# Leadership Lessons for Uncertain Times: A Discussion with Eric Rosenbach [Transcript]

**Allain Williams:** Welcome to the Leadership Lessons for Uncertain Times webinar. Thanks to all of our participants who are joining us from 169 countries around the world. This webinar is brought to you by Harvard online. Now it's my great pleasure to introduce our distinguished guest, Eric Rosenbach, and our moderator, Mary Godfrey. Eric Rosenbach, is a senior lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School and the Director of the Defense Emerging Technology and Strategy Program at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. As Pentagon Chief of Staff, from 2015 to 2017, Eric Rosenbach led and managed the execution of dozens of high-profile strategic initiatives for the largest public sector organization in the world. As the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Rosenbach was responsible for developing and executing the strategy for all aspects of the Department's cyber activities and other key areas of defense. In the private sector, he led the cybersecurity practice of a global management consulting firm advising the executives of fortune 500 companies on strategic risk and mitigation strategies. This discussion today will be moderated by Mary Godfrey, Director of Multimedia and Development and Production in the Office of the Vice Provost of Advances in Learning at Harvard University. Mary received an MA in journalism from the New York University and was a producer for ABC News, World News Tonight, with Diane Sawyer, 2020, and Primetime, where she collaborated with senior correspondents and editorial staff to write and produce global news and enterprise stories. Without further ado, let's begin. Mary and Eric, the virtual floor is yours.

**Mary Godfrey**: Thank you, Allain, and thank you, team. Good morning, Eric. Thanks for joining us. We want to take a moment to just acknowledge all of you who are joining us today. The enthusiasm that you have expressed in advance. Many of the questions that we'll cover today are inspired by many of the pre-submitted questions that you've expressed an interest in hearing from Eric about, so many thanks to our audience today. Eric, our conversation is going to be focused on your experience in leadership and strategy, and I believe we can agree, this feels particularly crucial at this moment in time. So, having said that, I would like to ask to hear from you. What are you focused on here at Harvard first?

**Eric Rosenbach**: Hello, everyone! It's so nice to be with so many people from so many different places around the world. I was just looking at the Q & A. We have people from Oman, Ukraine, Colombia, Ecuador, Latvia, and many other places. It's really great. Thank you to the Harvard team here for putting this together and being with Mary. She's a true pro. At Harvard now, my real joy and passion is teaching about public sector strategy and execution. So I do three things at Harvard. One is I teach at the graduate school, here at the Kennedy school for master's students in public policy. And when I'm teaching that class, it has nothing to do with the Pentagon or national security. And it's a very international crowd. So this year, for example, my class is 60% international students. And the largest group of international students is from

China, which makes for interesting conversations. And it is really great. The other thing I do is conduct research. Right now, I'm leading research projects on AI and autonomy and autonomous decision making and looking at emerging technology and how it contributes to global power. And then I teach executive education programs here in person. So if you ever feel like you want to come and learn at Harvard for a week or two on topics very similar to what we'll talk about today, then you should check that out. So that's it. And back over to Mary.

**Mary Godfrey**: That's a lot of work here at Harvard. I do want to take a step back and acknowledge that your work encompasses work at one of the most prestigious, high profile places in government, and that is the Pentagon. I'd like to begin by asking you what are some of the unique challenges of implementing strategies in government, given your prior experience at the Pentagon.

**Eric Rosenbach**: The Pentagon is a busy place. If you think about just the Pentagon itself, physically, the office building is 40,000 people in the headquarters there in DC. And, as you heard, it's the headquarters of the biggest public sector organization of the world. 3 million people. You know, a budget that is several 100 million dollars. So the biggest challenge is actually trying to get people to recognize what the strategy is and to execute through multiple layers of bureaucracy. I would say the Department of Defense is by far the biggest bureaucracy in the world, although I sometimes like to joke and say the worst bureaucracy is here at Harvard. The difference, though, in working at the Pentagon, when you're the Pentagon Chief of Staff, and you're trying to make sure that you're executing on national level goals, and then the things that are important to the Secretary and the Department of Defense, is that you're always trying to balance crises of the day and ongoing crises, and then things that aren't in the headlines all the time, but are very important to the goals that you've set in a longer term basis. So over several years. And quite frankly, that's probably the biggest challenge.
I'll say one other thing briefly, though, as all of you in the audience know, because I think most of you are working in the public sector, or in a way that is associated with the public sector, it's a lot harder working in the public sector when what you're trying to do is produce public value. You're not working for the bottom line. You're not looking at profits. You're trying to do things that are good for the world and make the world a better place.

