

## Part 2 – Preparing for a Crisis, Even After It Has Hit

**There are ways you can pre-prepare for when disaster strikes, however, I don't believe any of us could have seen a pandemic like this coming.**

**There will inevitably be areas in which you are so unprepared for this to occur it seems hopeless to even try to stay standing. But there will be areas where your business plan, policies, procedures, values, and so on, are solid enough to hold you up while you figure out the rest.**

**Trust in your business – your employees, and YOURSELF. To even become a business owner to begin with, that takes hard-work, resilience, facing adversity and challenges, and overcoming them. And you did it! So, you can do it again, now.**

Below is a list of things to consider for different areas of your business which may be affected due to the limitations under the [Government's COVID-19 Alert Level system](#) and/or laws and regulations amended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these things ideally should have been undertaken immediately at the onset of the crisis; however, it's better late than never.

### The Business ‘Backbone’: Plans, Policies, Procedures, Disclosures, Operations

#### 1. *Incident Management/Crisis or Disaster Scenario Plans*

You may already have something along these lines in your company's documentation. However, does it specifically relate to an incident, crisis, and/or disaster like the current situation? Probably not. Therefore, you need to:

- a) Develop COVID-19-specific **incident management** and **crisis/disaster scenario plans**; and,
- b) Plan for **supplier and/or freight disruptions** and how to minimise the risk of these on your business. Include planning for how you will meet Government priorities in individual countries (if you conduct business overseas) and investigate/consider changing to local/national suppliers. Develop the same for possible future incidents/crises/disasters, such as natural disasters, market crashes; and,
- c) Look into the **global mobility concerns**, such as reviewing travel rules and HR policies, and amend as necessary to suit the current, and possible future, situations; and,
- d) **Forecast finances**, as best as you can with the information you have available, to identify and assess risks and uncertainties on current and future financial periods and the impact COVID-19 may have on these. Think about disclosures you may need to make in relation to these, like **disclosures on the current and future impact on your assets and liquidity**.

## 2. Policies/Procedures Relating to Communication

Check these include and, if not, make sure you rework your documentation to include:

### a) Communicate with Investors and/or Stakeholders

This communication must be factual and honest, but also succinct, well-structured, easy to understand, and effectively communicated.

So, don't send out a 40-page report, but consider organising a video conference with all necessary parties so you can communicate in real-time to all involved to explain what you're doing to stay afloat now, and what you're doing to plan ahead, and so on. They need to be reassured their money is in the right investment, so you don't lose any funding, and trust that you're not going to sink or give up on the business.

Face-to-face communication is the best way to achieve trust from, and effective communication with, your stakeholders/investors, as they can observe your non-verbal language/environmental cues to further solidify the message you're sending, and they're able to ask questions or discuss any ideas, worries, or concerns they may have;

### b) Communications Infrastructure

Will your current way(s) of communication with employees/customers/suppliers be effective within a remote working environment? Do your employees understand what is required of them to effectively communicate in this environment?

More on this in [Part 3 \(b\) – Preparing for Remote Work](#);

### c) Communicating with Employees

Keeping in touch with your employees is now more important than ever. It's important because we need to be kind to, and support, each other during this time – especially those with children, more than one job, or existing health conditions – which means not forgetting what day it is, but remembering to regularly (at least weekly) contact your team and check-in, whether you're still in operation or not.

Every member of the team needs to be kept in the loop every step of the way of what your future is shaping up to look like. For example, how you're going to keep going or, if you plan to wrap up business for good; how you're going to continue to pay your employees, or are you considering redundancies; if you're applying for Government/other financial support; or, if it means your employees are going to need to use their accrued leave.

Plan and decide on how and where you will securely document and store files such as meeting notes, etc. And, plan, and set guidelines on, how you will record and communicate decisions made during meetings;

### d) Management Structure

What is your management structure like currently? Do you have provisions for who does what in a crisis? Traditional management structures are now being replaced with self-managing workers, while leadership plays a supportive role, so consider whether your structure needs some work to accommodate this change, and ensure all staff are aware to whom they are to report to, or who they are looking after;

### e) Policies/Procedures Relating to Employees

This is an unprecedented situation which even the Government did not have a full “plan” for. Remote work during a stressful time is not the same as self-selecting into a “work from home” lifestyle and, it’s become clear that this is how life will be for the foreseeable future.

Not only are staff working from home, they also must care for, and educate, their children, which is an indescribably tough balancing act. Even though schools are “officially” open from Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020, many still may not be comfortable sending their children back, and they mustn’t be made to feel as though choosing to protect their children’s health is less important than their employment, and at risk of losing this should they decide to keep their children home.

The bottom line: compassion and understanding are required during this time, and unique considerations and accommodations must be made for staff to allow them to protect themselves and their loved ones from the virus, as well as from the risk of unemployment. More on this in [\*\*Part 7 – Useful Resources;\*\*](#)

Leaders need to manage expectations about productivity and start by trusting that every team member is working to the best of their ability during this time - it's near impossible for staff to plan when their work will be interrupted due to the needs of a child or other family member.

In addition to actual policy and/or procedure changes, leaders should schedule “team meetings” via video conference software with the whole team able to be present at the same time, and one-on-ones as needed, to discuss these expectations and provide opportunities for team members to share their concerns. These simple actions will help ensure short-term success as well as lay the groundwork for more robust, long-term remote work policy solutions for the future.

More on this in [\*\*Part 6 – How to Choose the Right Video Conferencing Service.\*\*](#)



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