected does the team feel?
- How well am I keeping in touch with the key people I need to stay connected to?
- Is there anyone who seems to need additional support right now?
- Are there any relationships which seem to have gone off track, where I might need to put things right?

### Operational Domain

- How are we doing against our new and existing metrics? Do we need to change the way we work or revise our expectations?
- Which aspect of operations (cashflow, resourcing etc) is causing us most difficulty now? How can we stabilise this area?
- If people have gone off sick, how easy has it been to pick up their work? Is there anything we need to do to make this easier?
- How well is remote working going now?

### Strategic Domain

- How has the situation changed? Do we need to change direction?
- Is now the time to close down or restart strategic projects?
- Are we acting consistently across the organisation when necessary?