



WHITE PAPER 2020

Business Resilience

How to make your business more resilient in the face of a threat

Why Does Planning Resilience Matter?

“The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis.' One brush stroke stands for danger, the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger but recognize the opportunity.” — John F. Kennedy

On the morning of March 12th, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 a pandemic and urged all countries to implement a containment strategy to accelerate efforts in containing the virus.

By designating Coronavirus a global threat, new government policies, meant that the bulk of organisations could not continue with 'business as usual'. Numerous organisations felt the urgency to take proactive measures to protect both their operations and their people.

On top of the sudden changes, organisations were also having to face a turbulent economy. PwC's April 2020 Covid-19 CFO Pulse survey found that **the majority of CFO's (80%)¹, said they expected a decrease in revenue as a result of the virus, a belief supported by the OECD's prediction that the virus could slow global growth to 1.5% in 2020.²**

This crisis has highlighted the importance of preparedness and adaptability. Being able to quickly pivot to handle the 'new normal' is a key differentiating factor in how organisations cope.

A crucial element of adaptability relates to the most fundamental of assets – your people. As such, this document will focus on the following key themes:

- The importance of planning for remote working
- The role of connectivity & teamwork in a crisis
- The influence of company culture on crisis response
- The role of compassionate leadership

¹ <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/crisis-solutions/covid-19/global-cfo-pulse.html>

² <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/23/coronavirus-oecd-warns-economic-hit-will-be-felt-for-a-long-time.html>

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Planning and People Are Your Greatest Assets

ALMOST HALF OF UK BUSINESSES HAD TO HAVE THEIR EMPLOYEES WORK FROM HOME DUE TO COVID-19.

In response to the pandemic, International Chamber of Commerce Secretary General John W.H. Dentor AOI said: "Preparedness is a critical factor in determining the likelihood your business will remain afloat."³

Planning for any eventuality is essential and by building agility into the DNA of your organisation you can strengthen your ability to execute an effective response.

In the initial phase of this crisis response, most organisations were mobilising to react to the situation as it unfolded. Banks and offices were figuring out how to socially distance whilst airlines were working on business continuity with no customers and flights taking off.

Without planning many organisations are stuck in that initial phase figuring out what they need to continue operating.⁴ By focusing solely on putting out fires, they can forget to protect and utilise their strongest resource, their people. **Having an agile operation will ease the impact of this first stage and provide management with extra time to direct its attention more strategically.**

During the planning process an organisation must not neglect the human element of its operation. **Of the three top areas of concerns in relation to the impact of Covid-19, 44% of CFOs cited its negative effect on their workforce & productivity.**⁵

People and company culture are potentially an organisation's strongest asset in a crisis. Planning must include measures to ensure Employee Wellbeing & Engagement are continuously supported. When the unexpected occurs, having an engaged, supported,

³ <https://iccwbo.org/media-wall/news-speeches/icc-publishes-covid-19-business-continuity-guide/>

⁴ <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/crisis-solutions/covid-19/global-cfo-pulse.html>

⁵ <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/crisis-solutions/covid-19/global-cfo-pulse.html>

satisfied workforce already in place can significantly tip the scales in an organisation's favour.

Happier, healthier people who feel secure in their role will be better able to support the organisation when it needs it most. Employee response is pivotal in whether the organisation is irreversibly harmed or emerges stronger as a result.

Be Ready for Remote Working

Enforced closures in response to Covid-19, meant almost **half (46.3%) of UK businesses had to have their employees work from home.**⁶ The scramble to make the transition has highlighted a real lack of readiness for remote working.

A survey of more than 700,000 employees worldwide, of the 139,778 UK workers in its index, 55% have little or no experience working from home.⁷ **52% of CFOs when surveyed by PwC about the impact on the workforce over the next month, said they expect productivity losses due to the lack of remote work capabilities.**

For those organisations already accustomed to remote working with the necessary support in place, the move was easier giving them an edge over their competitors who were still hurrying to catch up.

Aside from responding to global pandemics, organisations should incorporate a remote working scheme in their planning for a number of reasons:

- Mitigate workflow interruption from unforeseen events such as extreme weather or damage to the office premises
- Offer employees greater work flexibility to boost wellbeing & productivity
- Increase business agility

Beyond putting the infrastructure in place, when planning for remote working organisations must consider that some of their people may need extra support and encouragement to thrive working from home. To avoid feelings of isolation or disengagement, an organisation should choose an appropriate online Employee Communication, Engagement & Wellbeing platform that will enable leadership to do the following;

⁶ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1109666/coronavirus-actions-taken-by-businesses-in-the-uk/>

⁷ <https://workplaceinsight.net/the-uk-is-not-well-enough-prepared-for-working-from-home/>

- Regularly check in with people to get a sense of how they feel
- Be informed in real-time about their people's concerns, issues and suggestions
- Offer their people confidential one-to-one support
- Keep their people up to speed

A platform like Trickle can be set up remotely and running within hours. With its easy to use interface, it is intuitive and can be rolled out quickly with little fuss.

Trickle will provide a dedicated channel for your people to openly communicate in real-time, raise suggestions and concerns, collaborate with their peers to resolve issues and flag more sensitive worries on a one to one basis.

