

Business Continuity & Communication Guide

Managing through and Emerging from the COVID-19 Pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic is compelling business leaders to work differently, think in new ways and creatively solve challenges. Businesses are quickly shifting from crisis response to what global research firm Gartner calls "recovery" and "restoration," the crucial next phases to ensure business continuity. Leaders have an opportunity right now to listen, learn, innovate — and communicate — to ensure businesses emerge strong and ready to serve a changed marketplace.

Leaders are thinking through key questions as they shift focus to recovery and restoration.

- What is core and foundational to sustaining business through the crisis? What do we do now to ensure stability?
- How will the crisis change what employees, customers, partners, communities and investors need, want and expect now and in a post-pandemic world?
- How can the business emerge stronger as a result of the global shifts being created by the pandemic?
- How will our products and services be relevant and valued in a changed market? Do we need to adapt?
- Are there new needs and opportunities the business can serve?
- What work needs to begin now to move the business forward and create readiness for a new future?
- How should the business be communicating inside and out to ensure plans and actions are clear and understood?

Answers to these questions will shape plans to protect business continuity, adapt operations and position for the future. Communication is a critical strategy throughout this process. Clear, credible and consistent information from trusted leaders stabilizes organizations during uncertain times. Communication also creates confidence, action and engagement — all vital to advancing business plans.

This business continuity and communication guide provides a framework for leading through the uncertainty of a crisis, managing organizational change and intentionally moving forward to a successful future.

Start wherever your business is at today — and return to top when your business is ready to dig deeper into planning and preparedness.

PREPARE

- Anticipating issues and having a response plan minimizes operating risk, maintains business continuity and sustains reputation and trust. Organizations currently activating business continuity and crisis plans during COVID-19 should regularly update them based on real-time learnings and decisions. Note gaps in existing plans to ensure they are updated and comprehensive.
- Organizations operating without solid business continuity and crisis plans should document all strategies, actions and communication as implemented. This work is the foundation of future business continuity and crisis plans.
- There are 15+ risk areas that most businesses could face. It's essential to fully assess all possible risk areas to determine which apply to your business. Each risk area needs a clear business continuity and crisis management plan. There will be overlap in some areas and unique considerations for others, like a global pandemic.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES:

[Crisis Readiness Checklist](#)



RESPOND

- Speed matters in a crisis. An organization's ability to quickly and effectively act and respond will have a long-lasting impact on business operations and reputation. Your audiences will hold the business and its leaders accountable for actions and inactions. It's critical to make decisions that are aligned to your business purpose or mission and values.
- A crisis response and communication plan that is consistently reviewed and refreshed will mitigate risk and protect your brand and culture.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES:

[Crisis Communication Checklist](#)

MANAGE AND STABILIZE

- The businesses that respond with transparency, truth and speed are most likely to gain trust and successfully emerge from a crisis. Understand your stakeholders, demonstrate empathy, communicate clearly and consistently, and act in alignment with values to stabilize the business and manage through the immediate crisis.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES:

[Work-from-home Continuity Plan](#)
[Employee Pulse Surveys](#)

[Values Activation Plan](#)

ASSESS AND ADVANCE

- Businesses can be in the crisis response phase for days to weeks. It can seem impossible to turn leaders' attention to business recovery and restoration in the midst of a crisis response — but it's critical. Human, financial and operating resources need to be immediately deployed to focus on the now, the next and the future.
- As the marketplace stabilizes, take time to listen and learn about how stakeholder expectations have changed and what adjustments might be needed as the business moves forward. Explore how this may impact the organization's purpose, mission and values. Determine how business plans and goals should change to adjust for time lost and strategic pivots.
- This work involves extensive change. Applying a change management model and implementing change management communication strategies can bring a logical flow in a time of rapid shifts and uncertainty.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES:

[Evaluating your Workplace Culture](#)
[Change Readiness Assessment](#)

[Change Management Communication Guide](#)
[Change Management Communication Plan](#)

RESTORE AND GROW

- Business continuity in a sustained crisis is challenging, but it also presents a unique opportunity to meet changing expectations and make meaningful connections that will positively differentiate your brand and culture. Organizations that use crisis recovery time to reimagine and regroup have the best opportunity for future success.
- Uncertain times challenge us all to think creatively and solve problems in new ways. Tap into that mindset to reenvision what's possible and how the business will operate following the crisis. Lay the groundwork now to emerge stronger and positioned for growth.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES:

[Modern Workplace Culture Guide](#)
[Purpose Mission and Values Guide](#)

[Business Case for Branding](#)

