



Leadership in Times of Uncertainty



Getting It Right in These Times is Critical

Problem Statement:

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is Disruptive

Our Objective Today:

Define What You Can Do to Survive and Thrive

What this isn't:

Medical / Preventative Advice

Organizations Should Take Immediate Actions Now



Note these immediate actions are guidelines—each organization should do a detailed analysis of its specific situation to best manage the crisis.

Source: How Companies Can Respond to the Coronavirus, MIT Sloan Management Review, 2020; Coronavirus COVID-19: Facts and Insights, McKinsey, 2020



For most organizations, Business As Usual (BAU) is not an option. As this is a literal life or death situation for people, organizations need to make the protection of employees a top priority. To this effect, there are 3 things you should be doing already.



①

Provide clear communication to employees on what to do.

- Foremost, we need to provide clear, simple language to local managers on how to deal with the Coronavirus pandemic. These recommendations should be consistent with best practices outlined WHO, CDC, and other health agencies.

②

Provide autonomy and decentralize decision making.

- Secondly, we should also provide autonomy to local managers, so they feel empowered to deal with any quickly evolving situation. With that said, corporate should also monitor and ensure guidelines are being safely followed.

③

Provide an infrastructure for remote work.

- For any crisis, telecommuting has been an important tactic for maintaining operations. To this point, do the following:
 - Allow employees to telecommute.
 - Train our leaders. Leaders should be sensible and reasonable in their expectations as to when workers are available for work.
 - Identify employees who are most crucial to maintaining business continuity. Ensure these employees have the proper tools and infrastructure to work remotely.
 - Develop a disaster recovery scenario that incorporates telecommuting.



You should set up a cross-functional Crisis Response Team. By cross-functional, we mean the team should include members from every function and discipline within the organization. The leader of the team should report directly to the CEO.

This response team will have several workstreams, focused on the following areas:





With few exceptions, most organizations will suffer financially. In particular, smaller organizations may find it difficult to survive the crisis and potential recession.

Here are 4 things to focus on in terms of liquidity and financial considerations:



**Ensure
Sufficient
Financial
Liquidity**

- ① Make every effort to accumulate a minimum 3 months of cash at hand.
- ② Know what your options are for extending loans, terms, and other short-term obligations.
- ③ Have an adequate buffer stock of crucial parts and other inputs on hand.
- ④ Try to get an understanding of how prepared key suppliers and other stakeholders are for an unexpected event.

Much of the activities related to Supply Chain Management relate to medium-term risk management in your Supply Chain.

In the aftermath, there are long-term actions to assess related to all phases of Business Continuity Management (e.g. diversify suppliers by region).



**Stabilize
the Supply
Chain**



Practice
Customer-
centric Design
Principles

Stay close and engage your customers, ensure customer transparency, and apply Customer-centric design to your solutions and communications.



In times of crisis that affects the community, it is important that your organization be seen as taking an active role in helping the community at large.

If not in place already, you should consider adopting strong Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices. Here are some important activities:

- ① Target nonprofits and community outreach organizations in your local area.
- ② Encourage your employees to volunteer responsibly and safely.
- ③ Let others know what your organization is doing. The communication should include only the most pertinent details, including the amount of funds committed, the key beneficiaries and recipients, and what you aim to achieve with your donations or efforts. Within it, include a quote from your leadership team.



**Help the
Community**



Steps to Take... Now

- **Over Communicate**

It is scary! Between the media and social media there is a ton of info but it's hard to determine what is true. Your people want to know "What's going to happen?", "How does it affect me?", "Will I have a job? Get paid? Make ends meet?" This touches on the very first 2 rungs of Maslow's hierarchy and they need reassurance.

Your entire team wants to hear from you as someone they trust. The unknown feeds fear. Sharing information squelches fear. As their leader, they need to hear from you.

Communicate what's happening, going to happen, and all associated timeframes to your team, your customers, vendors, suppliers or any other concerned stakeholders.

To customers – "what we are doing to protect you." The timeline ahead? How we can still help/serve you -maybe in new ways?

Now is your chance to excel as a leader! And remember - you are communicating with words as well as your body language!



Steps to Take... Now

- **Maintain a Positive Attitude**

You can choose your attitude. Choose to view the situation as an opportunity so you can see things from a clearer perspective. Optimizing your time over the next 2-4 weeks/months will help you to excel. Those positive attitudes will breed similar attitudes from your team.

