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Executive Search & Board Advisory

AS A LEADER COULD YOU MAKE THIS TOUGH DECISION? WOULD YOU DO THE SAME AS SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL?



"Success consists of going from failure to failure with loss of enthusiasm"

Sir Winston Churchill

It is great being at the top, but with "great power there is great responsibility" as Winston Churchill demonstrated during World War II.

On July 3, 1940, Sir Winston Churchill gave a very difficult order to sink the French Fleet. Faced with a choice to turn on his ally or allow their navy to fall into the German enemy hands and thus surrendering the battle on the seas, Churchill pleaded with the Vichy Government to come to see reason.

Britain was outnumbered in both men and munitions, and the French navy was the fourth largest in the world. The Brits needed the French Fleet, but the French Government were worried by the potential German punishment if the French Fleet sailed into British ports.

Churchill in desperation sent a memo to the French leaders representing the falling Government, either send us the ships or scuttle them. The request was ignored and so Churchill responded in the only way he thought he could, "If you refuse these fair offers, I must, with profound regret, require you to sink your ships within six hours...failing the above, I have orders of His Majesty's Government to use whatever force may be necessary to prevent your ships from falling into German or Italian hands." The French Government didn't believe him.

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As the leader of Great Britain responsible of ensuring the best opportunity for victory, Churchill issued the order to sink the fleet, which he described as “a hateful decision, the most un-natural and painful which I have ever been concerned”. Cabling to Vice-Admiral Somerville, on whose shoulders the responsibility fell, Churchill wrote “You are charged with one of the most disagreeable and difficult tasks that a British Admiral has ever been faced with, but we have complete confidence in you and rely on you to carry it out relentlessly”.

The French Fleet was sunk. The action ensured that Britain now alone in the fight had in Churchill’s mind and in many others the best chance to continue on.

As leaders our responsibility is to act for the greater good of our people and organisations, we put their interests before our own.

Would you have made this decision?

Gregory Robinson, Managing Partner, “The decision Churchill had to make brings home the trivial decisions that many of us set on and procrastinate about. As Churchill stated, leadership bears great responsibility and difficult decisions have to be made. As leaders our responsibility is to act for the greater good of our people, team and organisations, we put their interests before our own.”

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- Non-Executive Director Search;
- Board Strategy and Structure Consulting;
- External Succession Planning; and
- Executive Re-Engagement / Transition.

Founded in 2012, our team have acted as specialist adviser to many of the world's leading corporations on Board and Executive performance, capability and succession planning.

Our consultants have worked with clients from all sectors and a broad range of geographies. They include over 80 of the ASX 100, 10% of the FTSE 100, Private Equity, Multinational, Private Family and Mutually Owned Companies.

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Our team consists of senior Search Consultants, Human Resource Directors,

Psychologists, Coaches and exceptionally experienced Researchers.

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