

WHAT MAKES A CONFIDENT TEAM: EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY

Uncertainty can overwhelm a team. We can freeze or feel caught in the headlights. We see a way ahead and then ‘the goal posts keep moving’. We want to make decisions, but the data keeps changing and the messages from above keep switching. Legislation is expected and then delayed. Finance is expected and then aborted. A spiral of hopelessness can affect even the best of teams when it loses confidence in making any progress.

How best can you enable a team to keep ‘keep calm and carry on’ and be open to adapting in the face of uncertainty?

- Talk to the team about how they have handled uncertainty well in the past, or what they have observed in others who handle uncertainty well
- Explore the opportunities that the uncertainty could bring
- Be curious about the insights from new data
- Focus on the issues that you can influence and accept that some things are outside of your control
- Review the arguments that could persuade decision-makers
- Draw in an external perspective from a trusted source, and
- Keep coming back to the team’s shared purpose.

How can a team leader be sensitive to the emotional impact of uncertainty?

- Acknowledge that you are affected too – and you are confident there will be a way forward, however long it takes to find it
- Build trust that you will share what information you have
- Involve people in finding solutions, so they don’t feel helpless
- Take opportunities to mark achievements, however small
- Maintain regular communication with key stakeholders
- Be alert to people who may need extra support with their wellbeing
- Prompt everyone to stay engaged in activities outside work which maintain their energy and help them keep a broad perspective.

The current series of Praesta Prompts is exploring what makes a great team, and how to manage potential derailers such as handling uncertainty and being in the spotlight.