

ENTERPRISE

**NAVIGATING THE ROAD
TO RECOVERY:**

A Checklist to Guide Your Organization's Re-opening



Introduction

Canada is gradually beginning to emerge from a crisis unlike anything we've experienced in our lifetimes.

Each week, governments are easing more emergency measures and scaling back lockdown orders that were put in place to slow the spread of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Thankfully, after the collective sacrifices we've made over the past few months, we're taking steps on the road to recovery. But the way ahead remains uncertain. It won't be easy to navigate. Until we have a vaccine or an effective treatment to beat this virus, it will remain a serious threat to our health and our economy.

It's clear we can't just go back to normal. What we used to know as our normal operating environment doesn't exist anymore. We're in the midst of a decisive moment that will define who you are as a company for years. Major change is coming to virtually every aspect of life as we know it and the implications for business are profound.

So, what can we do to strike the right balance? How can we reopen the economy while continuing to follow necessary safety precautions to fight COVID-19?

Enterprise offers the following checklist of eight critical steps you need to be thinking about, preparing for and taking action on today to survive and thrive in our new normal.

ONE

GO BEYOND COMPLIANCE

The returning customer and employee will be looking for more than the bare minimum of what the government requires on personal protective equipment, distancing protocols and operations.

We may have all been cooped up for the past few months, but that doesn't necessarily mean we'll all be ready to embrace our growing freedom in the same way. Fear and anxiety over the unknowns tied to COVID-19 will persist. Companies can set themselves apart and regain consumer confidence by putting measures in place that exceed public health standards. The quality of your safety precautions – provided they aren't overly cumbersome and complicated – can serve as a competitive advantage. It's important to remember that welcoming reticent clients back isn't just about making them feel physically safe, but also creating an experience that takes their mental wellbeing into consideration and makes them feel less at risk.

TWO

OWN YOUR REPUTATION

How you act during the recovery phase is a corporate reputation moment. Frequent, authentic and honest communications with internal and external audiences are required.

One of the keys to emerging from any crisis with as little reputational damage as possible is clear, honest communication. Bouncing back from the pandemic – and the economic downturn created by it – will require companies to re-evaluate what their audiences need to hear. Rolling out the same old narrative and messages you relied on pre-pandemic won't ring true no matter who you're trying to reach – customers, staff or decision-makers. You need to keep your communications in step with the current operating environment and changing public safety protocols.

People want to hear from leadership, not nameless, faceless organizations. Leaders can help humanize your values and deliver emotional, real messages that will resonate with audiences that are primed to reconnect. It's also critical to enlist frontline employees to help re-establish lines of communication. When they're treated well, it's more likely they will treat your customers well. By protecting the safety of frontline staff and arming them with accurate, comprehensive information, they can serve more effectively as company ambassadors and demonstrate your values. The companies that will do best in times of uncertainty are those with relationships built on trust and loyalty.

THREE

INCREASE SUPPORT FOR YOUR STAFF

At a time when many are feeling significant mental health strain, employers will increasingly be judged by the support and care they provide employees.

After years of being treated as an afterthought, mental health has come to the forefront, with three out of four Canadians saying they have felt some form of mental strain since the pandemic hit. Not everyone is going to be psychologically ready at the same time for the return to a physical workplace after working from home for the past few months. Companies need to lead with empathy by acknowledging the increased anxiety levels of employees and taking action to offer additional mental health supports. Returning staff may require creative options to ease the transition, such as flexible hours to avoid crowded public transit, child care solutions for kids who aren't in school or rotating schedules to encourage physical distancing at the office.

Leadership should also foster a mindset among staff to take more responsibility to take better care of each other through simple actions, like checking in regularly with team members and offering moral support when possible.

Government has never been bigger, more trusted and involved in every aspect of the economy than today. Engagement with government is critical to ensure you have the right supports if you require them and have a say in policies that affect your business.

Everyone is watching how we handle reopening the economy and how it affects our COVID rates. As painful as it may be, governments at all levels have signaled they will not hesitate to tighten up restrictions again, if our rates of infection return to trending in the wrong direction.

