



Engineering Proactive Business Solutions

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Most organizations at the beginning of the year already had plans in place relative to their goals and objectives for the success of their business. These plans are made to guide the business through likely hurdles via thorough assessment followed by response strategies.

Business continuity is defined as proactive planning to avoid and mitigate risks associated with a disruption of operations. In 2020, we are faced globally with the novel Corona virus (COVID-19). While no entity could have foreseen the presence of the virus, some dimensions of the response can be attached to the disaster response for general operations of the business. This article will assess the some of the many questions that may be posed by companies and the implication to business continuity.

The global concern with the novel Corona virus (COVID-19) has led some organizations to close their physical locations.

As such, these businesses are left to consider their strategy for business continuity which includes response and recovery. The response has left human resources departments asking questions concerning paid leave and contemplating layoff strategies. For the safety and health professionals, the question being reiterated is, "How can we protect our staff?". All responses are guided by the pandemic response protocol which first and foremost calls for prevention of transmission followed by social distancing. For a health and safety professional it is clear to connect with this strategy as the hierarchy of controls emphasizes prevention followed by engineering controls. Let us assess the various measures that can be utilized by the organizations to ensure fiscal stability, business continuity and proactive employee management.

- Human resources managers and officers in collaboration with their senior management must begin to think of agile ways for their human resources to function where possible. In light of the need for social distancing, consideration must be given to a phased approach to limiting the amount of employees in the workplace. This can be executed by utilizing one of two mediums. Businesses can place their employees on lay-off

utilising the government's protocol as the reason for business closure. Additionally, businesses including government units can consider special leave. Special leave is issued in extenuating circumstances and allows the entity to provide payment to employees for leave away from work. The special leave should be properly formulated and the grounds for approval made clear to all employees to avoid miscomputation.

- Businesses can also draft and implement to work from home strategies for employees whose functions can facilitate this. However, to adequately manage productivity, managers should issue weekly or daily objectives which need to be met and evidence provided by the employee.
- To limit exposure to the virus, businesses can communicate with staff the possibility of emailing and WhatsApp-ing images of sick leave forms to limit the employees, or their friends and family members from visiting the organization to hand in their sick leave forms.
- Self-isolation units in the workplace must be identified to quarantine employees exhibiting signs of the illness until further instruction from the public health hotline can be issued. This ensures that other employees are not infected which has potential to further destabilize the business. Health and safety professionals must assess the risk and determine the safest place for the ill and the unaffected. This includes assessing the routes to gaining access to the room and modes of exit.
- While I am not an information technology professional, in order to guarantee business continuity, businesses will be relying heavily on their technological platforms working optimally. Therefore, analysis of the needs and the identification for process improvements, re-engineering or redesign must occur in order to facilitate the influx move to online/ computer-based operations.

- What mechanisms have your entity considered for customer service queries? Utilising a frequently asked tab on your website or automating your business WhatsApp account or Facebook page can serve to calm customer fears and limit misinformation.
- Safety professionals must actively train employees on the safe use and disposal of the personal protective equipment such as gloves, surgical masks or N95 respirators. The training ensures that employees gain the relevant information to limit the transmission of the virus and hence helping to protect employees. Let us not neglect training on the proper hygiene at work and at home.
- Businesses can contemplate outsourcing the disinfection of your workplace, especially the isolation areas to ensure the optimal sanitation of your resources. If the business temporarily closes their physical locations, the re-entry should be properly planned which includes full sanitisation of all spaces with special emphasis on areas repeatedly touched by more than one person. Good business continuity planning dictates that these arrangement are made even before the closure of the business to guarantee your access to the best outsourced firms.

While these are only a few considerations for businesses during this period of our nation, it is essential that businesses review or execute business impact analyses to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses after any likely or impending closure.

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