People Are Critical to Business Resilience – Consider Your Culture

At the beginning of a crisis there can be a good deal of confusion and organisational values can go out the window. By planning ahead and having a strong company culture already imbued throughout the organisation this can be avoided. **Maintaining its values will help the operation act as a team and push a “we’re all in this together” mentality, which can positively impact the outcome of a crisis.**⁸

Key to building a good company culture is psychological safety, an environment where people feel able to speak up and make suggestions without facing negative consequences. **Psychological safety has been found to be the key link in high performing teams.**⁹ This type of environment will also help build trust throughout the organisation and create stronger bonds.

Teamwork and people sticking to company values, were identified as two of the most critical components of an effective crisis response by organisations who self-identified as better off post crisis.¹⁰ But, without good communication it will be hard for any organisation to achieve this, which is why it's crucial a company find the right mechanism to facilitate this.

⁸ <https://hbr.org/podcast/2018/07/turning-purpose-into-performance.html>

⁹ <https://trickle.works/blog/trickles-tips-to-boost-engagement-wellbeing-throughout-covid-19/>

¹⁰ <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/services/advisory/forensics/global-crisis-survey.html>

Trickle can offer a digital space for colleagues to interact in real-time, lend each other support, share ideas, and to continue to function as a tight-knit team remotely. **To keep the trust of its people an organisation must show authenticity and transparency in its communication with them.** Failure to do so, particularly during a crisis, can have a demoralising effect on people who are already anxious.

“In the absence of information, employees will by nature assume the worst,” Christie Struckman, VP Analyst, Gartner.¹¹

During the 2003 SARS outbreak, executives at seven companies told Gartner that managing employees’ concerns and questions was one of the most time consuming activities.¹²

To simplify this process an organisation needs to have a real-time platform that will allow it to quickly reach its people with the information they need.

Lead with Compassion

Management must lead the way and show emotional intelligence in their interactions with people. Deloitte Global CEO, Punit Renjen, says that “resilient leaders express sympathy and compassion for the human side of the upheaval”.¹³

Gartner recommends **that leaders “listen generously”** to their people, allow for more social digital interactions when working remotely & that they create a “safe space for the use of technology resources” **to encourage discussion & lessen feelings of stress.**

Leadership should also acknowledge the strain and pressures their people are facing and provide suitable digital solutions to support their workforce’s wellbeing. During a crisis, organisations need to also adjust their expectations of both their workforce and their targets.

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¹¹ <https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/manage-employee-stress-with-flexibility-and-transparency/>

¹² <https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/3980756/the-pillars-of-pandemic-planning>

¹³ <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/economy/covid-19/heart-of-resilient-leadership-responding-to-covid-19.html>

Employers should understand that their people will be juggling a number of demands. **With school and childcare closures lasting more than two months, many people are splitting their time between work and care duties.**

Failing to take these extra pressures into account could have a negative impact on the mental and physical wellbeing of their employees, which will ultimately decrease their ability to stay viable at work. Gartner recommends that organisations help ease this pressure by offering greater flexibility beyond remote working such as different start times.¹⁴

To prepare for such a scenario, it is **suggested that leaders put in place mechanisms for sharing ideas on how to address additional needs and to acknowledge employee fears & stresses.**¹⁵ Getting real-time feedback from its people will help a company to understand the pressures its workforce are facing, which will enable it to make informed decisions quickly.

Conclusion

All organisations recognise the need to have contingency plans in place: it is not a question of whether there will be a crisis or emergency but when, and the unknown is what form it will take.


The current pandemic has stressed organisations of all types in vastly different ways. For some it has created direct opportunity, for other very significant challenges in simply keeping the business alive.

Whether the challenge relates to ramping up resources, adapting to new ways of working and interacting, or planning for what the world might look like moving forward, the common factor is that it is stressful and disruptive for the organisation's key asset, its people.

John F Kennedy's quote pointed out that there is danger in a crisis, but also opportunity. It is inconceivable that the world will return to the way it was in February 2020. The way that a lot of us work will change – less travel, more home working and video conferencing, more

¹⁴ <https://emtemp.gcom.cloud/ngw/globalassets/en/insights/coronavirus/lead-your-employees-through-emotional-impact.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://emtemp.gcom.cloud/ngw/globalassets/en/insights/coronavirus/lead-your-employees-through-emotional-impact.pdf>



flexibility, and perhaps an adjusted work life balance. The opportunity that the recent shock undoubtedly provides is for businesses to embrace this emerging “new normal”. This needs people to be supported as the heart of the organisation in new ways. We therefore suggest that your plan should embrace:

- Keeping the lines of communication between managers and employees open, direct, transparent and in real-time.
- Creating a strong company culture where Employee Engagement and Wellbeing is supported.
- Providing managers with the right tools to lead with compassion and empathy.
- Consider if you are set up for remote working. For instance, do all your people have laptops and do you have clear channels for people to communicate, share ideas and transfer information, as well as places for your people to share their suggestions, concerns and connect with management when not in an office environment?

How Trickle Can Help

- Trickle’s communication platform does can be implemented remotely and it can be running within 48hrs. It is easy to use and will keep people connected.
- Trickle’s Employee Engagement and Wellbeing features help foster the types of interactions between co-workers that help build a positive company culture and promote a sense of inclusion and community. Trickle will make it easier for an organisation to continue to support their people during a crisis **as they will be able to share their thoughts and concerns in real-time or confide on more sensitive issues.**
- Trickle also enables managers to regularly reach-out and check-in with their people to find out what matters to them. The insights from these real-time interactions will help managers to pin-point issues when they matter before they become problems.

If you are interested in a real-time employee communication, wellbeing and engagement platform, contact hello@trickle.works for more information for a demo.