**Mary Godfrey**: I kind of want to stay on that for just a second with a follow up question. When you think about working in the public sector and thinking about creating public value, knowing that it doesn't equate to revenue or equate to some sort of strategic initiative that somehow gets you a promotion, or somehow earns lots of dollars. How do you square that with your own potential personal frustrations with bureaucracy, or the kind of forces at work that can, you know, make one feel a little bit demotivated by that experience.

**Eric Rosenbach**: Right. So I think there are two important things to think about. One is the leadership and strategy for the organization. And then part of it is just you as a human, you know, holding on to the things that are important to you. So I'll talk very briefly about both of those. You know part of leadership is about strategy. And, in the course, if you decide that you want to take it, we talk about strategy as something that has internal consistency, external

consistency, and consistency over time to help you achieve the organization's vision and goals. We can talk more about why you want those measures of consistency, and that has a lot to do with the way you would handle leadership situations during a crisis. But that's kind of the foundation. Now, something real quick on challenges in the public sector that are different than the private sector. The first is the one that we just talked about. It's often much more difficult to measure outcomes. It's not like you have a quarterly review where you can see whether ROI and profit margins are what the board or shareholders would expect. You're trying to help people when it comes down to it. That's what the Kennedy School is all about. The second thing is you just never have the resources that you would have in the private sector and that could be in terms of budget, that could be in terms of technology, and definitely could be in terms of human capital, too. It is much more difficult, most often, to recruit people to public sector jobs because they pay less. Hours might be worse. You know you have worse IT. All of the things, especially younger people, are looking for, not as much flexibility. And to add to that, the risk profile for allocating resources is much different. So you know, one of the things that we did at the Pentagon is, we're trying to make the organization more innovative, in particular, in the ingestion and kind of the acquisition of emerging technologies, and we would get beat up all the time by the press and by members of Congress on Capitol Hill for being too risk averse. Now there is something to that. It is a very risk averse organization when it comes to that. But that's driven by the fact that it's taxpayer money that you're managing and you can't take the same level of risk when you're managing and using taxpayer money to get projects done as you could if you were at Meta or Google, or a Startup. If you fail, it's private money. You don't make headlines in the Washington Post. If you fail in government, and even, you know, for what would be comparatively small amounts of money compared to the private sector, it's a scandal. It shows up. You will show up in front of Parliament, or, you know, be in the newspaper, and that applies not just at the national level. I think also at the local level. I'm sure many of you work in state, local politics, and at the international level and international organizations. So one thing real quick is, you know, leadership, also, it is about as a human, making sure that you're remaining loyal to the things that are important to you, to your values. And I think that's very important to remember. It's hard to remember when you get tired, when you're thinking only about the functional things that you're trying to get done. I think, also, just maintaining your physical and your mental well-being and health is a really important thing, especially when you're in some very pressing, hard public service jobs.

**Mary Godfrey**: So something that you've started to allude to, which is the challenges with public sector strategies and squaring those with international challenges. How do you think about that? How do you think about working in government and tending to the strategies there and then balancing that with international global challenges like we're seeing today?

**Eric Rosenbach**: Right, I think part of it is that when you're thinking about what you want to do in the strategy for your organization, you do have to prioritize what you're trying to do first like, what is the public value that you're trying to create? But the challenge is that the world gets a vote. The events unfolding around you can have a big impact on the way things come out, too. And I'm positive that the vast majority of the participants in this webinar right now, you know, will never work in the Department of Defense or the Pentagon, and quite frankly, probably have very

skeptical views of the U.S. Military and the Pentagon, so I acknowledge that and accept it. But you know what some of the principles are the same, whether you're at the local level, whether you're at the international level, in international nongovernmental organization or multilateral organization or your national level government. So sticking to those things is important. But recognizing that, you know, things are going to intervene. I don't know. So what do you think about that, Mary?

