

OAKLIN INSIGHTS

Managing the disruption of COVID-19



Introduction

As a business leader, whether of a small team, a department or an entire company, COVID-19 is forcing you to deal with an unprecedented level of uncertainty, ambiguity and change. And the same is true for your team. We are all wrestling with a myriad of questions right now.

- How can I do my job remotely?
- What does that latest Government guidance and support mean for me?
- How can I look after my family, my colleagues and my customers at the same time?
- How can I address the immediate issues that COVID-19 presents to my job, without losing sight of the medium and long term?
- Will I have a job next month, or even next week?

The answers to these questions vary enormously for each of us. In some instances, they are things we've dealt with before but on a smaller scale and a slower rate of change. Nonetheless, when managing disruption of this magnitude, we can draw on lessons from the ways we plan and manage changes associated with business transformation programmes.

Clear situational awareness



You need to make sure you know the location, wellbeing and practical constraints (physically and technically) of your teammates and clients. You have immediate opportunities to help both groups. This includes looking for ways to support them through short-term cashflow issues, allowing them to work flexibly and providing flexible access to your products and services. However, consider these opportunities against the backdrop of your corporate financial realities, including your cost base and short-term revenue challenges. It is important to be a responsible

steward of your business so that you can look after your colleagues and customers in the long term – not just over the next few weeks.

Take a moment to ask yourself whether you have a clear picture of your position. Not just in a fiscal sense, but also whether you are being socially responsible. Do you know how to help? Are you working in accordance with the latest Government instructions and taking advantage of the support being offered?



Support your team through change

The uncertainty of COVID-19 and the practical changes we have had to make to the way we work have significantly impacted everyone. That said, you can still apply lessons from typical business transformation changes to soften your team's anxiety.

First, determine how the current changes are impacting your colleagues and clients at a human level. This will help uncover ways to support the formation of new habits and break old ones. Actively promote necessary changes by visibly practicing what you preach and supporting new ways of working with continuous coaching and encouragement.

You may be struggling with adapting your own routine. Showing your human side can only help. Disruption on this scale needs empathy, honesty, understanding and above all, a sense of common purpose and shared struggle to help everyone pull through. Expect, and manage

individuals' natural resistance to change, which is often borne out of fear and uncertainty. More than ever, now is the time to communicate, communicate, communicate.

Underpinning of all of this must be a compelling vision of the future, in terms that your team understands, to help them sign up to the journey ahead. Can you describe what the future looks like? Are you ready to help people through changes in their roles, either temporary or permanent? Can you provide the light at the end of the tunnel for you and your team? Do you believe it yourself?

With a focus on a clear understanding of your current business environment, supporting your colleagues through these significant changes and adjusting your business to meet its challenges, you will find you are positioning it more strongly not only for the immediate disruption but for longer-term success.

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Adjust your business for the current challenges

With your team properly supported, engaged and aligning behind your path forward, you can move at pace and react to the new challenges facing your business. It's important to allow discussion that includes all influential team members, rather than only including senior colleagues, as this encourages innovation and creativity.

Some organisations are seeing unprecedented demand, with health services and grocery retailers at the forefront. Others, like the hospitality and travel industries, have seen all demand for their services dry up overnight. Many other sectors lie somewhere in the middle, hampered with even more uncertainty of what the future holds. If your business hasn't been directly impacted yet, it is almost certainly only a matter of time. You need to quickly understand what drives value in your business in the current economy, how to maximise that value and how to manage your costs while you do it.

Getting the right data quickly should be a priority so that you can adapt rapidly. You can improve your business intelligence dataset over time, but you need a baseline that everyone can use for informed decision-making. Nothing drives inefficiency like arguing about unclear data when you are trying to implement changes to your business.

Do you have a common view of your data so that you can be evidence-led in your decision-making? Can you make targeted adjustments to your business model with reasonable certainty on the likely outcomes? If you are focussing your adjustments on the customer, are you remaining customer-centric?

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Get in touch

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