Disasters happen Prepare for recovery

A practical approach to adjusting the functional areas of business during times of disruption





## BUSINESS CONTINUITY GUIDE

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FOCUS

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## FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING

# SECTION

#### OVERVIEW

The financial impacts of a catastrophic event like the COVID-19 Pandemic can be significant and lasting, even for well-positioned companies. Now, more than ever, the finance and accounting function of your business needs to be at the top of its game. While specific recommendations may differ by company, here is a list of general guidance and best practices to help small businesses navigate a catastrophic disruption.

#### **Key Elements**

Cash flow



Financing



Financial reporting



Government assistance and aid



#### **CASH FLOW AT A GLANCE**

The liquidity and cash position of your company is paramount and, perhaps, the single largest key to maintaining business continuity. This means managing the company's cash coming in AND going out. The focus of efforts with cash flow should

be two-fold: achieving or maintaining positive cash flow and sustaining operating capital to fund ongoing operations. Here are some things you should and should not be doing during this period of disruption.



#### DO THESE THINGS

- Increase the frequency and effort of accounts receivable (A/R) collections.
- Prioritize new projects based on payment terms, availability of cash, and project funding.
- Collect insurance deductibles up front (in accordance with state laws and regulations).
- Renegotiate payment terms with vendors, suppliers, and subcontractors to extend them as long as possible.
- Contact your mortgage lender or landlord and ask for a deferment or forbearance of payments.
- Temporarily suspend retirement plan contributions.

#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Operate on good faith with A/R commitments.
- Continue to pay vendors, suppliers, and subcontractors early or take prompt-pay discounts.
- Pay cash for anything unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Proceed with projects that have no payment commitment, guarantee, or defined payment terms. This includes insurance deductibles.



#### FINANCING AT A GLANCE

For small businesses, financing is essential to maintaining the continuity of ongoing operations AND future opportunities. While it is tempting to focus on the here and now, business owners and managers must also look toward the future. When life and business return to normal, you

want to ensure the company is well-positioned to capitalize on opportunities as they present themselves. This could be a large project, new services, or a surge in new work. Here are some things to consider to be sure your company is in a favorable position.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Apply for a business line of credit (LOC) if you do not already have one.
- Ask for an increase in your LOC.
- Consider pulling all available cash off the LOC and putting it into a savings account as a safety net.\*
- Maintain compliance with LOC covenants.

- Consider government or Small Business Administration (SBA)sponsored stimulus and aid loans.
- Consider debt consolidation or refinancing.
- Be careful of predatory lending offers, scams, and other fraudulent solicitations.

\*CONSULT WITH YOUR FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND CPA BEFORE DOING THIS.





#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Close commercial credit accounts.
- Initiate a sell-off of capital assets.
- Make long-term financing decisions without consulting your banker, financial or business advisor, and CPA.
- Use strategic reserves (savings) unless it is absolutely necessary.



Any remedy is going to depend on having financial statements that are reliable.

-Tom Foley

#### DO THESE THINGS

- Post A/P entries daily.
- Increase the frequency of invoicing.
- Keep job management and CRM software up to date.
- Continue to publish flash and WIP reports weekly.
- Maintain a 13-week cash flow forecast.
- Create forecasting models and contingency plans for 20%, 30%, and 50% reductions in revenue.

#### FINANCIAL REPORTING AT A GLANCE

During a time of major economic disruption, owners and managers need timely and accurate financial reporting more than ever. With the business environment changing daily, if not hourly, having this information to make good

business decisions is critical. This might be a challenge with employees working remotely, so increased effort may be required to maintain the continuity of financial reporting. Make sure to maintain best practices by following these guidelines.

#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Make decisions without reviewing current financial information.
- Ignore financial reporting because of the business disruption.



#### **GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AT A GLANCE**

On March 27, 2020, the United States government passed a \$2 trillion economic stimulus package aimed at providing much needed relief to employers and employees alike during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This package included direct payments to individuals, increased unemployment

benefits, and special lending programs such as those from the SBA. Many small business owners can use this type of government assistance and aid to help maintain and even grow their business during these uncertain times. Here are some recommendations to help you capitalize on relief packages.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Contact your commercial banker and inquire about SBA-backed government relief loans.
- Utilize stimulus programs and expanded unemployment benefits as opportunities to rightsize personnel to levels that are sustainable with any decreases in revenue.
- Inquire about SBA Debt Relief programs which can provide relief from payments for existing SBA loans.
- Inquire about Emergency Economic Injury Grants for short-term relief due to economic injury.
- Consult with your tax accountant about payroll tax deferment.
- Look for opportunities to provide services (e.g., cleaning and equipment rental) which will be funded by federal or state assistance.





