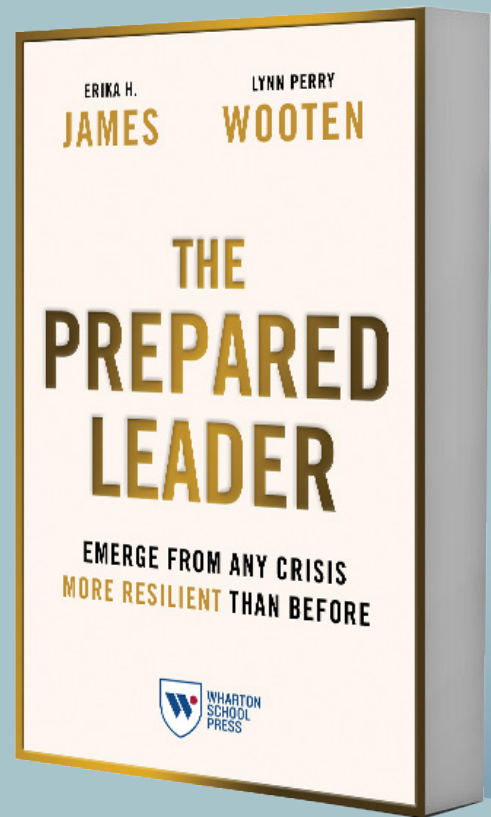


The Prepared Leader DISCUSSION GUIDE



The next crisis might be here now or it might be right around the corner. In *The Prepared Leader: Emerge from Any Crisis More Resilient Than Before*, two history-making experts in crisis leadership—Erika H. James, dean of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and Lynn Perry Wooten, president of Simmons University—forcefully argue that the time to prepare is always.

In their fast-reading and actionable book, James and Wooten provide tools and frameworks for addressing and learning from crises, as well as insight into what you need to know to become a Prepared Leader.





To learn more, visit: wsp.wharton.upenn.edu/book/prepared-leader

Questions for Discussion

1. In the introduction to *The Prepared Leader*, James and Wooten talk about two critical ideas that have emerged from their crisis leadership research. One is that crises are inevitable. The other idea is that leaders can prepare for crises before they actually happen. What kinds of experiences have you had in the past managing crisis situations—at work or at home? How have you prepared for a crisis in the past?
2. James and Wooten highlight a number of cognitive biases that can impair rational decision-making and make it all the harder for us to prepare for a crisis in advance and then take the right actions to mitigate its impact. Which of these cognitive biases present a challenge for you or your organization?
3. In chapter 1, the authors introduce a critical idea: the fourth bottom line or fourth P of leadership. What are your thoughts about this assessment? How would it transform your leadership, organization, or business as a whole if a fourth P were adopted?

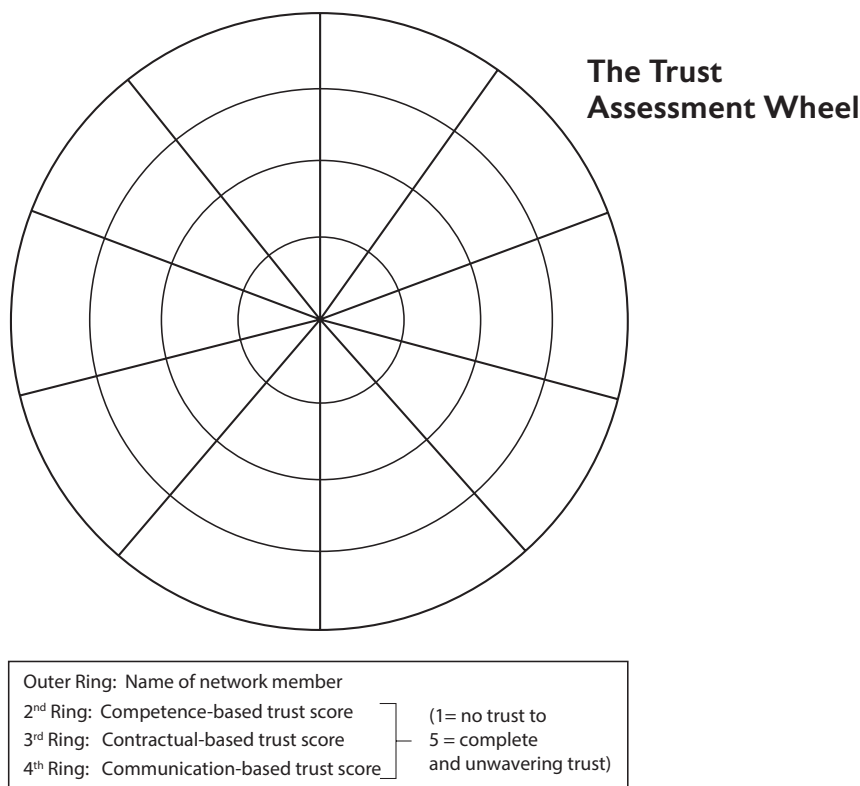


4. Chapters 2 and 3 break down in detail how crises unfold: the five phases of a crisis and the specific skills you need to deploy to navigate each of these phases. Which phases and which skills do you feel most prepared for? Where do you see the need further development?

