

PREPARING YOUR BUSINESS FOR “NEXT NORMAL”

If there is one certainty a year after COVID-19 reared its ugly head, it's this: how we live and work has changed and continues to change. For business organizations of all types and sizes, preparing employees and the business to deal with new threats and emerging opportunities is the key to both short-term survival and longer-term success.

This 10-point checklist will help guide efforts to prepare your business to meet the challenges presented by the “next normal.” It is by no means an exhaustive list. However, it does highlight key areas in which you can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of your enterprise.

1

ASSEMBLE & EMPOWER A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM

As preparation will involve every department and function, enlisting a broad cross-section of support will pay dividends. Reporting to the CEO, ‘Team Prep’ must be provided with a clear mandate and empowered to enlist help and delegate responsibility as required.

2

ADJUST WORKLOADS TO ALLOW TIME FOR SPECIAL TASKS

Don't make employees choose between their regular responsibilities and the special tasks associated with preparation. Ensure workloads are adjusted to prevent these tasks from falling between the cracks.

3

IDENTIFY, PRIORITIZE & PLAN

Being logical, systematic, and thorough is essential. Planning is job one for ‘Team Prep.’ Taking the time at the front end to identify and prioritize opportunities, challenges, and vulnerabilities will enable you to plan your work, ensuring that the most significant are dealt with first, and leading to a mitigation of the risks associated with a post-pandemic world.

4

BUILD CONTINGENCIES INTO YOUR PLANS

What impact could a third or fourth wave of COVID-19 have on your business? What if you lost one or more key customers? What if a member of your existing supply chain was unable to deliver? Making an effort to identify and plan your response to issues like these will pay off, big time!

5**PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO MARKET CHANGES & TRENDS**

What's happened to your business since the pandemic hit? How have your customers and their buying habits changed? What can you learn from your competitors' reactions? Factoring market changes and likely trends into your planning – major aspects of the “next normal” – and remaining vigilant are extremely important to the ultimate success of your preparatory planning efforts.

6**EVALUATE THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON YOUR EMPLOYEES**

Have there been any changes in the way employees relate to one another? What's happening to collaboration and engagement? Are employees less motivated than they once were? With core values and behaviours providing a foundation for your organization's culture, a review and possible adjustments might be in order.

7**DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGES OF REMOTE WORK**

Some companies have embraced the concept; others are biding their time until a full return to the office is possible. With some employees suffering from exhaustion and burnout, and productivity on the line, a planned and thoughtful response is key.

8**CLARIFY YOUR COMPANY'S PURPOSE**

Research shows that purpose-driven organizations grow faster and enjoy higher levels of customer and employee satisfaction. Establishing “*Why we exist?*” and “*Why people are better off because we exist?*” in the post-COVID world will provide a filter for decisions affecting both long-term strategic priorities and day-to-day operations.

9**REVIEW & UPGRADE YOUR DIGITAL CAPABILITIES**

Digital transformation was sweeping the business world before COVID-19. The pace of adoption has been accelerating since early 2020. Having a well-thought-out plan for upgrading your digital capabilities will be a competitive advantage in the post-COVID world.

10**COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE!**

It's essential that employees understand the nature of the preparatory work being undertaken, what's at stake, and why their contributions are so important. With no room for second guessing and foot dragging, regular, transparent communication is an investment in the success of this initiative.

Interested in jumpstarting your preparation initiative? We can help. Our **Defining “Where to from here?” Workshop** brings your leadership team together to collaborate on identifying and mapping out the essential tasks. To find out more email info@StrategicDirections.ca or call +1 (800) 465-6500