#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Try to "double dip" by applying for multiple loans where there would be a duplication in the use of funds.
- Embellish or falsify information to qualify for assistance from loans, grants, and relief programs.
- Use funds from government assistance loans for expenses other than what is approved.

### JURCES OVERVIEW **Key Elements** Communication Companies have a moral and legal obligation to look after their employees—whether $\odot$ that is mitigating the risk of contracting a virus or simply looking after their general health and wellbeing. Employee relations $\odot$ Policies and procedures $\odot$ Safety and health



#### **COMMUNICATION AT A GLANCE**

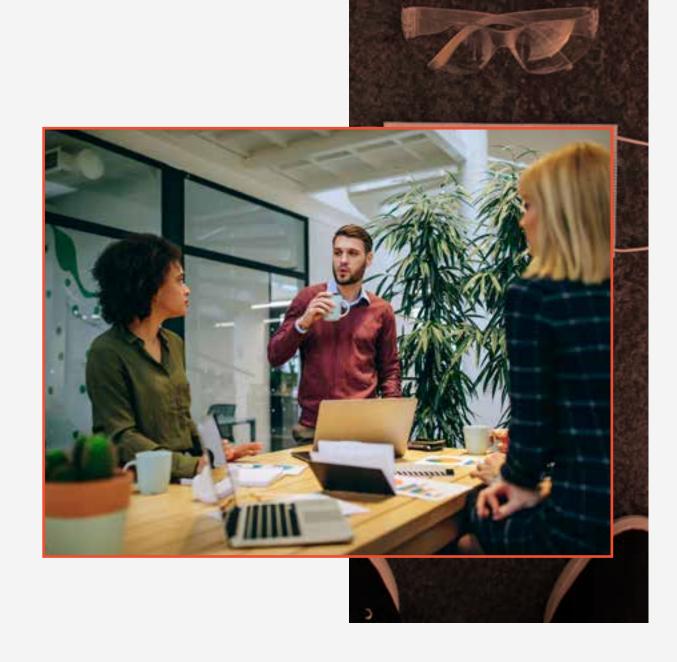
Communication is critical. Here are three key steps employers can take to support their employees.

- 1. Prepare for needs and questions.
- 2. Communicate regularly and often.
- 3. Ensure consistent and accurate messages.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Set up a schedule of communication meetings as often as deemed necessary.
- Be specific about the day and time of meetings and stick to the schedule.
- If you have employees working remotely, schedule daily follow-ups and use technology to stay connected.





#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Assume that you are communicating adequately.
- Think that the environment in your company should be "business as usual."
- Believe that everyone will either step up or will take advantage. You still need leadership and consistency in your management of the business.
- · Minimize the time you spend in listening to employee concerns.



#### **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AT A GLANCE**

The responsibility for employee relations centers around the emotional, physical, and practical relationship between you and your employees. During times of crisis, address your employees before doing anything else.

#### DO THESE THINGS

- If you do not have a full-time HR department representative, appoint one person to be the employee contact for any issues or concerns that an employee may have.
- Provide a list of local community resources that your employees can go to for assistance outside of the business.
- Secure the services of a Labor Attorney.
- Keep in mind that, in the future, your employees will remember this moment.



- If you feel the need to reduce payroll, examine all possible alternatives before making a final decision.
- Realize that you must protect the privacy of your employees. During a pandemic, if an employee tests positive, contact your local public health officials for guidance on how to notify other employees who could possibly be affected.
- If you have employees with high-risk concerns, address them by:
  - offering flexibility, if possible.
  - limiting their exposure at work.
  - staying up to date on the latest recommendations.



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Overemphasize the importance of taking care of the "customer."
- Ignore requests for information from your employees.
- Disregard their fears, concerns, or insecurities.



#### POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AT A GLANCE

Policies and procedures are determine all major decisions. Your company's actions and activities should take place by them. Procedures are the specific methods employed

to express policies in action designed to influence and in the day-to-day operations of the organization. During times of crisis, it is imperative to understand and adhere to within the boundaries set your company's policies and procedures.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Have a temporary staffing plan in place in case the need arises for temporary employees.
- Call your healthcare broker to understand your company's healthcare policy.
- Have a layoff letter in place.

- Be aware of federal, state, and local employment laws.
- Advise employees of any changes to company policies.
- Notify everyone in writing if there is a change in policy.



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Make commitments regarding employment status and benefits.
- · Disregard your company manual in an attempt to be sympathetic to certain employees.





-Safety Saying, early 1900s

#### DO THESE THINGS

- Ensure that OHSA regulations are being followed.
- Rely on medical information and not subjective "feelings" in dealing with health issues.
- When communicating with employees,
  - let them know the company will take any reasonable and necessary steps to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.
  - Ask employees to contact HR with any concerns.

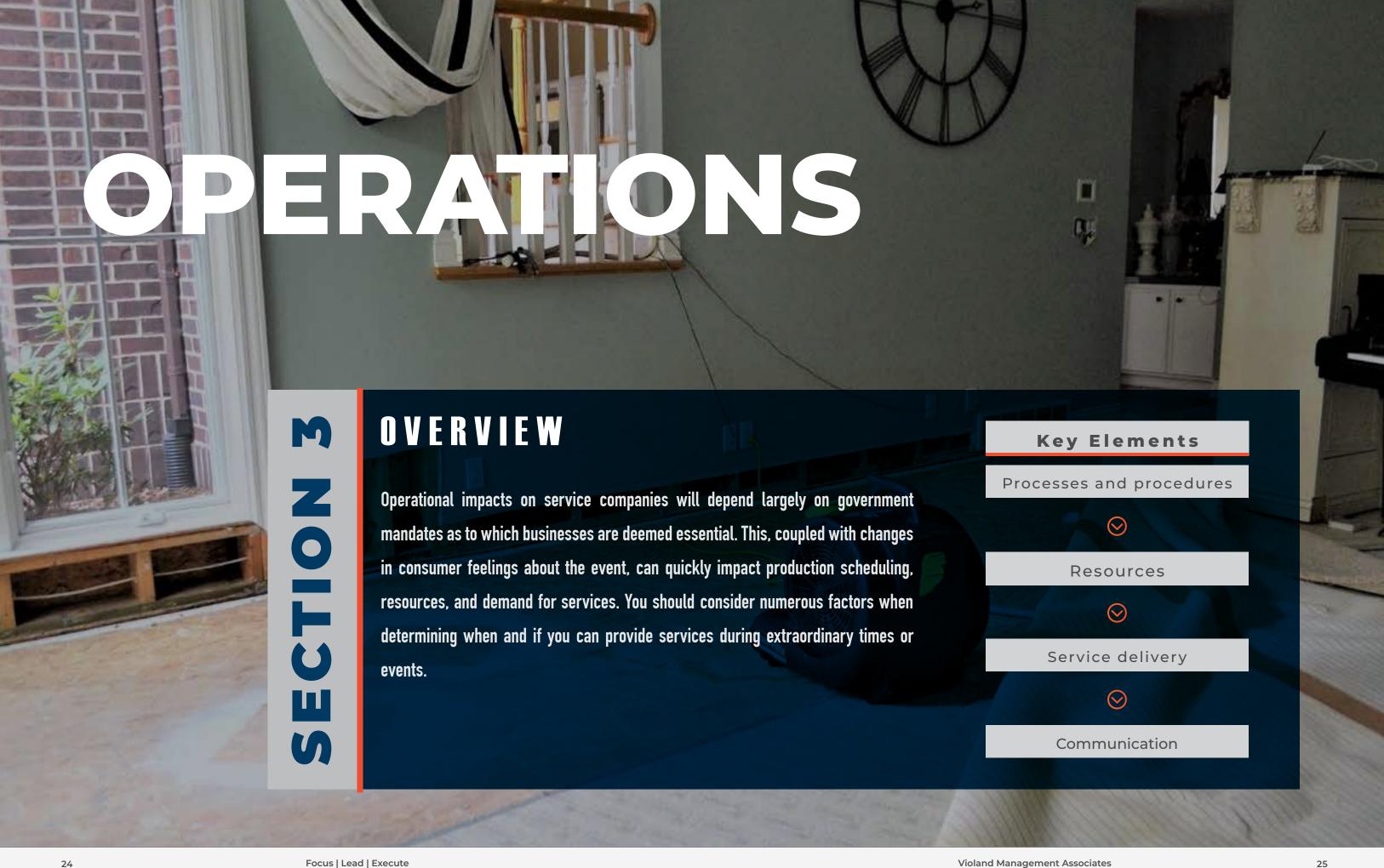
#### SAFETY AND HEALTH AT A GLANCE

Federal OSHA regulations are there to ensure that employees work in a safe and healthful environment by setting and enforcing standards and by providing ongoing training, outreach, education, and assistance. As an employer, you must comply with all applicable

OSHA standards. You must also comply with the General Duty Clause of the OSH Act, which requires employers to keep their workplace free of serious recognized hazards. Additionally, be aware that your state may have OSHA requirements as well.

#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Make safety a secondary concern.
- Give the impression that PPE requirements are optional.
- Place untrained personnel in a hazardous environment.





#### PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES AT A GLANCE

Simply because you are operating in situations you have not previously encountered does not mean you should abandon good business practices or operational discipline. Following processes and procedures

established by credible sources such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Johns Hopkins University will help you to smoothly navigate uncharted waters.

#### DO THESE THINGS

- Establish temporary processes and procedures for employee conduct and performance.
- Revise service contracts to include language specific to the event.
- Clearly define the scope of work, payment terms, and responsible parties in your service contracts.
- Verify that your liability insurance contains the correct pollution liability language for work pertaining to this event.
- Verify that the subcontractors you engage hold the correct licensing and insurance for the event.



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Use standard work authorizations or service contracts for specialty projects.
- · Perform work without a signed contract.
- Use an extraordinary event as an excuse to abandon good business practices.



#### **RESOURCES AT A GLANCE**

Without an adequate supply chain, staffing and training are wasted. Materials may be in short supply, making "just in time" ordering ineffective. Likewise,

having the necessary materials and supplies is useless without the staffing to complete the job. Be proactive and get ahead of any labor or supply issues.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Secure additional labor sources in advance (e.g., staffing agencies, trade contractors, strategic partners, etc.).
- Utilize subcontractors as potential labor sources.
- Monitor supply and equipment counts daily.
- Increase inventory levels of critical supplies (e.g., PPE and cleaning agents) to 120% of the anticipated workload.

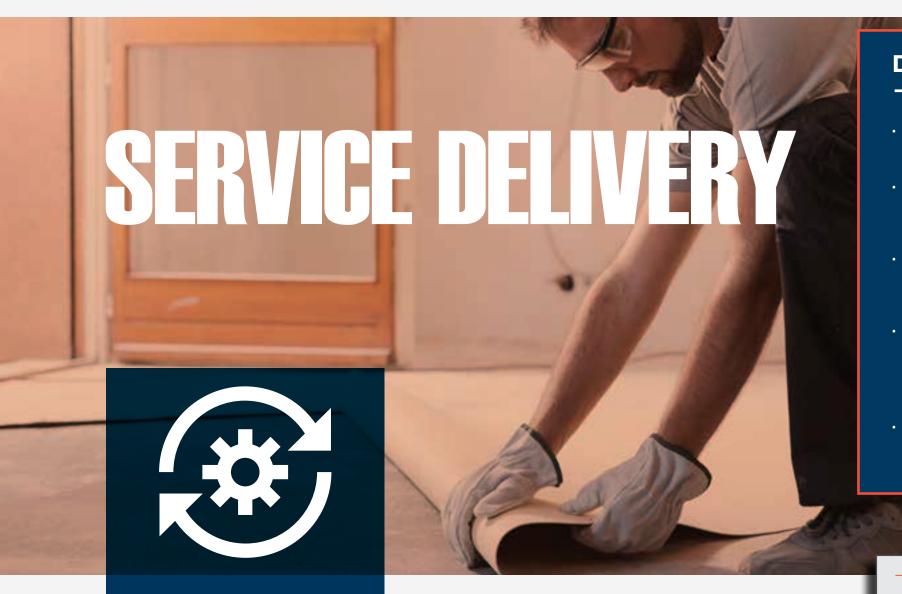
- Place supply orders for high demand or limited supply items with several different suppliers concurrently.
- Inspect equipment operability and safety before and after every use.
- Locate acceptable alternatives for those items you normally use but cannot currently locate.
- Explore ways to reuse or recondition PPE supplies to get more than one use from them.





