
Transformation & Change insight series

How to organise yourself quickly to deal with a crisis



The situation

You may already have detailed and sophisticated Business Continuity, Disaster Recovery and Crisis Management Plans in place. But if not, you will already have had to deal with the immediate aftermath of Covid-19 in a relatively reactive way. But what next and how long is this going to last?



The challenge

There is now a need to run and sustain operations in a relatively unknown and unprecedented environment with an open-ended timeline that is changing several times a day.



The key question

How do I organise my company to deal with the crisis for the foreseeable future?

What do the experts say?

In situations like this we look to the people who do this regularly and use their best practice, notably the energy sector that has to deal with operational emergencies or the military who are experts in this field.

These long term “crises” or “emergency” situations need to be dealt with differently to business as usual. Often businesses can deal with a 24 to 48 hr emergency situation; however, maintaining the focus, keeping the momentum and communications flowing, providing strong leadership and formulating a plan that changes to deal with an unfolding situation like the coronavirus requires a different set of skills and approach.

Now is the time for leaders to consider how they will run the business through the next few challenging weeks and months, re-strategise and put in place the structures and resources required to emerge from the crisis intact and even on the front foot. So, what are the steps to be taken?

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1. Short, sharp strategy review

Looking at your plans for the few next months and year, ask yourself what you need to **stop, start** and **continue** so that you are able to adapt to the current business environment and to move quickly once the business environment changes back to a more normal footing. Remember, whilst there are obviously challenges in keeping the focus on working now, what are the opportunities for your business and how can you maximise them?



2. Build a short-term plan and put together a “crisis action team” to manage this plan.

A crisis action team is something that experts in this area are able to pull together quickly to deal with an emergency and need not require a big consulting engagement – one key individual with the relevant skills can organise and galvanise your whole business into action. They focus on dealing with the immediate ‘here and now’ in a calm and controlled manner to ensure the medium-term actions required to keep the company are on track, and to navigate through to a steady state.

What the short-term plan & crisis action team is:

A team of experts in their fields, pulled together from across the organisation with a flexible composition depending on the task in hand

Has daily or more frequent stand ups: short and to the point briefings to deal with issues and actions

A team that has the authority to take action

A plan that articulates the actions and messages that need to be communicated

What the short-term plan & crisis action team isn't:

The executive / leadership Board! Although some of the Board may be part of it and the progress and actions should be escalated to them

A replacement for the leadership team or there to manage business as usual

A thinking, advisory body

Delivering all communications - this should be the responsibility of the existing communications team

Key questions to ask yourself

- Are you set up to operate in a crisis mode for a few months?
- Is your current strategy working?
- Do you need some external support to boost your leadership and set yourselves up to weather this storm?

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