**Mary Godfrey**: Well, I think actually, it leads to another question I have for you, which is, you know, this concept of the world gets a vote. I love that. I think that it's very challenging, probably to weigh sticking to what your priorities are in dealing with the crisis of the day, especially where we have to, you know, we have to be citizens to the world in many ways. So I want to ask you this, in thinking about that, we have a war in the Ukraine that's ongoing. We have things in the Middle East are tense. We have an election coming up. That's right now, according to polls, very close. And we also have the uptick and threat from natural disasters like Helene, like we've just seen in the United States. So against all of this sort of backdrop, I want to ask you, how do you stay on track? How do you think about staying on track with longer term priorities when you have to deal with the crisis of the day and very big crises of the day, none of the things that I've mentioned, and many more are small or simple problems to look at and solve for they're very complex. They're very real. They're very important. So how do you balance those two things? Long term priorities and very big crises of the day.

**Eric Rosenbach**: It's really the biggest challenge in leadership. And when we were preparing for the webinar today, I was reflecting back on how a lot of things in the world today remind me of when I was Chief of Staff at the Pentagon back in 2016. Also, in 2016, it was an election year. At the time, the United States was very fractured along political partisan lines, much like it is now. At the time, also, for the first time ever the US Election infrastructure and social media networks were being subject to a lot of disinformation that's very similar to what's happening right now. And I can talk a little bit more about that. At the time in the Department of Defense we were trying to address those issues, you know, in the way that was appropriate for our lane. We were working on many very complicated security issues that had to do with Isis and the Middle East, trying to figure out exactly what Israel might do. Is it related to Iran? Because the Iran nuclear deal was in effect, and we had met with Prime Minister Netanyahu several times, trying to figure out what he was thinking about actions in Iran. You see, that's pretty similar to the situation today, too. At the time the Russians had invaded and overtaken Crimea, and we were trying to figure out what to do to help Ukraine, and we were also trying to figure out what to do in the South China Sea because there were some tensions flaring with the Chinese at the time. Some of those things are not the same issue, but are very analogous to today. And all of those were things that came up without it being an expected part of what the strategy was for the organization. So to get to the real bottom line, remember earlier, I talked about how one of the most important things of the strategy is internal and external consistency. So let me talk a little bit about that. Consistency is in that, if there's a crisis that comes up, you don't suddenly change course on what your longer term vision is for where you want the organization to go, what it is you're trying to do. Some of those will be some of those crises will be related to what you're trying to do. But you don't let them derail you completely. So you have to remain consistent both in how you communicate externally about what you're doing, about the way your organization

acts and behaves, and the actions you're taking. And, you know, continue on. But the internal consistency is maybe even more important, because that's when you're the leader of an organization, and you're making sure that the team is also orienting on a north star, on a vision, on a small set of goals that support that vision. And that you remain internally consistent in the way that you communicate it. Sometimes we'll have to shift resources. That's, of course, you know, part of the challenge, and you're enabling people to continue doing things over the long term that matter, too. So it is a big challenge, and, you know, I would like to say we did it perfectly. That would, of course not be true, because you can always do better, but it's one of the things that we talk about in the class, and I know it's one of the things that many people who are on the webinar right now struggle with in leadership roles that they have.

**Mary Godfrey**: I really appreciate this idea of internal consistency and external consistency. I want to stay on that for a minute and ask you, can you give an example of when you didn't do that well? Where things didn't go very well and you know what can be said about that? What could be learned from that?

**Eric Rosenbach**: Yeah. When I was Assistant Secretary of Defense, this was the job before I was Chief of Staff, we were working on trying to respond to the Ebola crisis that had originated in West Africa, in Liberia. And everyone here has lived through Covid, so you know, sometimes it's hard to remember that there were other, you know, potential global pandemics. And Ebola was pretty scary, you know, just the physical manifestations of the way that it would affect people, and the lethality of the virus was very high, and it killed people very quickly. So I remember that the US was not very well prepared for this at all. We kind of saw it coming, didn't really know what was going on, and I was the one for the Department of Defense that was in charge of the homeland response for trying to mitigate the risk of the spread of Ebola. In the United States, the military has a lot to do with domestic response for emergencies. You'll often see the National Guard supporting hurricane relief or other things. I remember very clearly being in the situation room with President Obama and we spent literally about an hour trying to figure out how, for an Ebola patient who is in a hospital in New York, we were going to safely dispose of the medical waste because the technology needed to incinerate the virus was not there. How could we transport it across State lines? We had to worry about state and local governments. We had to worry about the politics. And I remember thinking how crazy it was that the President of the United States was sitting here with his Cabinet. I was the plus one to the Secretary trying to figure out how to deal with medical waste when the whole rest of the world was going on, and all of these terrible things. And it made me think literally that when I got back to the Kennedy school to teach that I really wanted to try to train the next generation of leaders about how to focus on effective execution and thinking about strategy when you had things that came up, but still maintaining focus, you know, on the bigger picture, too. And you know, in the course, if the people here decide to take it, we talk a little bit about Ebola. Not as much as the US response, but the international response. And I think, you know, that's probably one good many case example of what we're talking about.