#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Send your teams to jobs with broken or malfunctioning equipment.
- · Consider staffing and material/supply issues as optional.
- Delay the sourcing of labor, materials, and equipment.
- Delay scheduled maintenance of vehicles and equipment.



#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Stagger start times for your crews to avoid close contact.
- Develop contingency plans for dealing with catastrophic events.
- Maintain proper social distancing with customers as established by the CDC.
- Maintain proper social distancing between staff members as established by the CDC.
- Have your staff drive separate vehicles to job sites when possible.

- Follow proper procedures for donning, doffing, and disposal of PPE.
- Decontaminate all equipment used on job sites after each use.
- Decontaminate vehicles following each shift.
- Have office personnel work from home when possible.
- Inspect all completed work for quality.

#### SERVICE DELIVERY AT A GLANCE

Extraordinary times may require that you adjust the way in which you provide your services. It is paramount that your customers and your employees understand that you are going above and beyond to protect their health and safety.

#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Ignore government shutdown requirements and shelter in place, stay at home, or quarantine orders.
- · Make commitments for services to which your business is ill-prepared or equipped to perform.
- Allow employees to come in close contact with clients or each other without wearing PPE.
- · Assume that brief, casual contact with others is okay.
- · Allow your employees to consider the safety procedures you have put in place as optional.
- · Allow exceptions to your procedures.



#### **COMMUNICATION AT A GLANCE**

When providing service in times of heightened awareness it is important to ensure that your communication, both internal (within your company) and external (the customers you serve), is clear and thorough, yet concise. Communication channels should also be chosen carefully based on their effectiveness and audience.



#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- · Create internal (employee) and external (customer) memos regarding operational changes resulting from the event.
- Create "Essential Services" letters for all service vehicles and subcontractors.
- Provide your team with written instructions of what is to be done that contain clearly stated expectations of the results you require.
- · Communicate that the safety of your employees and customers is the top priority.
- · Clearly state and reinforce desired outcomes and expectations.
- · Train your staff on the proper verbiage to use with customers.
- · Listen to the concerns of your customers.
- · Listen to the concerns of your staff.
- Practice "mirroring" (asking the person you are communicating with to repeat back what you told them to ensure they understood the message) when necessary.

#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Rely on verbal instructions with staff and customers.
- Use verbiage that overstates what can be accomplished such as "disinfecting," etc.
- · Assume that your customers understand what you have said.
- Assume that your instructions are being followed. (Trust but verify.)
- · Overstate your knowledge or experience in certain areas.

## SALES AND MARKETING

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#### OVERVIEW

Sales is about helping others find a solution to their needs. In times of crisis, every person and business has a need for your company's services. Companies should consider sales and marketing an essential part of their ongoing business during extraordinary times or events. During these times, companies will look for ways to cut costs and save cash. Cutting the lifeline to your existing customers and potential customers is not a good course of action. Do not let fear cause you to make poor business decisions.

#### **Key Elements**

Sales management



Communication - clients



Communication - prospects



Performance measurements



Digital marketing



#### SALES MANAGEMENT AT A GLANCE

Having open lines of communication with your entire staff is paramount. During a crisis, the sales team needs to know their role and how they are expected to support the company's needs. Priorities will undoubtedly

shift during this time. This will make the fundamentals of sales management increasingly more important. The following guidelines will help managers to stay focused on the priorities while maximizing impact from business development efforts.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Create a sales strategy that supports the Sales Plan and communicate it with the sales team immediately or within a few days of the event.
- Ask the sales team for help in developing a sales strategy.
- · Be transparent.
- Hold daily meetings with each salesperson and focus on their needs.
- Hold daily or semi-weekly meetings with the team.
- Make adjustments for remote working conditions and establish remote working policies.

- Use technology to enhance communication and collaboration of the team.
- Prepare agendas for your meetings.
- Focus on what is working and strategize and adopt new ideas quickly.
- Let the team know that you understand the expected sales pipeline may become volatile or even dry up during the crisis.
- Build on the future pipeline.
   "Don't focus on the score, focus on playing the game."



