

Promoting Business Continuity & Resilience during States of Emergency

An Entrée Capital Resilience Initiative

PART 1: Management and Team Practices in Times of Crisis

A strategic aspect of winning a war includes keeping the economy running, and hence the need to manage business continuity, high levels of productivity, and ensuring this is communicated to all stakeholders both internal and external. Business continuity in stressful and uncertain times holds great value not only in stability and preservation of the company but also significantly strengthens the ability to support employees, both as individuals and as a group.

But how do we achieve this when some of our employees, including key functions and management, are out of office for a long time, spread across multiple locations, or have reduced physical and mental capabilities for task execution, among other challenges?

For those who have held management positions during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these challenges are already familiar and the experience can be applied now too.

Mapping Employee Needs with a Focus on Capacity and Productivity

Many companies track employee attendance (e.g., absences, holidays, work times etc.) and reasons for situational awareness - not just for finance and other functions. It is essential to evaluate capacity/productivity too, using tools like the traffic light systems or KPIs. This helps pinpoint challenges so that they can be treated with tailored support, such as assistance with childcare, emotional well-being, and remote work setup. In this way, management will be able to make data-driven decisions that reflect the overall company picture rather than biased decisions based on extreme/specific cases. It also reveals organizational gaps to shape responses and risk management strategies. A proactive approach enables organizations to bridge these gaps and handle risks effectively.

Creating a Dedicated Business Continuity Team

Whenever management is not readily available and/or the management structure is highly decentralized, it is prudent to establish a small team that ensures business continuity in various areas (not just human resources). This team can identify challenges and risks, and take decisions accordingly.

Getting Support from Professionals in the Field of Organizational Psychology

Having an organizational psychologist, leadership coach or other experts on board can help the company manage a crisis in the best way possible. Getting professional support is not evidence of weakness. On the contrary, this person can support and guide the team and the founders in managing the crisis, and adapting a “back to routine” mindset.

Meetings and Social Gatherings:

We recommend organizing a few short meetings and activities:

- **Short Informative Meetings:**
These regular (weekly) meetings include all employees, both on site, working globally and remote. These meetings should include: (1) a brief update on the current situation in the country/affected area; (2) an overview of the company's activities with a message of resilience, alongside empathy and sensitivity; and (3) provide a forum for answering questions. These can be under 30 minutes.
- **15 Minutes Check in/Sync Meetings:**
These should be held at least three times a week at various management levels, including company management, team/group levels, and individual employee levels. The objectives are to identify gaps and emerging needs, address known risks, optimize task assignments based on the current workforce and capacity, maintain synchronization, uphold a high-touch sensing approach, and gauge emotional well-being. These meetings should be short and focused, lasting around 15 minutes.
- **Casual and Team-Building Meetings:**
These are for smaller teams, and they can be held either in the office (to encourage physical presence) or outside (to reduce anxiety and strengthen a sense of togetherness). Such activities can include shared lunches, coffee breaks, voluntary team-building initiatives, leisure activities, and more. These should not be complex long duration events - Staff are already anxious and need to get back to work to recover from productivity loss.
Examples: Create short fun videos/tik-toks/reels with a personal message, or giving a glimpse of office life when team members are away. Another could be team building exercises/games (see www.withconfetti.com/)

Using Collaborative Technology Platforms and Remote Management Skills:

As part of the shift to mainly remote work, this is the time to increase the use of collaborative technology platforms for synchronization, information sharing, and building connections at both team and organizational levels (e.g. monday.com, [WhatsApp Communities](#)). These connections are essential for promoting collaborative work, strengthening relationships, and offering mutual support during challenging times, such as joint office visits, volunteer initiatives, and more. In addition, It's essential to continually renew and provide tools for effective remote management and for managing employees in various functional conditions, especially for young managers who may not be accustomed to such situations and need to lead teams and set an example.

Documenting and Summarizing:

While writing shouldn't replace meetings, it's vital to encourage meetings during uncertain times. Documentation becomes crucial in times of ambiguity, confusion, decreased concentration, and evolving circumstances. Short bullet/table form meeting summaries should include decisions,

responsibility distribution, task assignments, and other important details. Bullet form e-mails suffice. But keep a track record for continuity and disaster recovery purposes

Maintaining Contact with Mobilized Employees and Their Families:

Continuing to stay in close contact with mobilized employees and their families is not only a sign of care and concern but also a message that, even as the company resumes operations, their lack of presence is felt. Ensure existing and potential employees know that returning to the company's operations is essential, and their role and status within the company remain relevant.

Any crisis situation we find ourselves in can persist for some time. Safeguarding our social and economic resilience is an essential part of success and overcoming any crisis. These aspects are intricately intertwined, and it must be our commitment to remain strong together, even more so than ever!

Additional Resources:

- [Leadership in Times of Crisis](#), American Psychological Association
- [HR and Leading People in Times of Crisis](#), IESE Business School
- [9 Useful Tips for Business Continuity in Times of Crisis](#)
- [Episode 53: Paul Thallner on Organizational Resilience](#), LeaderReadyCast (Harvard NPLI)