



10 Tips for Businesses on Responding to the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic & a Suggestion

Things small business owners should consider and do right now so you'll be better prepared to survive through the COVID-19 pandemic. These, incidentally, are smart preparations to undertake at any time, so you're not wasting the effort.

1. Look at your financials and cash flow.

How long can you "make it through" in case of a quarantine, lost wages, employee absenteeism (when you are paying for sick leave AND not bringing in revenue). What do you need to bridge the gap? Suggestion: Get a credit line approved now. You don't have to use it. But you'll have it when you need it.

2. Slash your overhead.

If you're worried about losing customers or employees due to sickness, school closures or possible quarantines, cut the things you don't HAVE to spend your money on.

3. Understand your insurance policy.

What does your insurance cover? What doesn't it cover? Ask about business interruption insurance; it may be too late to help you in this emergency, but you should know what it is, how it works, and how much it costs.

4. Look at your supply chains.

Are they diversified or are you relying on one source for your products? Supply chain management is essential in any global pandemic. Travel, workforce absenteeism, and financials will impact supply chains across the world. It's important you have multiple providers of a resource that is the core of your business.

5. Develop an incident response plan.

What do you have in place in case of a quarantine? Can your employees work from home? Can you sell online or deliver instead of staffing brick and mortar? What kind of technology can be implemented to reach your customers? What communication is in place to your customers and employees?

Identify essential functions and cross-train employees now so several can perform those tasks. Consider what programs or services could temporarily be shut down.

Think about potential disruptions in supplies, services and transportation in the likelihood those organizations experience employee absenteeism. Identify alternative vendors / suppliers / etc. and how to reach them.

6. Build capacity in the areas you will need it most!

Legal support

Financial support

Employee support

7. Practice Social Distancing!

Social distancing is a term applied certain action to stop or slow down the spread of a highly contagious disease. Here's some action items you can implement quickly in your business:

- Encourage staying more than three feet apart
- Do not high five, shake hands or have close physical contact
- Wash your hands more frequently and use hand sanitizer
- Clean and disinfect your work and customer areas more frequently
- Avoid touching your face, nose, or eyes

It may seem silly to have to continue to tell your employees to – wash your hands, cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough. But the truth is, habits are hard to break. Printing signs on your office printer can help as subtle reminders to your employees and customers to practice better personal hygiene – key to recovery from this illness, according to the public health experts.

8. Encourage Good Hygiene.

Purchase hand sanitizer and encourage employees to start using it or washing hands per health agency guidance (alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol or wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds). Begin a “no handshaking” protocol NOW so it's ingrained in our daily routine if/when things get worse.

Encourage employees to regularly clean their work areas. Be prepared to do a thorough cleaning of your facility should you need to if employees are directly affected and have been on the property.

9. Reevaluate your sick leave policies.

Under pandemic circumstances employees should be encouraged to stay at home beyond their currently authorized sick leave. Also take the time now to review what additional benefit options might be available to support and continue paying employees beyond usual sick leave periods when they may be infectious or need to stay home to take care of family members. An example would be “borrowing” sick leave from the next year, or providing “administrative leave.” Another approach is to establish special provisions just for COVID-19 circumstances.

10. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

Keep staff and customers informed and up-to-date on your operations. It's important for businesses to keep in touch with customers to help maintain them through this incident.

A suggestion:

If you are planning a large event, small event, or a gathering...try not to cancel those events. The other small businesses you are working with depend on that cash flow too to survive. Rather, look at your contracts and see if you can reschedule the event for later in the year when this crisis subsides.