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Gloss over issues of concern with a salesperson's actions or lack of.
- Let pessimism and negativity creep into the sales team's conversations with each other or the customer.
- · Micro-manage your team.
- · Panic if the sales pipelines start to dry up.
- Cut the lines of communication with customers by eliminating your salespeople.

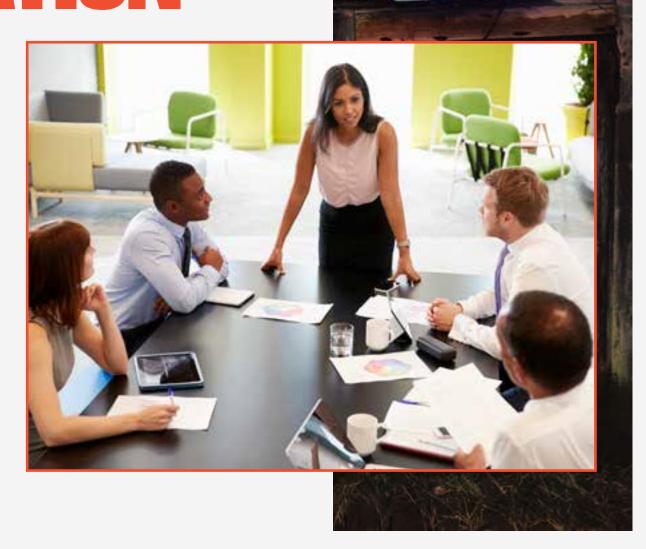


#### **COMMUNICATION - CLIENTS AT A GLANCE**

Communication with your clients during a crisis is paramount. Ask how they are doing and what their needs are. Let them know you and your company are here to help them and their clients through the crisis. Staying ahead of a major business disruption or crisis portrays confidence to your clients and builds trust in both the short- and long-term.

#### DO THESE THINGS

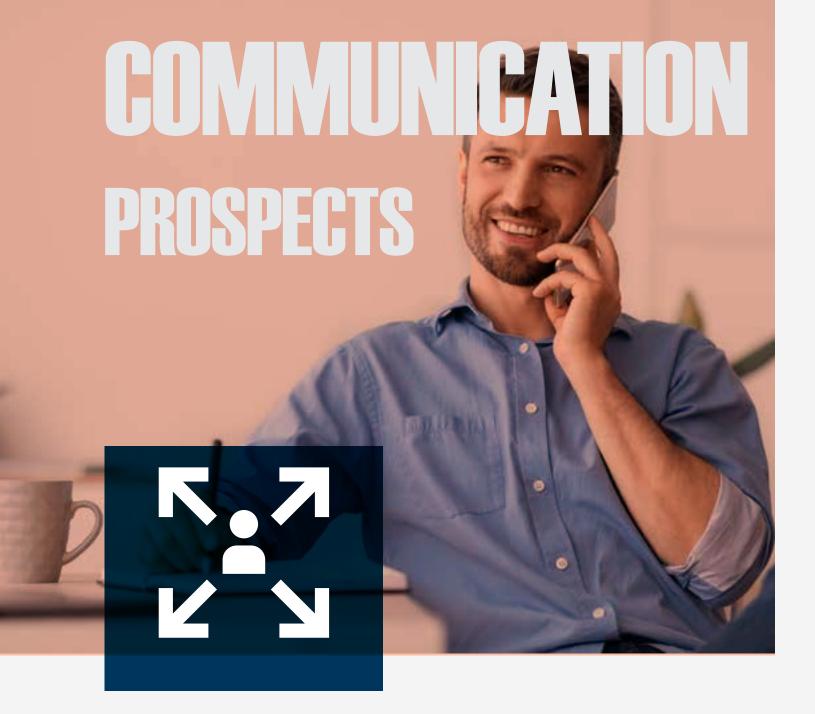
- Ask them what their needs are during this crisis and about the needs of their clients.
- · Communicate with them based on their level of need during a crisis.
- Use available technology to create new ways of keeping them informed.
- Find ways to add value with the customer.
- Recraft your company's value propositions and differentiators based on the current situation.
- Bring customers or referral partners together in virtual roundtables to find new opportunities for them to grow their businesses.



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Stop communicating because the "normal" form of communication with the client has been cut off.
- Assume business as usual and continue to do what you have always done.
- · Beg the customer for business or sound desperate for a sale.
- · Overcommit the services and capabilities of your company.