**Mary Godfrey**: You said something interesting there, I want to follow up on, which is when you came to the Kennedy school, one of the things you wanted to focus on was execution. This was something that kind of came to you from this example you've just described. What, from your

perspective and years of experience, might get in the way of somebody being able to execute? Maybe they have all the plans in place. Maybe they all have the strategy in place. What would halt the actual execution part and you know what might we learn from that?

**Eric Rosenbach**: I would say there are three main things. The first is that something you see a lot at Harvard, and you see a lot among senior policymakers, whether in the United States or other places. Is that leaders in the public sector often would like to make policy strategy decisions. But then they think somehow, mistakenly, that the execution of the decision is just going to happen, and some of it, to be very candid, you see a lot up here at Harvard where there's a little bit of arrogance or a little bit of elitism where they think someone else's problem is like getting stuff done. As the leader, my job is just to make the decision. And you know how it happens is really someone else's problem. I see it surprisingly, you know, often. I think the second thing is that there are these impediments that I told you about the challenges to the public sector that are not trivial when it comes to public scrutiny, resources being tough, legal and authority constraints that are much different than the private sector, and, you know, if you're not eyes wide open about those, then you're not able to address them. I think the third thing, which is really the most important thing, I think there's just a lack of training for people who are in the public sector as public sector leaders on how to get stuff done and how to execute strategy. At the Kennedy school, for example, they're probably 80% of the classes are on the policy design and development, and far fewer on execution, on budget, on how to get things done. I think that's pretty typical of the way it is around the world in public sector organizations. And so, you know, it goes back to what we're talking about here, is one of the things we want to do—maybe it's idealistic and naive—is make people who matter in the world, who are making decisions that matter, better at thinking about strategy execution, and, then, being better leaders. There's a quote that I think of all the time that I quote all the time, too, which is, “strategy without execution is hallucination.” It's essentially the idea that a good idea is fine, but if no one's actually going to execute on it, it doesn't matter, and you're not going to make any difference.

**Mary Godfrey**: So in order to prevent hallucinations, I want to ask one more follow-up question here related to the training of people on how to execute. What is one core concept in the courses that you teach or the training that you do at the Kennedy School to help people become better executors, so that they're not hallucinators?

**Eric Rosenbach:** Okay, that's a good question. Most senior leaders are pretty good at creating a vision. They’ll be the visionaries. But when you start to study this more closely, you see that with the vision there have to be goals. And then the most important thing is specific objectives and there are key results. There are a lot of consulting firms around the world that’ll spit out objectives and key results. OKRs, as they're known. Sometimes people call them KPIs. But here’s where the leadership thing comes in, is, if you're in an organization and these are the objectives and the key results, do you drive change? Do you drive the execution? Do you build your team's actions, allocate resources to be aligned to those, and then monitor them and follow up? And, quite frankly, if people aren't doing the things they should, do you hold them accountable. And if people aren't going to deliver, you're able to reshift the team. Sometimes

you might need to move someone out. And are you able to communicate about those things internally and externally, particularly to the press and with political leaders?

**Mary Godfrey**: Thank you for that. You've again teased an idea that I want to get at next, which is this idea of teams. So, execution relies on really strong teams to execute. Team building is a very important concept I'm aware of in both the work you've done with us here at Harvard, as well as certainly the work that you've done at the Pentagon. How do you think about building a really strong team? What are the components to building a really strong team that then leads to strong execution?

