



While the coronavirus continues to cause serious health implications for hundreds of thousands of people across the world, the impact on businesses and the economy is likely to be unprecedented.

Over the last eight weeks, companies have had to adapt their normal practices against highly uncertain and rapidly developing circumstances.

For almost all, responding to the coronavirus

pandemic has presented challenges unlike any other crisis.

The scale, global reach, unpredictability and the personal impact on every member of staff, has placed unparalleled pressure on business leaders.

As the world finally comes up for air and companies begin to look to a very different future, we take a look back over what lessons can be learnt from effectively managing this crisis.

1

Strong leadership

In an unpredictable crisis where the goalposts are ever moving, business leaders must recognise their limits and surround themselves with a strong multi-disciplinary team that will challenge from every angle.

When speed is of the essence it is all too easy to become blindsided by a single challenge, lose sight that your purpose should be built around what is best for your people (namely their health,

safety and wellbeing), and make snap decisions without considering all the facts.

The rapid mobilisation of a strong crisis management structure, made up of several layers and with clear roles and responsibilities, will keep decisions aligned to a strong sense of purpose and support actions that consider every corner of the business.

2

Collaboration is king

In March 2020, UK construction activity reportedly declined at the fastest pace since the financial crisis in 2009 as many companies ceased work as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

It is vital that the industry recognises that everyone is in this together, that there is strength in numbers and that a crisis is not a time for competition or personal gain. The construction sector, in particular, is made up of small, medium and large businesses. Some will be more resilient than others but the long-term survival of all parties will determine the strength of the industry as a whole,

and the rate at which it returns to full capability and operation.

During the last eight weeks Mace has worked closely with industry bodies, other tier one contractors and global consultants and our supply chain in an attempt to tackle the crisis together as an industry.

If a global pandemic doesn't compel a united front, nothing will. Working together, taking time to understand each other's challenges and sharing lessons should not be underestimated.

3

Clear, consistent, compassionate communication

By 1st April 2020, almost 1m people had been diagnosed with coronavirus and it had claimed almost 50,000 deaths world-wide.

Few businesses had ever had to deal with such wide-spread personal concern. Coupled with new working practices and business uncertainty the need to quickly and carefully communicate with workforces became an overnight challenge.

In times of such uncertainty, employees need regular, honest updates that acknowledge the enormity of the situation but don't sugar coat or shy away from difficult announcements.

Building trust from the outset will help employees to understand the scale of the challenge and appreciate that, where answers cannot be given, they will be tackled head-on and efficiently when possible.

The need for information shouldn't be underestimated. It is almost impossible to over communicate at a time when you are asking more of your employees than ever before, in terms of their support.

4

Understand your data

In the construction and real estate industries, access to live project and corporate data has never been more important.

Throughout a crisis, where the landscape is changing rapidly and decisive action is crucial, business data will support a measured approach and reduce the risk of error.

Different challenges require different data. In the resilience phase, businesses needed to understand their exact position quickly – whether that's their cash balances or the number of workers on site each day. On the return to work, it is the productivity KPIs that will be key – the business will need to be constantly checking

to make sure that it is genuinely returning to an effective level of production.

It's important that data is additionally used in forward planning. Predicting trends for the future can be a challenge during such turbulent times, however data-driven scenario planning will enable businesses to gain some control and provide reassurance for risk analysis.

As we approach the next stage of this crisis – returning to work safely and looking to re-build productivity – we must not lose sight of the lessons we have learnt on accessing and utilising data.

5

Look to the future

A recent study by Building UK highlighted that up to 23 April 2020, just 15% of construction companies had a plan in place for how to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

While management of a crisis focuses on addressing immediate challenges and creating broad resilience to an evolving situation, it is vital for businesses to keep one eye on how to return to scale.

New strategies and business plans will require a high degree of flexibility that details direction and actions in relation to forecasted outcomes rather than rigid commitments.

As crisis management teams mobilise into delivering against new plans they will need to work within a fluid scope that can be adapted as the landscape changes.

Despite working with so much uncertainty there will always be opportunities. In this very unique situation it would be naive to think that a new normal won't exist and businesses that can identify opportunities to redefine or reinvent themselves will rise out of the crisis stronger.



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