

## 7 Questions to Restart Smart

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As you contemplate turning on the office lights and unlocking the doors, here are 7 questions worth considering.

**Strategy:** You can't predict the future, especially in this age of discontinuity, but you can invent it. What overall direction will enable you to thread your way through the uncertain and troubling times ahead? *Actionable idea:* Run two scenarios: one assuming that COVID-19 is going to continue to interrupt "business as usual"; the other assuming that the development of a vaccine will arrest, or at least slow, its spread. In either case, avoid the extremes of doomsday thinking and undue optimism as you lay out your future product/market/capabilities/financial expectations.

**Leaders/Teams:** In this crisis, how do you ensure that the temptation to leap into action doesn't distract you from making sure that your actions are congruent with high-performance ways of working? This is a time for bread-and-butter basics. *Actionable idea:* Keep focused on the 5 alignment areas and remember to periodically self-assess. How are you doing as a team against these areas?

**Organization:** Are your current structure, systems, and technology infrastructure still up to the task? Organizations have become disembodied entities, with offices becoming at-home, electronic cottages. *Actionable idea:* Conduct an audit to ensure that reporting relationships, information flows, decision chains, and communication paths support your strategic and operational effectiveness.

**People:** How do you attract, retain, grow, motivate, engage, and manage talent in the face of the shift to remote working, the need for greater employee flexibility,

reductions in workforce, furloughs, and salary compression? *Actionable idea:* People work within a performance system. Focus on objectives, skill development and processes, positive and negative consequences for desired/undesired behavior, and feedback loops. Check each of these for clarity, alignment, and how well each is monitored.

**Customers:** How do you grow and engage customers, given changes in consumer behavior and the explosion of remote-buying patterns? *Actionable idea:* Stay focused on the "USPs" of your products and services: Think multichannel marketing/distribution; pinpoint messages to key buyers; check the realism of sales targets and incentive packages; build customer intimacy by staying in touch, especially in a "no-touch," remote-access era.

**Revenue/Profitability:** What are realistic revenue/profitability expectations—and are traditional financial control approaches sufficient? *Actionable idea:* Think zero-based control. What are the essential financial reporting systems and procedures that must be in place to ensure financial health? Avoid death by a thousand forms!

**Safety:** What's your plan/design to ensure a safe, sanitized workplace? It's not just about plexiglass partitions and hand sanitizers. *Actionable idea:* Pay attention to the human side of office dynamics. With new rules for social interaction and the need for social distancing and masks, conflict is unavoidable. Do you have in place agreed-upon protocols for conflict resolution? Are people properly trained in the discipline of conflict management? Absent this, opening your offices might just become an open-and-shut case!