**Eric Rosenbach**: So, if the most important functional thing to strategy execution is creating objectives, key results, and then holding people accountable to it, by far the most important ingredient for getting things done is building a good team and maintaining a good team. A couple of things on this: the first is that any good leader knows it takes a surprisingly large amount of time to build a good team and maintain a good team. Too often, elite policymakers don't want to invest the time that it takes to be a good leader, to look at the team, mentoring people, telling them what they need to do, and setting expectations. A really very very important thing I've seen for decades is that the most effective teams are teams that have different types of people. They come from different backgrounds. They have different ethnic identities, racial identities, gender. It's not even a question in my mind that a team that's more diverse is more effective because they think about wicked problems in different ways. And you see groupthink sets in pretty often, to be really candid, the Department of Defense and the military are not very diverse in some ways, and in particular not diverse from the perspective of gender. When I was Chief of Staff for Secretary Ash Carter, someone who I have a lot of respect for, he passed away just a couple years ago, just about this time last year. He really wanted to make sure that we had the best possible organization we could, and he recognized that there were structural impediments to women in the military rising to the most senior leadership positions. And we felt and saw in data that that was actually holding the effectiveness of the organization back. And so he made the decision that we were going to make structural changes to open all jobs leading to the most senior jobs in the military open to women. And I think that was very important. Now, here's a lesson in that very important decision. The decision was made in 2016, at the end of the Obama administration. So Ash and I then left when President Trump took control of the country because that's the way the American system works. We were political appointees for President Obama, and, the execution and the implementation of that decision since then, I think, has not been great, and that was not just because of President Trump. That's also during the Biden administration. So that's not a partisan comment. And again, just shows you can have a vision for something that could change an organization that could make the organization better. That was part of our longer term strategy for making the Department of Defense, you know, more effective. But in the execution and implementation of that important policy decision about opening all jobs to women, it fell through, and now is not what it should have been, too. So it's kind of like a meta example of what I've been talking about, and one of the cases that we look at in the class quite frankly as well.

**Mary Godfrey**: I want to leave time for Q and A. There's a lot of really good questions coming in from our participants today. But before we move to that, I want to end on something that's just really important, really top of mind for a lot of people in positions of leadership today, which is this concept of trust. More specifically, maybe this concept of rebuilding trust. So a lot of industries are experiencing skepticism in public opinion. Recent Gallup polls will show that we're at an all-time low in terms of public trust in government. Media and higher education has its own battles to reckon with related to trust. So very simply put, how do we rebuild trust?

**Eric Rosenbach**: Yeah, this is something for someone like me who loves thinking about public service and the education sector. It's pretty depressing because if you look at some of the polls that you're talking about, Mary. Faith in public institutions of education, I think, is below 20% in the United States right now, and, you know, a lot of people are very skeptical about a place like Harvard University, which we should reflect on. Trust in Congress, I think, is below 10%. Trust in the Supreme Court is low. One of the most trusted organizations is the U.S. Postal Service and the military. So there's some brightness there. But when I think about this, the way you rebuild trust in public organizations is you execute. You deliver public services to people who need help, right? And you don't just talk about it. It's not just political talking points. You put a strategy in place, you execute, and then people see that their lives are better, and that they're actually deriving some benefit from government or from educational organizations, institutions, or nonprofit organizations. So you know, that seems kind of counterintuitive, like if something is big and abstract, but important as trust is so related to organizations doing something so operational and so kind of like leadership-intensive.

**Mary Godfrey**: Thank you for that. I am going to turn to some submitted questions in our live Q and A. And I'll begin by asking, there's been a big theme on how to keep teams motivated through uncertainty. So the question is, how can leaders effectively maintain team morale and motivation during periods of uncertainty, especially when facing remote work challenges and rapidly changing business conditions?

**Eric Rosenbach**: Yeah, that's such a great question. I see that question from Adnan. I have a couple of thoughts. I think the first is that both the leader at the top and organically from the team you don't want to say at the bottom, but you know, below the executive level. You need to work on creating a shared identity in the organization. And part of that will be by making sure everyone actually understands what the vision is of what you're trying to achieve. And in the public sector, making sure that they recognize that the hardships they're enduring or the things that are a little stressful or trying, that they're necessary. And they're almost expected as part of what you do to make the world a better place, right? That's kind of like the pride you take in doing these things. I think the second thing is that the leaders in the organization, they need to very consciously set aside time to make human contact, especially when you're in more remote work environments. But even here at the Kennedy School, you have to set aside time to actually speak with the people who are on your team, to mentor your students, to reflect on how they're doing, and see what you can do to help them. I know because I've been in these jobs that are super stressful, where you barely have time to spend with your family, more or less like sleep or

anything. But it's a great investment of time. Setting aside time both to meet with the team, talk about non-mission things, how they're doing, and check in, I think is really important, too.

