



# COVID-19 BUSINESS CONTINUITY GUIDE





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## ► FOREWORD

Friends

The coronavirus (**COVID-19**) pandemic outbreak is impacting businesses all over the world. Whether your operations are already greatly affected, or the impacts are yet to be felt, a business continuity plan is essential to ensure you can be as resilient as possible in this global health crisis.

It is understandable to feel overwhelmed by the health and economic challenges posed by COVID-19. But we must focus on those things we can control. Preparedness is a critical factor in determining the likelihood your business will remain afloat. If you have not done so already, it is imperative that you put a plan in place to maintain business continuity.

This document serves as a high-level guide to business continuity to assist your business in weathering COVID-19, based around four key principles: Plan, Adapt, Monitor and Assess (**PAMA**).

I invite you to reach out to your local chamber of commerce and trade association for advice more tailored to your region and sector. Please also review government websites for business support schemes as they are progressively rolled out.

These are challenging times, but with preparedness, pragmatism and determination, we will prevail.

All the best



**John W.H. Denton AO**  
Secretary General  
International Chamber of Commerce

## ► ICC PRINCIPLES OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC PREPARATION: PAMA

Businesses can play a major role in combatting the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, but will inevitably be impacted, both by the virus itself and by the public health measures taken to limit its effects.

Having a **Plan** will ensure that disruption to your business is minimised and resilience enhanced.

When you begin to experience disruption, it is essential that you **Adapt** across all operations to ensure business continuity.

As the situation develops, you should **Monitor** public health advice as well as government support programmes for your business and employees.

The fluid nature of the pandemic requires you to continuously **Assess** your COVID-19 business continuity plan, and amend as necessary.

Following **PAMA** will help protect employees, customers and local communities—and ultimately make your business more resilient during this difficult period.

### PLAN

- Create a company taskforce on pandemic preparedness within your company
- Assess the importance of business activities
- Conduct a business continuity scenario analysis
- Assign roles for COVID-19 mitigation activities
- Establish an internal communications strategy
- Establish an external communications strategy
- Explore business continuity management programmes



### ADAPT

- Protect your employees
- Devise a working from home procedure
- Maintain capital and cash flow
- Identify supply chain risks
- Plan to close some of your locations



### MONITOR

- Monitor the situation to determine a change in severity
- Monitor local transportation restrictions
- Monitor business continuity advice from local sources
- Monitor government support announcements



### ASSESS

- Continuously review your pandemic preparedness plan

## ► PLAN

### Create a company taskforce on pandemic preparedness

Creating a key team of people who can focus their energies on the business impacts of COVID-19 will enhance the resilience of your business.

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What business units are critical to the continued functioning of the business?
- Within those business units, who is best placed to address COVID-19 disruptions and lead design and implementation of relevant mitigation activities?
- What are your flagship products or services?
- Can I keep key team members physically separate to reduce risk of transmission?
- Are the reporting lines in my taskforce clear?



### Assess the importance of business activities

(e.g. critical IT infrastructure vs business development)

A disruption on the scale of COVID-19 calls for ruthless prioritisation of business activities. Undertaking this exercise will ensure energies are focused on the COVID-19 response and maintaining essential business functions.

In many instances this means focusing only on your key products and services: those flagship products or the services that draw customers to you.

If possible, analyse activities along a spectrum of possible COVID-19 impact: low, moderate and severe.

LOW	MODERATE	SEVERE
Limited community transmissions (low number of isolated cases)	Community transmission (no longer contained; increased number of confirmed cases and rapid spread)	Community transmission prevalent (virus widespread; much of local community infected or recovered)

In so doing you can tailor your business response to the situation on the ground, and evolve your response as necessary.

### Conduct a business continuity scenario analysis

A business continuity scenario analysis looks at the expected government policy response, and your potential business response to the spectrum of possible COVID-19 impacts.

A sample business continuity scenario analysis is provided as **Annexure 1** to this guide.