While there's a rush to open, if you don't do it correctly there could be serious consequences. As governments ramp up scrutiny, there will be less leniency for businesses who fail to comply with the safety measures. You need to keep an ear to the ground and stay connected with rapidly changing public health directives and government protocols to make certain you're following them properly.

FOUR

ADOPT A PUBLIC AFFAIRS MINDSET

FIVE

LEAD ON DIGITAL TRANS- FORMATION

Accelerate your shift to mobile, social media and e-commerce solutions to ensure customer and client relationships can endure prolonged physical distance.

The pandemic has forced us to recalibrate what ‘fast’ means. Many organizations have already embarked on digital transformations overhaul and modernize operations. But what may have been initially conceived of pre-pandemic as a multi-year plan should really be rolled out in a matter of months. It’s critical to shift to digital to benefit from the new marketplace rising out of the ashes of the lockdown.

Consider how two very different sectors – healthcare and hospitality – have landed quick successes in some areas by urgently ramping up their digital capabilities to overcome physical distancing. Virtual visits with physicians and healthcare professionals are now already commonplace where just a few months ago they were rare. Many restaurants have successfully reinvented how they reach diners through apps and digital tools, keeping customers satisfied even without the physical experience of dining in.

Your digital transformation has to be more than just shifting meetings to web conferencing. You need to exploit every digital tool at your disposal to reach consumers who will now interact with businesses in fundamentally different ways. The economy we’re gradually reopening is a consumer’s market. Digital is no longer just about convenience – it’s also about health and safety.

SIX

BUILD IN FLEXIBILITY

Whether it's a second wave or the patchwork of regulations and openings, you need to be prepared to open/close/modify your business with little notice for the foreseeable future.

For all of us who have lived through this pandemic, a public health and economic crisis of this magnitude will never be unprecedented again – you know it could come again, so you to prepare for it.

Public health officials across Canada and around the world have warned us to expect a second wave of COVID-19 or at the very least significant spikes, which will require some form of response. Without better access to testing and a vaccine, the most effective way we can reduce the risk is by doing what we are doing now – physical distancing.

Because we may have to live with this virus for years, there will be long-term value in investments that better protect staff and customers, such as office renovations, tools to digitize operations and replacing temporary safety measures (plexiglass shields and other distancing equipment) with more permanent ones.

While growing internationally has long been the goal of Canadian companies who want to reach a broader audience, it will be necessary for many organizations to focus on customers closer to home.

The pandemic has disrupted transportation networks and supply chains around the globe. Different countries – and different regions within them – have implemented a variety of restrictions that affect the supply of goods and services. There's a need in the short-term to develop greater self-sufficiency where possible and build domestic supply chains.

Consumer appetites have also shifted along with the changing economic landscape. Reconsider your customer base and make sure they are still with you. Have your demographics changed? A focus on local target markets – either in your city, province or across the country – could also reveal potential customers who have changed their appetite since the pandemic and may now be worth a renewed effort to reach.

Pay attention to what's happening in other jurisdictions that are reopening ahead of Canada – such as parts of Europe – to see if there are lessons that can be applied here.

THINK LOCAL

SEVEN

ELIGHT

OWN THE FUTURE

Don't get lost in the day to day. Now is the time to make a big bet on how COVID-19 will change customers, businesses and demands for years to come.

We see three main phases to navigating the pandemic:

THE RESILIENCE PHASE: What emergency measures are needed to help people survive?

THE RECOVERY PHASE: How do we get our economy back on its feet?

THE RENEWAL PHASE: How do we adapt and evolve to thrive in our new economic reality?

Currently, we are in the midst of recovery and heading towards renewal.

Now is the time to reinvent and reshape. Out of crisis, opportunity is born. Many companies have had to take a long look at themselves over the past few months and acknowledge flaws and vulnerabilities in their business models. Take the time for an operational audit and keep an eye out for legacy processes that no longer fit with our new economy and eliminate them.

Follow the lead of companies like Canadian e-commerce giant Shopify, which has begun the process of reinventing itself. Shopify recently announced it has gone “digital by default” and will allow most staff to work from home permanently as it reshapes.

So, use this rebuilding time as a springboard to aim higher. Right now customers and employees have a high tolerance for businesses adapting and learning as they go, even if it means a few missteps along the way.

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