**Mary Godfrey**: I want to follow up with that and ask you, how do you think about setting aside time? In other words, people can do it in terms of open office hours, lunch with team members. But I think for people who are especially in very busy leadership positions, it can almost feel intractable to figure out how to do it. So one thing you've done to set aside time?

**Eric Rosenbach**: Okay, here's an example. I just thought, Mary and I had not scripted this at all, by the way. When I was chief of staff, one of the things you're doing is you're also managing the time for the Secretary of Defense right? This is a very senior position. Aside from the President of the United States, quite frankly, I'm not sure there's someone busier in the world than that person, and what we mandated is for ash that there was 20% of his time that we tracked very assiduously in a very disciplined way every month that was allocated on his calendar. When he was going to check in with the team. Now, the team is big in this organization, but it would have some senior leaders come in, would have people from not senior parts of the organization, would talk to soldiers out in the field to go visit with them. Just him. None of the fancy generals in between to check in and see how things were doing. So again, this is really hard. You have your to do list. You have all of these pressures from the outside. If you don't mandate for yourself that you're doing team building time, you're both not going to be as good a leader. And, more importantly, you're not gonna have the results that you want. You have to set that aside, and it's a great investment because your team will perform more. You don't lose people. You get the best talent because they want to be part of a team like that. You know, it's not often recognized as widely as it should be how important that is.

**Mary Godfrey**: Thank you for that. Tips, good tips. Here's another one from Eric. You mentioned that public organizations like the Pentagon tend to be more risk-averse? Would you recommend risk aversion as a default policy for public organizations? And what would be a good reason for public organizations to be less risk-averse?

**Eric Rosenbach:** I absolutely do not think the default position for public organizations should be risk aversion because you'll never get anything done. I think it is right now already the default position of most public sector organizations that they're risk-averse. I've mentioned some of the structural reasons, but I'll also say that there may be a lot of people in these organizations, to be super candid, they may look like me. They may be older guys who've been there a long time. And you know what? They're kind of okay with the way things are and probably not so psyched about people who have new ideas about how to do things more effectively. Right? So here's what we found when we're trying to break risk aversion for certain ways, you know, in the biggest bureaucracy in the world. We set up specific projects, for example, to set up a new innovation unit that was going to be based in Silicon Valley, so that we could improve both the technology that we got in, lower the cost of doing it, and do it more quickly. We had to set up a special team. It needed top cover from the most senior levels, myself, and then the secretary as well, because I was working for him, and set up discrete projects that you can get quick wins on. It's almost like a strategy of generating micro wins and knowing that micro wins turn into something bigger that can end up being a little tidal wave, right? And it starts to change that

organizational culture. The important thing is that's a signal that needs to be set from the top, and if the top sends the signal that if you take any risk and you fail, you're gonna get fired, you're not gonna get in there. Then it will become even more bureaucratic and more risk-averse, right? So the signal needs to be, take some risks. I will back you up. If something bad happens, I'll have your back. I'll take the blowback.

**Mary Godfrey**: Interesting. I've seen that and read that a lot about governmental agencies, or even public sector businesses sort of setting up little innovation hubs funding like a separate little working group to go off and innovate so that it's away from the normal day-to-day operations. It's not distracting or pulling from additional staff time. But it's also helping to advance an initiative forward or a business strategy forward. So interesting. So we have one final question before we have to wrap things up. And this comes from Michelle. Question is, how can public leaders effectively navigate situations where large groups of people seem resistant to facts or established authority? What strategies can help align diverse stakeholder groups in times of crisis, especially when misinformation or distrust is prevalent? It's a really great question. Really great.