### Assign roles for COVID-19 mitigation activities

As part of your business continuity scenario analysis, you should plan potential mitigation activities for a given business function. In doing so, it is essential that you assign responsible parties to each mitigation activity to ensure issue ownership and accountability.

Here is an example for an “inventory specialist” business function:

COVID-19 Impact	LOW (little to no forecasted impact on supply chain)	MODERATE (supply chains disrupted, alternative sources available)	SEVERE (total supply chain disruption; no alternative sources)
Mitigation actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Engage with key suppliers</li><li>&gt; Ascertain expected supply interruptions</li><li>&gt; Purchase buffer stock</li><li>&gt; Devise supplier diversification plan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Implement supplier diversification plan</li><li>&gt; Maintain frequent contact with key suppliers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Re-evaluate production capacity</li><li>&gt; Re-evaluate supplier capacity (daily)</li></ul>
Responsible person:	[X]	[X]	[X]

We have provided a template business unit continuity analysis at **Annexure 2** of this guide to assist you in your planning.

## Establish an internal communications strategy

Your internal communications on COVID-19 will have a direct impact on the morale and productivity of your employees.

Consider using a combination of emails, intranet postings, flyers or posters, leader talking points, FAQs or a digital hub, as appropriate.

In devising an internal communications strategy, it is important that you identify simple key messages and a reliable process for providing continual updates and collecting feedback from employees.

You will want to think through how to communicate several different possible developments.

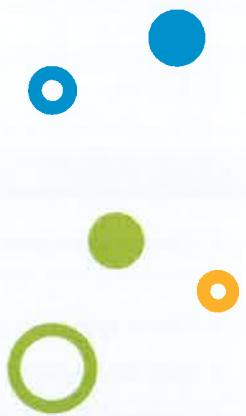
### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- > How will you respond to various scenarios (e.g. school closures, quarantine of areas, employees suspected or confirmed to be infected)?
- > How will you communicate:
  - what the plans are and what employees must do to prepare?
  - whether a plan has been enacted?
- > How will you respond to rumours and anxiety among your employees?
- > How and when will you make an “all clear” announcement and a potential return to standard processes?
- > How will you handle staff concerns regarding job security?



## SOME TIPS

- > State the facts
- > Demystify employee fear and outline the steps you are taking on behalf of your employees
- > Promote safety steps that employees can take at work (see under Adapt)
- > Describe the impact on your business
- > Summarise company policies and positions (on insurance coverage, paid or unpaid leave, payroll continuation, travel, group meetings etc.)
- > Explain working-from-home policies
- > Promote safe travel policies
- > Hold regular calls to avoid isolation
- > Where possible use videoconferencing
- > Identify opportunities for staff reskilling



## Establish an external communications strategy

Whether you are in a consumer-facing industry, or provide business-to-business services, how you engage with your external stakeholders will leave a lasting impact on your reputation.

Work with your marketing and communications teams to develop a communications plan to address external stakeholders, including suppliers, customers, news media, investors, partners, analysts, etc.

Align external communications with your internal communications strategy (keep employees in the loop on what messages are being delivered externally).

Develop messages and provide latest information to your customer-facing team members, such as service and sales, and ensure you have clear messaging on what COVID-19 means for client support.

## Explore business continuity management programs

There are several business continuity management (**BCM**) digital programmes available on the market, from insurers and risk advisory service firms. Some are offering free or discounted access in response to COVID-19. Investing in these services can enable you to improve business resilience, make priority-based plans, and implement recovery procedures.

## ► ADAPT

### Protect your employees

Your first priority should be maintaining the physical and mental wellbeing of your people. Here are a few suggestions on how to minimise risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19.

If the situation in your area worsens, you may need to close offices and, where possible, shift to working from home.

