



We are all facing a situation where the survival of individual businesses – or indeed the entire market – appears to be in question.

Recent survey's of more than 250 multinational companies (1) indicated that most are enacting a portfolio of reactive measures to COVID-19 such as autonomous working, contingencies for critical operations, and cost discipline. However very few multinational companies have initiated their recovery by identifying opportunities for future growth – less than 25% are reporting to have actioned paths to new sales growth, partnership opportunities, or prepared their supply chain for a rebound (1).

Yet history has shown businesses that are adaptive and proactive can survive and even thrive during crisis (2). They leave old habits behind, re-assess goals, re-focus strategy and create a new 'business as usual'. They are able to shape opportunity for future growth.

These survivors were both proactive in near term revenue and cost management and 'radically generous with customers and partners'(3). Business leaders must diligently set aside time each day to focus on the business opportunities within recovery. In this way, recovery will also become a growth opportunity.

This effort require both creativity and discipline; which is the capacity to create and evolve mental models of situations that don't exist (4), and the discipline to thoughtfully and aggressively manage costs. While these abilities appear to be incompatible, they actually provide a balance between the empathy necessary to support people and the need to maintain the economics of a business (3).

While the concept of 'doing more with less' is usually a morale killer (4), inventive alternatives can be found to reduce demand on cash flow and increase resources including people and assets. Consider the following examples;

- A company planning to cut a department considered "low-hanging fruit" to save costs paused and reflected – resulting in a solution that distributed cost-savings more broadly across the organization, easing the burden for all (4).

- A consulting business focussed on launching innovations to market did not stop work. They were open with their team on business needs; adjusted their focus and set up systems for collaboration. This honesty fostered creative thinking and new customer growth. In a similar vein to Tesla with its autopilot software launch, they focussed on honesty and engagement with their customers (3).
- Hyundai demonstrated generosity with their customers following the 2008 recession. Their campaign promised customers they would buy back a vehicle they purchased if they lost their job. The following year their sales grew by almost 24% (3).
- In a similar theme for partnerships, an organisation shared people on a part time basis across operational units; effectively lowering the burden on cash flow but retaining access to key skills and talent for critical business functions.

Businesses are all having to think, operate, and lead in new ways. We must survive and thrive with humanity, humility and honesty. Indeed, “dark times are when legendary companies and leaders are forged”(3).

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