

## Quick Tips for Crisis Management

As we begin 2021, we have the opportunity for a fresh start; yet, we now know there is no end to the COVID-19 related issues in sight.

Many people are fatigued by COVID-19, some people are ready to move on and others are still very concerned. Which one is right? The answer? It depends because we all seem to feel a little bit different. COVID-19 is a crisis similar in theory to other crises we could experience, such as genetic defect in the herd or a devastating weather event. We all react to crisis differently. Throughout 2020, I coached professionals to understand their current position and then train them to come to a place of reasonable collaboration. In this month's column, I'd like to share a simple assessment I built called "The Four Crisis Reaction Types." Hopefully, it will help you find common ground and the ability to move forward positively this year.

### #1: Hide and hunker

- **Common reactions:** Slash budgets, close doors and avoid external decisions
- **Underlying issue:** Haven't accepted change and are stuck in fear

The hide and hunker reaction is one of fear. These people are not yet willing to move on from full-on crisis mode and are probably very concerned about how the crisis will affect them personally. They don't want to take any

risks and will likely be slower to move on than other types. When businesses are operated by hide and hunker types, they are often the first to close down or stay home and often are slower to adapt to a new model.

### #2: Conformist

- **Common reactions:** Waiting for the "all clear" from an authority such as the government
- **Underlying issue:** Stuck in pause, needing rules to move forward

Conformists are frequently identified by their strict adherence to rules established by whomever they deem to be an authority figure. They will go forward with new activities but not without very clear risk mitigation plans. One hallmark I often see with conformist types is a stern demand that others see the world the same way and believe in the same precautions they consider essential. Conformists are rule followers to the extreme in a crisis.

### #3: Fence rider

- **Common reactions:** Bored and ready to move forward but need reassurance
- **Underlying issue:** Unable to take the lead; prefers someone influential "goes first"

Fence riders are eager-for-change (these are the people who use the phrase "new normal" all the time) and want to move forward, but don't want to make the first move. Often fence riders will seek out a conformist or a vanguard to take the lead and choose a direction. Fence riders are good at seeing both sides of the issue, which is a positive quality to have around when tensions among opposite types run hot. Yet, this reaction type isn't going to make waves, either. So, if your farm or business is operated by a fence rider, someone else will likely need to propel him/her into action by setting the pace and establishing the playbook.

### #4: Vanguard

- **Common reactions:** Anger, then action; already innovating; "So, what? The world is different."
- **Underlying issue:** Impatient; ready to create and implement new-world solutions

If conformists are the leaders that stay within the rules, vanguards throw out the rulebook and make their own rules that they believe are better suited to their lives and farms. At the front of the pack, vanguards in crisis are the fix-it folks who have already decided that the crisis has/is happening, and it's

time to tackle it headfirst. Vanguards are often initially motivated by anger at the crisis and frustration with the disruption, but they'll quickly pivot and decide what needs to be done to survive and thrive. A caution with vanguards, much like with conformists, is that they are often in disbelief at the views of other reaction types. This can lead to unpleasant conflict with people either not ready to move on or seemingly slowing them down with too many arbitrary rules.

The direct opposite of conformists, this crisis reaction type is ready to get into the situation, figure out what needs to be changed, make the change, and move on to the next great thing.

### The four crisis reaction types

So, where do you and your family fit? Some people may fluctuate, and with any crisis, people can move through stages. You may not be able to change everyone's reaction, but you can still work together well if you know how to understand each other. **HW**

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