**Eric Rosenbach:** Yes, that is a great question, that is very hard. So a few thoughts. Inherent in your question, I see an assumption that authority is probably the base from which you're going to lead or execute something. And I would caution people to think about it that way because if you're always using authority or you're always using your rank, which is very common in a military organization, that you know, someone will point to their shoulder and say, "You're gonna do it because I have three stars rather than explaining why the organization should do it, why an individual should do it. So I'd be careful about that. Now, of course, there are a lot of times when authority is necessary just by law, and because you have to do it to push through. So it's not naive. But don't go there first. That's my first point. I think the second is that the more you're communicating about facts, about the goals of the organization, about you know, what are common assumptions for the reality of what's going on. I think the better. But I will say this issue of misinformation and disinformation is super complicated in the era of generative AI. I have to be honest, I'm not such a strong supporter of open AI and Meta and those organizations. I don't think they're doing enough to put guardrails on the technology in a way that will benefit society. And a great example, you see what's happening right now is missing, and disinformation in hurricane relief in the United States. And how difficult that has made it for these organizations, whose sole intention is trying to get help to people who are hit by the hurricane. Now, having trouble because of misinformation, disinformation, and the only way to cut through that is communicating and communicating and then executing and delivering results. Similarly, you know, I've done a lot of work on looking at disinformation in the election system in the United States. And this is without reference to either party. It's a nonpartisan, bipartisan type effort. Again, the best antidote to miss and disinformation is communicating the facts over and over and over and over. It's really one of the only and most effective ways to doing it. So again, I know these are kind of like unsatisfying type answers because they're things you may have thought of already. But you know what the key to leadership is. You identify what you really need to do, and then you just execute, and then you grind, and then you execute, and then you keep on doing it. Until you know you feel like you're gonna fall down on the floor.

**Mary Godfrey**: So what I'm hearing is that persistence and just ongoing communicating of the facts.

**Eric Rosenbach**: Yes. Better way to say it. Thank you, Mary.

**Mary Godfrey**: Okay, so anything before we wrap up. Is there anything else you want to add anything around leadership and strategy where we are today, stakeholder alignment, anything else we can learn from you in the final few minutes that we have together.

**Eric Rosenbach**: I would just say this. I think about my perspective in the way that I've talked about it, is only one perspective. It's not *the* right answer. A lot of leadership is cultural and context dependent. So I know many of you have your own leadership lessons that you could teach at Harvard as well. And I think that's very important to acknowledge. I think the second thing is that I want to thank you all for what you're doing, because it does seem like most of you are doing things that are trying to create public value, and I know it's hard, and I know there are a lot of other things you could be doing that are probably easier and more lucrative. So I just wanted to thank you for that. And the third thing is just to remind you that you can always be learning. You can always be improving, and when you do that thing, do that in learning and growing, make sure that you're you're like paying it forward and and trying to teach other people and mentor some people who don't have as much experience as you do, so that you know we do try to make the world a bit better place.

**Mary Godfrey**: Thank you for that. So I do want to say thank you to our audience today, really appreciative of all the people that joined from around the world. This is really special for us, and so thank you and all for your great questions as well. And once again thank you, Eric, for taking the time out of your busy day to speak with us. It's been an education. So we've been learning today, and as you've been talking to us. So with that said, thank you to everybody, and once again, Thank you, Eric.

**Eric Rosenbach**: Thank you all. Thank you. Harvard team, too.

**Allain Williams**: Thank you, Eric and Mary, and a special thanks to our audience for your thoughtful questions and engagement throughout the Webinar. We invite you to take the next step in your leadership journey by applying for Eric's upcoming course, Strategy Execution for Public Leadership. The application deadline is November 11. We encourage you to consider enrolling your colleagues as the strategies covered in this course are most effective when implemented across teams and organizations. I'd like to turn over to Henry, our Head of Partnerships, to give you an overview of how your team and organization can benefit from Harvard Online courses and training programs.

**Henry Kessner**: Thank you, Allain, and thank you to Mary and Eric, for all your care and insights, and thanks to all of you all over the world. As you heard today, Harvard Online courses, like Strategic Execution for Public Leadership offer a learning experience to build skills and strategies for leadership success so critical in these uncertain and dynamic times. We are happy to share more about how we partner with organizations of all types and bring Harvard faculty-led

content to your teams and employees. We offer flexible pricing and can tailor a learning experience and learning journey pending your needs and focus, or, as Eric rightly put, OKRs. If you're ready to connect, I'm here and can be reached via this email. I believe it's on the screen. There it is. If you'd like to review more materials, submit information first and read more about our courses. You can scan this QR code and find our form for organizations. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to partnering with you. Now back to you, Allain, to close us out.

**Allain Williams**: Thanks, Henry. And, once again, our sincere thanks to Eric and Mary for their invaluable insights and to all of you who have joined us from around the world. We hope you found this webinar informative and that you'll consider joining us for the Strategy Execution for Public Leadership course to further develop your leadership skills in these uncertain times. Thank you for your time and active participation. We look forward to potentially seeing you in the course and at our future events. Have a great day, everyone, and see you again soon.