Violand Management Associates



#### **COMMMUNICATION - PROSPECTS AT A GLANCE**

Reaching new prospects and developing new sources for business will be more difficult during times of crisis, especially when traditional methods of prospecting are not possible. Focusing your efforts on the long term, when the event will be

over, can pay big dividends down the road. On some occasions, the current event may actually open doors that were previously closed. Take advantage of these opportunities by following this advice.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Network! Ask your existing clients or referral partners for leads and be sure to reciprocate.
- · Use the internet and social media to introduce your services.
- · Use available technology to connect and communicate.
- Be creative in all forms of communication with a focus on advising.
- Build relationships that will create business long after the crisis.
- Continue to focus on the Sales Plan by growing new target markets.
- Recraft your company's value propositions and differentiators.





#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Stop selling and wait for the crisis to pass.
- · Sell like your job is on the line.
- Overcommit.





- Modify sales goals appropriately.
- Create fun, short-range competitions or challenges with prizes.
- Continue to use the company's CRM or sales tracking system to measure sales activity.
- Implement new metrics to measure activity.
- · Check in more frequently, but for shorter durations, and review performance daily.
- · Be a sales coach! Continue to support training and development.

#### PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS AT A GLANCE

Performance measurements will change during a time of significant business disruption. The primary change will be with the leading key performance indicators. Since traditional methods of selling, such as route stops, networking events, face-to-face meetings, and meals with clients, may no longer be possible, they

must be replaced with other sales activities. These new activities should be tracked and correlated with lagging results like referrals, opportunities, and sales. Continue to motivate and inspire your team by adjusting your performance management tactics. And be sure to lead by example.

#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Micromanage.
- · Abandon sales revenue goals.
- · Attempt to motivate by fear of discipline or termination.
- · Abandon the Sales Plan.



#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- · Focus on professionalism.
- Improve your company's website and create social media sites.
- Use the internet and social media to educate and offer your company's services.
- Coordinate website and social media messages to ensure consistency.
- Post all information on company sites first and then share to personal sites.
- Maintain or increase posting frequencies to daily.

#### DIGITAL MARKETING AT A GLANCE

Internet usage and online activity increase significantly during times of crisis and business disruption. Clients and customers are looking for information and advice. Since not all information found online is credible, you can use this opportunity to establish

that credibility and build your company's brand image as well as get the information they are looking for into their hands immediately. Investing time and energy into improving your company's internet image and customer experience will pay off now and in the future.



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Post political or personal opinions.
- · Post meaningless information.
- Allow multiple users to have access to your company's website and social media sites.





The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in the moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

-Martin Luther King Jr.

#### DO THESE THINGS

- · Keep an open mind about shifting business priorities and practices.
- · Realize that people's perceptions about work, regardless of their associated generation, will be affected by this event.
- · Be visible and approachable to your people.
- · ASK. LISTEN. ACT.
- · Exercise empathy.
- · Be definitive and confident with your words and actions.

#### **BOLD LEADERSHIP AT A GLANCE**

As a business leader, you should plan on shifts in the priorities people will place on work, relationships, safety, and even profits—both during this crisis and after. Those shifting priorities will place increased demands on leaders at all levels to think differently about their role and what people will be looking for from them.

Adopting a command and control or "Lone Ranger" leadership style IS NOT bold leadership. Being in tune with the sensitivities of your people and relying on the expertise and strengths of others to help you initiate the tough conversations and to make tough decisions IS bold leadership.

#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- Rigidly adhere to outdated business models and work rules.
- Hide out from difficult or uncomfortable decisions.
- · Think you're expected to have all the answers.



