Deloitte.

Addressing the impact of COVID-19
Teaming to provide continuity in uncertain time

Black Swan events are the most unpredictable, biggest game-changing events to impact our global economies, ecosystems, businesses, leaders, and their teams.

"The rapid global spread of COVID-19 has quickly eclipsed other recent epidemics in both size and scope. In addition to the deadly human toll and the disruption to millions of people's lives, the economic damage is already significant and far-reaching. In the face of certain challenges and a still-uncertain set of risks, business leaders are rightly concerned about how their companies will be affected and what they have to do next."[1]
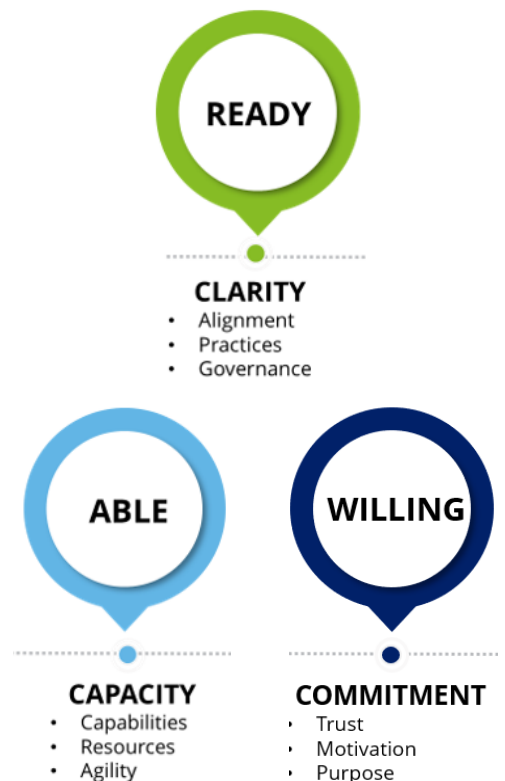
To fully triage and stabilize their organizations to meet this crisis at hand together, success often hinges on executives' ability to create high-performing, effective teams to manage proactively, positively, and calmly from a position of strength throughout uncertain times. Done well, companies and groups can leverage every layer of their structure to provide continuity—their leaders, workforce, teams, organizations, and their ecosystems. Research shows that even a one percent improvement in team effectiveness in an organization can yield up to an eighty percent improvement in workforce productivity[2]. Below are a few simple steps for preparing leadership teams to be ready, able, and willing to adapt how they organize, operate and behave in these uncertain times.

Preparing Your Leadership Teams

Crisis-ready organizations know that they must work quickly to build teams that can effectively be promoting safety and trust to its workforce and customers from the uncertainty that a crisis may present. For this to occur, leadership and their teams must rigorously prepare to guide employees and inform customers through the uncertain period, while trying to provide a safe "business as usual" and/or "critical services" environment for customers. Preparation begins with clear and detailed business continuity planning as well as periodic rehearsal sessions to help teams pivot in the event of a crisis. For businesses that do not have business continuity plans for unforeseen events, smart first steps include:

- **Select Team Leaders:** Choose top-tier, transformative leaders—those who are able and willing to engage stakeholders in fulfilling the missions and outcomes required throughout the crisis period. Both the executive leadership and triage leadership teams must be committed and patient. Uncertain environments require a steady hand, so it's imperative to find leaders who won't get flustered during this uncertain and dynamic time, which may include ppotential furloughs, salary freezes, salary cuts, or other cost-saving measures.

- **Define and Design High Performing Teams:** Highly aligned and effective teams that are ready, able, and willing to lean in and mitigate a crisis or manage a business continuity event should meet three broad conditions: Clarity, Capacity, and Commitment.

A Framework for Highly Aligned and Effective Teams:

READY

CLARITY
- Alignment
- Practices
- Governance

ABLE

WILLING

CAPACITY
- Capabilities
- Resources
- Agility

COMMITMENT
- Trust
- Motivation
- Purpose

1. "The heart of resilient leadership: Responding to COVID-19", Deloitte Global CEO, Punit Renjen, 16 March 2020)
2. Team Effectiveness and Perceived Employees' Performance in Nepalese Service Sector, International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management Volume 5, Issue 2, 2018, p. 1-10

Key questions to ask, and suggested actions:

How are you executing via the three Conditions of Highly Aligned and Effective Teams?

- **Ready – How are you creating clarity for your teams?** Create clarity through shared and aligned missions. Focus on value, meaning, and human interests at the heart of each team's mission. Successful teams in business continuity environments center on a clear mission and a set of core values, set by leadership. Further, each team must also have its own clear focus on a supporting mission. The number of desired missions sets the number of teams, and as outcomes change, teams shift to meet the new demands.

- **Able – How are you enabling and empowering your teams to create capacity to respond?** Facilitate iterative and empowered execution. Teams cannot thrive in new environments if leaders are stuck in old mindsets and ways of working. Empowered execution addresses how the team operates throughout its daily business continuity activities to continuously improve its outputs. Successful business continuity teams frequently adapt components of agile methods to keep teams aligned including daily stand-ups, iteration reviews, cross-team planning to handle more complex problems. Taken together, these methods help connect teams and support an appropriate environment for speed, accountability, and autonomy.

- **Willing – What actions are you taking to build trust and motivate your teams?** Establish commitment through a climate of psychological safety, fairness, and constructive conflict. Business continuity teams that have deliberately moved into the rhythm of trust, clear mutual accountability, and transparency are able to construct a safe climate that celebrates diversity of thought and anchors team members in the social purpose of the organization. With each member bringing diverse perspectives, unique skillsets, and broad experiences, the ability and potential to successfully to achieve the organization's purpose, mission, and outcomes grows.

How are you engaging your teams for success in these uncertain times?

- **How are you leading and teaming differently?** Crises and business continuity events call for new people management skills, especially if the event puts an organization with dramatically different social and business environments. Executive and functional leaders should be coached on what to say and do to help build confidence and move their organization in a positive direction. Training support should include establishing a collaborative environment with business continuity planning that is transparent and synchronized. This includes encouraging leaders to talk candidly with their people at every level and promote idea-sharing, as well as asking leaders to communicate specific ways their people can contribute to the organization's mission.

- **How are you cultivating patience while driving continuity?** Business continuity execution is an iterative process that for many employees may seem chaotic or disorganized. The resulting anxiety and frustration can interfere with effective day-to-day performance. Business continuity teams and their leaders should set realistic expectations for employee performance, allowing them time to adjust to new ways of doing business. When leaders inspire and model positive behaviors, they can help to ease employees' concerns resulting from ambiguity, thus allowing them to concentrate on delivering on what is being asked of them in disruptive situations.

> *"With the right approach, this crisis can become an opportunity to move forward and create even more value and positive societal impact, rather than just bounce back to the status quo."* [2]
>
> **Delivering in a crisis requires teams to demonstrate skills that go beyond those needed for business as usual. Aligning, acting and speaking as one, teams will empower and inspire employees to pull together and collectively achieve more than they ever imagined possible.**

Contact:

For more information on how to respond, recover and thrive:
- Connect to Deloitte leaders www.deloitte.com/COVID-19-leaders
- Visit www.deloitte.com/COVID-19