#### SOME TIPS

- **Clean workspaces and shared items** (door handles, copy machines/printers, breakrooms, remotes, light switches) three times daily.
- **Place sanitizer** at entryways and provide employees with disinfecting wipes.
- **Reinforce handwashing procedures** and other methods to limit virus exposure.
- **Implement sanitising procedures** multiple times a shift in high traffic areas, such as retail and restaurant environments.
- **Reduce office capacity** by implementing staggered arrival, departure and break times.
- **Modify workstations or stagger hours** to increase space between staff, guests and clients.
- **Schedule video or phone calls** instead of face to face meetings.
- **Ask delivery drivers to call upon arrival** and/or leave items outside the office instead of entering the lobby or reception area.
- **Place signs on entrances** requesting that sick guests do not enter the building.
- **Practice social distancing** by maintaining a 1-metre distance between staff and visitors.
- **Use alternate greetings** such as waving or bowing.
- **Empower staff** to disclose and stay at home if they develop any symptoms.



### Devise a working-from-home procedure

If the situation demands your employees work from home, here are some things to think about:

**Ensure you have the proper technology:** Employees will need computers, email, phone conferencing programmes, and access to internal networks.

**Use a secure connection:** If possible, employees should have a secured Wi-Fi network and use a virtual private network (VPN).

**Store critical business data on the cloud:** Your employees will need access to files and business systems from a remote location, including human resources, payroll and customer relationship management software. If you do not have an online repository of business-critical information, investigate low-cost options to securely store your data online.

**Implement communications programmes:** There are several free or low-cost programmes on the market to ensure seamless communication among employees, including messaging services. Regular contact should be maintained to ensure workers do not feel isolated.

**Trust your employees:** You will not have full visibility of your employees during this time. It will be important for you to trust your employees to get their work done under limited supervision.

## Maintain capital and cash flow

As COVID-19 begins to impact your business operations, you may experience financial hardship. It will be important to both:

**Increase the frequency of working capital checks:** abrupt changes in demand can have a significant impact on your working capital; and

**Explore concessionary loans or grants from government to support cash flow:** All over the world, cities, states and national governments are rolling out business support programmes, including wage subsidies, loan guarantees, temporary relief from insolvent trading laws, and tax deferrals. Explore all options and regularly monitor the situation as further programmes are rolled out.

## Identify supply chain risks

COVID-19 has disrupted global supply chains on a grand scale. Whether or not your business has been affected, it pays to proactively mitigate any present or future risks in your supply chains. Following these steps can assist:

### 1. Proactively engage with partners in your supply chain

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Do your suppliers have business continuity plans in place throughout COVID-19?
- What level of service do your customers expect during the pandemic?

### 2. Identify supply chain disruption risks

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Are there specific regions or sectors within your supply chain that are adversely affected by COVID-19?
- Can you implement an “early warning system” using supply chain risk assessment tools?

### 3. Assess opportunities to diversify sourcing or production

## Plan to close some of your locations

Depending on the level of COVID-19 impact in your area of operation, you may need to close locations. In doing so, here are some questions to ask:

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Are there equipment maintenance issues to manage during a closure?
- Do I have adequate security in place when sites are closed?
- Have I informed all relevant stakeholders of the closure (including employees, contractors, suppliers)?
- Have I forwarded deliveries to an alternate site?
- Can I encourage a move towards providing documentation electronically?
- How can I provide effective support for displaced workers?



## ► MONITOR

### **Monitor the situation to determine a change in severity**

Source information from reputable sources. On public health guidance, seek information from the [World Health Organization](#) and the national and subnational health services in your areas of operation.

### **Monitor local transportation restrictions**

As the situation develops, many governments are putting in place restrictions on movement that could have a direct impact on your business. Measures include restrictions on freight movement, the creation of travel windows and suspension of public transport services. Be sure to regularly check reputable sources for the latest information.

### **Monitor business continuity advice from local sources**

Ask your local government authority and chamber of commerce whether they are providing location-specific COVID-19 business continuity advice. Sector-specific trade associations can also be great sources of information and advice on COVID-19 impacts.

### **Monitor government support announcements**

Many governments are setting up small business assistance schemes. Be sure to regularly check for updates from your local, state and national governments.