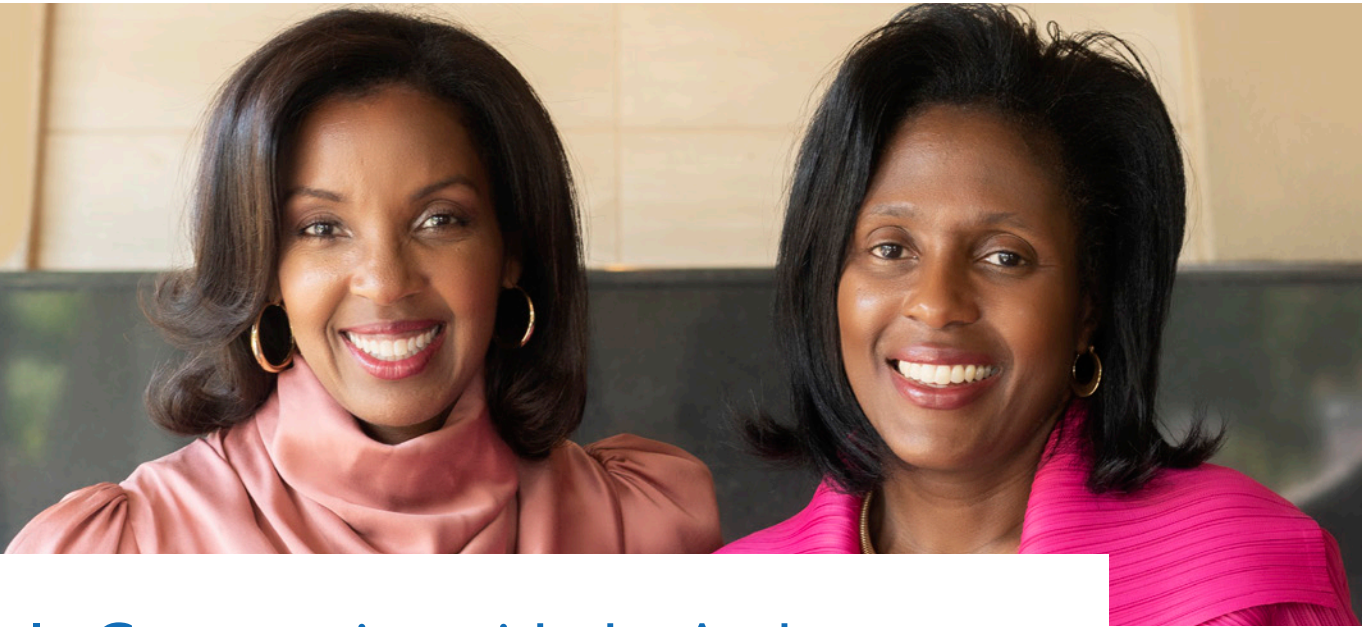
 5 Phases of a Crisis		Early Warning Signal Detection		Preparation and Prevention		Damage Containment		Recovery		Learning and Reflection	
 9 Supporting Skills		Sense-making Perspective Taking		Influence Organizational Agility		Creativity Communicating Effectively		Risk Taking		Promoting Resilience	

5. Crises are both threats and opportunities, say the authors. Do you agree that crises present opportunities? Is there an example from your own life where a crisis presented an opportunity?

6. The authors argue that in a crisis you not only need the input of others, but you need a diversity of inputs or perspectives. How diverse is your team and what practices or processes do you currently have to capture information and expertise from different areas of your business? How empowered are individuals at different levels of the organization to speak up if there's an issue?
7. Trust is absolutely vital in a crisis. Your team needs to trust in you and your leadership. Likewise, you need to be sure of the advice that you are receiving. Using the Trust Assessment Wheel, think about who you would go to in a crisis situation, and evaluate how each person scores in terms of transparency (communication), following through on a promise (contract), and their skillset (competence.)



8. Crises are exceptional events with the potential to do major harm to business, communities, and individuals. They are also exceptional opportunities to learn. However, oftentimes leaders don't leverage this learning effectively, and the authors cite four ways that leaders fail to learn in the book. What positive or negative examples of learning after a crisis have you experienced or observed?
9. Throughout the book, the authors flesh out the key ideas with examples taken from the real world: Prepared Leaders who have navigated the pandemic era and emerged more resilient. Is there someone who you believe has been an exemplary Prepared Leader in the last few years? What characteristics or decisions distinguish them from others, and why?
10. What are your next steps to become a Prepared Leader?



In Conversation with the Authors

Wharton School Press sat down with Wharton School Dean Erika H. James and Simmons University President Lynn Perry Wooten to talk about how they found the motivation and the staying power to write this book during the pandemic.

WHARTON SCHOOL PRESS: What led you to write *The Prepared Leader* in the midst of a pandemic while transitioning into highly demanding new roles?