Visualize Patton's speech before the Allied Invasion. While highly realistic, it served to rally the troops to win in the face of adversity and uncertainty. There was a mission to accomplish, everyone had a clearly defined role, and it was their job to give it their very best.

- Don't accept mediocrity! Instead, aim to excel
- Don't let the situation drive your attitude! Instead, accept the challenge!
- Be real, but remember, you are your company's Chief Positive Attitude Officer
- Side-note: Again, watch your body language



Steps to Take... Now

- **Conduct Unbiased Assessments**

Conduct assessments of the situation. Include your leadership team as well as advisors, thought leaders, and consultants.

First, determine the Current Status

- What do we know vs. think we know
- Who knows the real pulse of our customers?
- What information do we need to collect?

Next, what are the Possible Futures

- What if X, Y, or Z happens?



Steps to Take... Now

- **Carefully Plan a Course of Action**

Be methodical in establishing goals, desired results, obstacles, potential solutions, processes and timelines.

As you prepare for actions:

- Determine which timelines drive what decisions
- Determine what events drive which decisions
- Outline required plans
- Position your organization for post-success
- Assess the victories and disappointments of your latest experience as input into your *return-to-normal* plan
- Prepare to mobilize for a possible round 2



Steps to Take... Now

- **Make Decisions**

Since there will be no perfect decisions as you move forward, it is crucial that you make prompt, but not rash, decisions.

- Don't get hung up in "Paralysis by Analysis."
- The situation will likely remain fluid. Take the opportunity to adjust as more information comes in.
- Again, rely on your leadership team as well as advisors, thought leaders, and consultants for input and advice but, remember, in the end, a decision needs to be made



Steps to Take... Now

- **Be Present**

Ideally—face to face but there are other ways to be present as well.

What other ways can we be “present”?

- Regular emails— at the right frequency and to the right levels
- “To all:” is important. Everyone needs to feel like they are getting the “straight skinny.”
- Rally your leaders even more than normal and keep them informed through
 - ✓ Conference calls
 - ✓ Systematic one on one calls
 - ✓ Periodic texts
 - ✓ Video conferencing tools such as Microsoft Skype, Zoom, GoTo Meeting, JoinMe, or Google Hangouts
 - ✓ Microsoft Teams if you operate on an Office365 platform.



Steps to Take... Now

- **Take Advantage of the Time**

- Take this opportunity to reassess and re-focus you and your team on the remainder of the year.
- Begin your 2021 strategic planning process
- This is a good time to assess your team and implement development plans. Look at how your team has responded during this period of uncertainty and identify any gaps that need to be addressed.
- Assess structure and processes for any vulnerabilities. Identify gaps that need to be addressed. Also, assess what went well and how you can build off your strengths.
- Take some time off. There is a reason that airlines tell you to place the mask over your face before assisting others. Because if you run out of oxygen, you can't help anyone else. Same is true with a burned-out leader. Make sure to get your rest, sneak in some exercise, eat right and drink plenty of fluids. Remember, your team needs you and you need to be at your best!



Steps to Take... Now

• Use Affirmations

It can be scary during a time of crisis. You may sometimes feel as though you are under assault from the negativity of the world around you. But often the biggest assault comes from our own minds with thoughts like “how can I navigate these times when I don’t have a specific end date? Or “what if my idea isn’t successful?”

Fears like these are perfectly normal but the best way to drown out those inner voices is to replace them with a positive voice that is even louder. These are called Affirmations and they are positive statements about what qualities, achievements, behaviors or circumstances you want to possess.

- Affirmations should be positive (i.e. “I can...” or “I will...”)
- Should be stated in first person and expressed in present tense
- Should be within the realm of your capacity to believe (realistically high but attainable)
- Should be directly related to your goals and should be Yours, written by you, for you.

Visualizing your affirmations enhances their power. Empower your affirmations through spaced repetition – carry them with you on your phone or index card and repeat them aloud to yourself several times a day. This will promote positive energy.

Next Steps

Stay Committed to:

- **Taking Positive Actions**
- **Communicating With Your Team**
- **Assessing and Adjusting Your Own Behavior**
- **Using Affirmations**

Capitalize on Lessons Learned



I wish you all the best as you manage through this, or your next, crisis.

Remember, you have the power to drive positive outcomes and your leadership in times like these is critically important to those you serve.

Sincerely,

Doug

Doug Brown
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