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Now Is the Time for Leaders to Focus Post-COVID

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A photograph of a man in a dark suit, light blue shirt, and striped tie, standing next to a dark green chalkboard. The text "WHAT WILL BE AFTER COVID-19?" is written on the chalkboard in white chalk. The man is standing with his hands in his pockets, and the chalkboard is the background for the text.

WHAT WILL BE AFTER
COVID-19?

Though the end of this pandemic is still uncertain and undoubtedly still in the future, it's clear that in the business world, the initial crisis management response is becoming admittedly stagnant. In the first few days and weeks the focus for leaders was on safety and risk mitigation. There wasn't really enough time to understand what was going on, only that the world was about to turn upside down. Quick decisions were made to protect the health and well-being of both employees and customers. That was the first phase.

The second phase was greater understanding. We had a name for the disease and lists of symptoms – and it had the newly minted label of *pandemic*. As the awareness of its longer-term impact on our businesses grew, new processes began to emerge around remote workers, social distancing, safety measures, communication best practices, and more. A new norm has steadily been established amidst the uncertainty. But even this phase is temporary.

As the level of panic continues to taper off, leaders are shifting their focus to post-COVID business planning. The key question is, “what’s next?” Planning for the future, for the post-peak economic and business landscape, is going to be a delicate endeavor. No one wants to appear opportunistic, but the truth is that leaders must start asking what new doors may have opened up to them – and which ones have closed. Once they’ve picked up the pieces of this mess, which of those pieces do they keep, repair, and strengthen – and which should they consign to the past? Many companies have experienced tremendous strain on specific areas of their organization and infrastructure – where they may have once settled for mediocre performance, weaknesses have come to light that must be addressed moving forward. What can be learned about their existing strategies, best practices, and processes during this time? What might carry over into the future and what needs evolving – or even overhauling?

Outside of each company's own four walls, leaders need to understand how the marketplace has evolved and how they respond and adapt accordingly. What do they need to do to create and maintain a sustainable business for the months and years ahead? How are they connecting with customers despite the shifts in their own behaviors and expectations? How can they align strategy and bolster their leadership teams accordingly?

Finally, we can't ignore the fact that the COVID-19 situation will not dissipate overnight. [Starbucks is an excellent example of a company](#) that, in planning the way forward, is taking a “monitor and adapt” approach. Post-COVID business planning *must* include contingencies that respond to any data and trends that emerge in regards to the virus itself.

Ultimately, now is the time for leaders to bolster the resilience of their organization and

prepare for the business landscape ahead.

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