## ► ASSESS

### **Continuously review your pandemic preparedness plan.**

Be willing to adapt as necessary as the situation on the ground changes.

## ANNEXURE 1 - SAMPLE BUSINESS CONTINUITY SCENARIO ANALYSIS - CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

Impact Level of COVID-19	LOW	MODERATE	SEVERE
<b>Brief Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited community transmissions (low number of isolated cases).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community transmission (no longer contained; increased number of confirmed cases and rapid spread).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community transmission prevalent (virus widespread; much of local community infected or recovered).</li> </ul>
<b>Potential government response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education centres and workplaces remain open.</li> <li>No cancellation of major events/large scale gathering.</li> <li>Limited travel restrictions applied.</li> <li>Quarantine period only applies to contact with confirmed cases, return travellers from restricted countries and symptoms.</li> <li>Some minor disruptions to supply chains.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large scale gatherings/events cancelled.</li> <li>Some educational institutions/childcare centres shut down temporarily.</li> <li>Some workplaces shut down temporarily.</li> <li>Government-imposed quarantining of sections of the community.</li> <li>Extension of travel restrictions.</li> <li>Moderate disruption to supply chains.</li> <li>Delays in getting tested for COVID-19.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any group gathering banned.</li> <li>Large proportion of community in quarantine lockdown.</li> <li>Most/all educational institutions, childcare centres shut down longer term.</li> <li>Most workplaces shut down longer term.</li> <li>Significant travel restrictions applied.</li> <li>Major disruption to supply chains.</li> <li>Health care system struggling to manage caseload (testing and result return significantly delayed).</li> </ul>
<b>Example business response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff continue to work in the office as normal.</li> <li>Testing of potential flexible work arrangements in preparation for possible escalation.</li> <li>Provide supplies to support good hygiene.</li> <li>Roll out an internal communications campaign.</li> <li>Government-directed quarantine measures applied.</li> <li>End non-essential work-related travel to restricted countries.</li> <li>Social distancing measures applied (no shaking hands etc.).</li> <li>Non-essential face-to-face meetings postponed or undertaken by electronic (or other means), restrict length of meetings face-to-face.</li> <li>Review supply chain weaknesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some staff required to work remotely (high-risk/immune compromised etc.).</li> <li>Testing of potential flexible work arrangements in preparation for possible escalation.</li> <li>All work travel to high and moderate risk countries cancelled (domestic work travel significantly restricted).</li> <li>Wherever possible, no face-to-face meetings.</li> <li>High-risk events cancelled.</li> <li>Potentially sections of the business quarantined.</li> <li>Self-assessment questionnaires for external parties before entering office (e.g. contractors).</li> <li>Potentially flexing hours; avoid public transport during peak time.</li> <li>Sourcing from diverse suppliers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole of business working remotely.</li> <li>Assumption that a large proportion of the workforce is ill or are undertaking caring responsibilities and unable to work (skeleton staff maintaining services).</li> <li>Complete travel ban.</li> <li>Complete face-to-face meeting ban.</li> <li>All events/training/seminars cancelled.</li> </ul>

| This table has been adapted, with thanks, from a Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA (CCIW) resource.

## ANNEXURE 2 – TEMPLATE BUSINESS UNIT CONTINUITY ANALYSIS

1. Identify the key business activities or business units affected
2. For each activity outline the impact on your business unit's operations and potential revenue impacts (positive and negative)
3. For each activity, outline mitigating actions (assign responsibilities for each)

BUSINESS UNIT (E.G. SALES)	Impact Level of COVID-19 (E.G. LOW)	IMPACT ON OPERATIONS AND REVENUE		Mitigation action A:  Mitigation action B:  Mitigation action C:  Mitigation action D:	Mitigation action A:  Mitigation action B:  Mitigation action C:  Mitigation action D:	Responsible person:  Responsible person:  Responsible person:  Responsible person:	Responsible person:  Responsible person:  Responsible person:  Responsible person:
		MODERATE	SEVERE				
MITIGATION ACTIONS							