

Foreword

[SENIOR LEADER NAME]

[SENIOR LEADER TITLE]

[COMPANY NAME]

*SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY LETTER*

\*Utilize this sample as a guide for how to use this custom opportunity for a senior leader from your organization to personally address those that you are gifting this custom edition to, setting the tone and expectations for crisis preparedness.

My fellow [INSERT COMPANY] leaders,

While we would all like to think that a crisis couldn't possibly occur in our organization, the brutal truth is that we are very likely to experience a major disruption in the not-too-distant future that could (or will) significantly impact the way we do business, how we engage with our customers, and how we work as a team, any day ... at any time ... in, quite frankly, any number of predictable and not-so-predictable ways. No organization is immune from crisis, and I've come to learn that the best way to navigate these predicaments is to do what can be done to prepare for them as if they were inevitable. Facing a major disruption in some aspect of our business just doesn't seem to be a question of "if" anymore. It's much more likely a question of "when". In the months ahead, we will be dedicating some time to improving our readiness for these challenging times. To help us focus, it is my pleasure to share the book you are holding as an invaluable tool that will support our efforts.

I've had the opportunity to personally meet Dr. Mike Barger, author of *High-Stakes Leadership in Turbulent Times*, and learn about his approach to crisis management. Not only has he enjoyed a remarkable career as a military leader (he ran the TOPGUN school for the US Navy) and as a business leader (he co-founded JetBlue Airways), but he now teaches an incredible course to business students at the University of Michigan on the topic of leadership when tensions are escalating, the stakes are high, and leadership is needed most. In my conversations with him, I was struck by... [SHARE SOME HIGH-LEVEL THOUGHTS ON MIKE'S PERSPECTIVE AND YOUR COMPANY'S RELATION TO IT]

Like many of you, I've spent a great deal of time learning the ins and outs of our organization, how we provide meaningful products and services to our customers, and how we create value for different groups of people in a variety of ways. We have enjoyed some moments of great success over the years, but what we've done historically to be successful won't necessarily ensure our success well into the future. We must continue to improve, every day. There is simply no option if we want to remain competitive. But beyond our shared commitment to continuous improvement, I'm convinced that we must begin to reimagine how our organization adapts to the changing world around us. As I've watched and experienced the increasing volatility in our society and the escalating complexity of the competitive environment in which we operate, I truly believe that we need to think differently about leadership. High-stakes leadership, a form of leadership that Dr. Barger speaks to in this book, will challenge us to not

only think differently about our responsibilities during a crisis, but also to fundamentally rethink our relationships with our various stakeholders even during the best of times. As you will begin to appreciate to a much greater extent over the months ahead, these relationships have become some of our greatest assets. As we reimagine our approach to leadership at [INSERT COMPANY], we must find ways to develop these relationships to new levels, helping us run a better business in the best of times, and helping us become more resilient when facing obstacles that must be overcome. If we are to become an organization of effective high-stakes leaders, we must look at everything we do (and everything we prepare for) from not only our own perspective, but from the perspectives of our stakeholders as well.

Our customers, our employees, our board of directors, the communities we serve, the officials who serve these communities, our channel partners, our regulators, the media, and many others — these are our stakeholders and they each find value in their relationships with us. Our work impacts their lives in countless ways. For us to be effective, we must always consider how each move we make is perceived by these vitally important stakeholders ... in good times and bad. Have we spent enough time thinking about how we engage these stakeholders, even in the best of times, to maximize their confidence in our ability to consistently deliver on our commitments and their expectations? Further, have we considered how, when, why, and with what we should engage these stakeholders during a disruption — when we aren't able to meet their expectations? This emphasis on stakeholder engagement is a pivotal step in Dr. Barger's approach to crisis management. Thinking this way will not only help us manage crises more effectively when they occur, but it will also help us identify opportunities to resolve issues before they've had a chance to reach crisis-level proportion. After all, being resilient isn't just knowing that we can pick ourselves up after we've been knocked down. It's also being able to keep ourselves from stumbling in the first place — to be proactively addressing potential sources of disruption before they become raging infernos.

As leaders within our organization, you may feel as though you spend countless hours putting out fires instead of preparing for or preventing them. Indeed, crisis management is a necessary evil of great responsibility. But understanding the proper tools and mindsets needed to tackle the problems we have faced previously and could very well face in the future is crucial to our success. If we can do this well, we'll not only deepen the trust and confidence of our key stakeholders, but we can become even more effective in our organizational and personal work. The mindset shift I'm suggesting will simply help make all of us better leaders and, at the risk of overstating my ambitions, will make us all better people and professional colleagues.

Luckily, high-stakes leadership — what Dr. Barger calls the challenge of leading organizations through the most challenging of scenarios — can be learned. As I've managed high-stakes situations throughout my professional career, I've come to appreciate the lessons that Dr. Barger highlights, including: [CONSIDER HIGHLIGHTING YOUR FAVORITE KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE BOOK – here are some starters. Use them, add to them, or create your own]

- During difficult times, people will always look to organizational leaders for tangible evidence of leadership.

- When they look, they want and need to see leaders who they can trust, who are demonstrating an acute awareness of the situation, and who are clearly committed to the best possible path forward.
- These people are not expecting leaders to be perfect or omniscient, but they are expecting them to be visible and dedicated to addressing the needs of their stakeholders with a sense of urgency.

I'm very excited about the opportunity we have to learn together as we explore Dr. Barger's powerful insights on high-stakes leadership. I'm confident that we will not only be inspired by the lessons contained within this book but that we'll find dozens of actionable takeaways that will have a meaningful impact on each of us as [INSERT COMPANY] leaders and on our enterprise as a whole.

Thank you for all that you do every day to make this a great place to work. If we continue to grow as a team and get a little bit better every day, I know that we'll enjoy some incredible success for many years to come.

Warm Regards,

[SENIOR LEADER NAME]

[SENIOR LEADER TITLE]

[COMPANY LOGO]