



Addressing the impact of COVID-19 Developing a sustainable crisis communication response

Organizational leaders have a call to action to be resilient and drive that same resiliency in their organizations in the wake of the unprecedented and ever-evolving COVID-19 disruption

The world has changed overnight. The rapid spread of COVID-19 has had far-reaching implications to organizations across the globe. What makes this situation unique is that it is not a one-time event, but a set of circumstances that are constantly updating with new information and directives – and businesses need to be able to continuously adapt in kind.

It is more important than ever for leaders to be visible and engaged with their organizations. The drive to resiliency should be leader-led, as the right behaviors are modeled for employees. By using behavioral science and data to underpin decisions, leaders can provide transparency and purpose. It is important to move quickly and in iterations, and enable continuous improvement through feedback loops and reflection.

Now is the time to act swiftly, and adapt to the changes. This begins by understanding the impacts, and driving immediate shifts in behavior that will enable business continuity and ease employee concerns.

Critical impacts to understand

- Can employees still do their jobs effectively?
- What flexibility do employees need?
- How does the work need to change?
- What do we need to do to engage with employees and external stakeholders?
- Have our business priorities shifted?
- How can we adapt and innovate?
- What technologies can we leverage to connect and engage?
- How are our employees feeling, and are they managing distractions and anxiety?
- How do we manage performance, given the circumstances?

Actions to enable

- Focus on the well-being of your people, your leaders, and your customers
- Establish a PMO to manage risk and coordinate messaging and communications
- Maintain connections and monitor the pulse of employees
- Communicate authentically; acknowledge uncertainty as well as employee anxiety
- Examine the skills and capabilities in your organization and look for opportunities to redeploy
- Enable sprints to focus on problem solving, engagement, and innovation
- Create contingency plans: for talent, for operations, for technology

As leaders navigate this evolving situation which requires constant iteration and fluidity in terms of response, they must show up differently, adopt new skills, and empower their people to adapt and thrive amid the ambiguity

Resilient leadership drives rapid change in times of crisis

Enable employee behaviors for navigating disruption

• Own the narrative

- Be transparent about current realities; acknowledge what is “known” and “unknown”
- Provide frequent and concise communications, with a clear and authentic voice
- Be leader-led, iterative, and quick to provide updates through the fluidity of the circumstances

• Centralize decision making

- Set up a centralized command center to act swiftly and coordinate quick decisions, remove barriers, and provide responses
- Gather quantitative and qualitative data on potential changes; share that data with critical stakeholders for fact-based decision making
- Adopt a calm and methodical approach to making changes that enable business continuity

• Focus on employee experience

- Express compassion for the human side of the upheaval
- Identify the moments that matter, provide support, and be empathetic to what people are living through
- Consider the critical impacts and determine immediate changes to support employees and enable business continuity
- Show authentic support for well-being and mental health

• Work through ambiguity

- Employees must gather information available now, make decisions, and work to deliver
- Remain focused on activities that drive business impact
- Inspire calm and clear thinking, support teams, and raise risks in order to deliver excellence for customers/clients
- Be innovative in thinking through client solutions

• Inspire empathy

- Employees should aim to be “influencers” who carry genuine messages within their networks
- Be empathetic towards colleagues who have changing and competing priorities
- Check on and support fellow employees

• Reflect company's culture

- Strive to uphold company values and demonstrate these when delivering to customers
- Seek to understand and enable organizational values and strategy, and be a part of moving the business forward
- Have a continued commitment to the “cause”

Contact:

For more information on how to respond, recover and thrive:

- Connect to Deloitte leaders www.deloitte.com/COVID-19-leaders
- Visit www.deloitte.com/COVID-19

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