#### COMMUNICATION AT A GLANCE

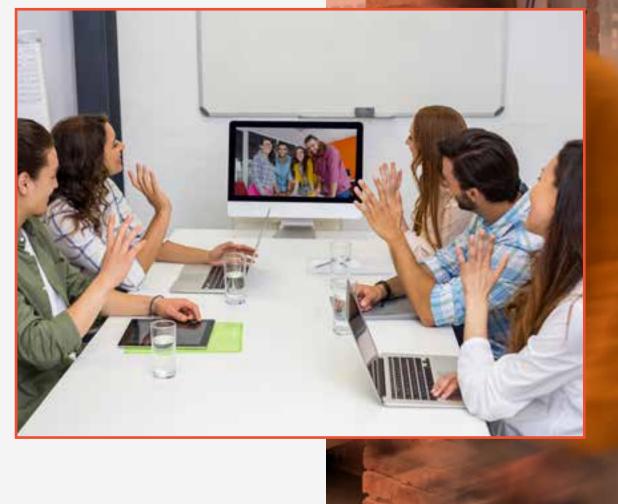
During difficult times in business, the first instinct of many business owners is to retreat to the safety of their office and to avoid the uncomfortable conversations and difficult decisions they may need to make. But realize that distancing yourself both physically and emotionally from your people will only

make those unpleasant decisions more difficult should they occur.

Clear, constant, and effective communication from leaders is essential during a time of crisis. As a result, it will be necessary for you to communicate with your people more frequently and more openly than you may have in the past.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Use the many communication tools available to you to connect with your people.
- · Connect with your people daily, if possible, and individually whenever practical.
- Use your words and your actions to let your people know how much you appreciate them.
- · Let your people know you are acting in their best interests.
- · Let your people know "the plan," even if it changes (it likely will).
- · Communicate clearly.



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Give false or sugar-coated information.
- · Hide out to avoid difficult conversations or decisions.
- · Distance yourself from your people.



#### **DECISION MAKING AT A GLANCE**

Times of crisis often require us to make difficult decisions and, at times, to make them "on the fly." Frequently, it also means making these decisions with incomplete or constantly changing information. It's easy to let your emotions (fear, fatigue, uncertainty) cloud your thinking and cause you to focus on short-term fixes at the

expense of long-term outcomes. While there will be times when this is necessary, it is critical that you balance the short-term fixes with the long-term implications of your actions. In other words, be sure to consider how the decisions you make today will affect your company in one year, or two years, or after the current crisis is behind us.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Whenever possible, take time to gather information before making important decisions.
- Be aware of how this crisis is affecting your tolerance for risk and change, and how that is affecting the decisions you make.
- Assume that your thinking is clouded by events, even when it isn't.
- · Manage and control things that are within your control.



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

- · Disregard your existing priorities or business plan.
- Knee-jerk or hip-shoot your decisions.
- · Go it alone.
- · Overcontrol or try to manage things that are not within your control.



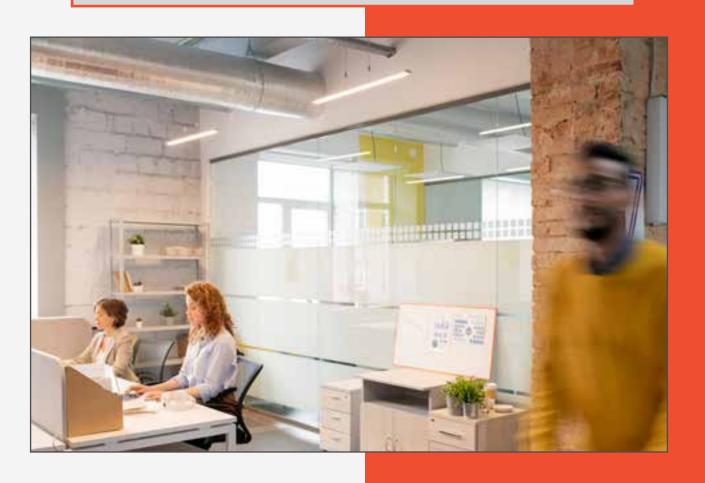
#### **EMOTIONS AT A GLANCE**

It's no secret that people behave differently when they're stressed than they do under normal circumstances. The combination of added pressures and having events that are out of your control can cause even the most seasoned business leaders to lose their normal composure and react emotionally. Your

people are watching your behavior as much as they are listening to your words for signs about how things are really going and how they are to behave. It is critical that the leaders of your organization demonstrate sound judgement and emotional control.

#### **DO THESE THINGS**

- Get some rest. Be sensitive to how physical and emotional fatigue are affecting you.
- Talk to and consult with family, trusted friends, and advisors.
- Be sensitive to how the tone of your voice and your body language can affect the messages you're sending to others.



#### DO NOT DO THESE THINGS

· Panic.

· Go it alone.

## CONTRIBUTORS



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