JAMES: When we had the notion to author a new book, the pandemic was still not on anyone's radar. And as it started to emerge, it so happened to coincide with the point in time when Lynn and I were both at the final stages of making the decision to join a new institution. We realized that, given our backgrounds, our expertise in crisis leadership and given that this pandemic had now come to the United States, we couldn't not take advantage of this opportunity. And although, yes, we were starting new roles in the midst of the pandemic and the midst of a really major crisis, we realized that we had to speak to this, both from our own personal experiences as leaders, but also as experts and scholars in this field. We had a unique perspective, and we felt like we had to take advantage of this moment.

WHARTON SCHOOL PRESS: You use the word "we" when you're talking about response to a crisis, and it's clear that no one person can lead through a crisis alone. In the book you talk about the crisis team and how it needs to be "diverse in perspective." Why does this need to be front of mind for prepared leaders?

JAMES: Surrounding yourself with trusted colleagues and experts is a really important factor in helping take the organization effectively through a crisis. When we talk about diversity, we generally assume a very narrow definition, and we think about race and gender. Yes, those characteristics are certainly important in responding and problem-solving, but they are not all of what we're referring to when we describe diversity. Diversity of perspective really matters. That might mean seeking advice and counsel and input from people who are not on your leadership team, but who might sit in different areas of the organization; who see firsthand some of

the challenges associated with the crisis that you're trying to address. These are the people who might have a window into information that is absolutely critical in a time of crisis.

It's important to recognize that perspective and expertise might come from anywhere in the organization and we shouldn't just narrow our focus to our senior leadership team who will add valuable insight, but probably insufficient information. So, expanding who we have access to, who we seek information from, is a critical part.

WOOTEN: When I'm doing the checklist, there are a couple of things that I consider in terms of diversity in times of crisis. First, I want to hear the voices I normally don't hear. So I'm going to seek them out. Then you want the *provocateurs*: people who are going to disagree with you; people who can see the pros and cons.

I want to bring everybody into the room who has the expertise to help resolve the crisis. I want people who have previous different experiences. I want execution capability and I want different levels of emotional intelligence; all the ingredients to make that diversity melting pot that you need in the room to resolve a crisis.

WHARTON SCHOOL PRESS: What do you hope that a reader coming to *The Prepared Leader* for insights will take away from your book?

WOOTEN: I think for me it's the importance of creating a culture of prepared leadership. A culture where everybody's constantly progressing through the five phases: scanning the environment, thinking about

what could go wrong. Then, once in crisis mode, it's about having people empowered to step up and roll up their sleeves.

It's also really about the importance of learning at the individual level and at the team level. What you want is when your team comes together the learning is always more than one plus one; you want all of your people thinking proactively about the system and scanning their environment. This for me, is having a *culture of prepared leadership*.

JAMES: And I would add two things to what Lynn said. One is, when you're thinking about managing a crisis and responding to a crisis, it really is about the people. And if you surround yourself with people that you trust, they're the ones who are going to go through the fire with you. They're the ones who are going to be there through the thick and thin and help you resolve the challenge that you're experiencing. Having trusted counterparts throughout this process is a critical aspect of prepared leadership.

And the other thing I would say, touching on Lynn's comments on learning, is that you shouldn't learn for learning's sake. You want to be able to do something with the information you gather. Crises can generate opportunities, but you only leverage those opportunities if you make investments based on new information; if your teams are able to deploy the new skills they've developed through really challenging circumstances. Learning allows for creative, innovative ideas to emerge, if we are intentional about seeking those opportunities.

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—ERIKA H. JAMES

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—LYNN PERRY WOOTEN

About the Authors



Erika H. James became the dean of the Wharton School on July 1, 2020. Trained as an organizational psychologist, James is an expert on crisis leadership, workplace diversity and management strategy. Prior to her appointment at Wharton, James was the John H. Harland Dean at Emory University's Goizueta Business School from 2014 to 2020. An award-winning educator, accomplished consultant, and researcher, she is the first woman and first person of color to be appointed dean in Wharton's 141-year history. As such she has paved the way for women in leadership both in education and corporate America.

James has been instrumental in developing course material in crisis leadership and women's leadership and in leading programs for executive audiences in these areas. She earned her B.A from Pomona College and her PhD from the University of Michigan. James serves on the boards of Morgan Stanley, Momentive and the Philadelphia Orchestra. She is coauthor, with Lynn Perry Wooten, of *The Prepared Leader: Emerge from Any Crisis More Resilient than Before*.



Lynn Perry Wooten, a seasoned academic and an expert on organizational development and transformation, is the ninth president of Simmons University and the first African American to lead the institution. Before coming to Simmons, she served as the David J. Nolan Dean and Professor of Management and Organizations at the Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management. Prior to that, she served on the faculty of the University of Michigan Ross School of Business for nearly 20 years.

Specializing in crisis leadership, diversity and inclusion, and positive leadership, Wooten is an innovative leader, presenter, and prolific author. Wooten holds a bachelor's degree from North Carolina A&T State University, where she was valedictorian; an MBA from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business; and a doctorate from the University of Michigan. A resident of Brookline, Massachusetts, Wooten is actively involved in the Boston philanthropic and civic community. She is the coauthor, with Erika H. James, of *The Prepared Leader: Emerge from Any Crisis More Resilient than Before*.