



Stand Strong After COVID-19 Disruption: Steps to take now

COVID 19 is an unprecedented world-wide disruption in this era of globalization, impacting the bulk of small businesses everywhere. As a small business owner or entrepreneur what can you do now? In our first topic – Business Model Assessment, we shared on sitting down with your team and assessing your Business Model.

In this second step, the spotlight is on small business owners/entrepreneurs implementing on short notice a strategy for Capacity Building within their respective organizational structure. What is Capacity Building? According to BusinessDictionary.com, Capacity Building is planned development of (or increase in) knowledge, output rate, management, skills, and other capabilities of an organization through acquisition, incentives, technology, and/or training. Let's zoom in on the training facet as the means of increasing knowledge, skills and other capabilities designated as Capacity Building.

COVID 19 disruption has only elevated the urgency and permitted small businesses the occasion to plan, implement, evaluate and improve the Capacity Building strategy with short-term, mid-term and long-term goals.

In the past, small businesses avoided this key step on the grounds that it was expensive and time-consuming. The COVID 19 disruption has invalidated both of these arguments. Countless online educational resources have announced free or affordable trainings, and time can be found now, that many small businesses are at half capacity or less, if not completely at a standstill. Prioritize investing in your number one asset, your employees.

[Gallup.com/Workplace](https://www.gallup.com/workplace) affirms value of Capacity Building

- organizations that make strategic investments in employee development report 11% greater profitability
- these same organizations are twice as likely to retain their employees

Step 2. Build Team Capacity

Think through and ask the following questions:

- How has COVID 19 affected the business?
- What changes do I have to implement in my operations and management to become more efficient, effective and profitable?
- How has productivity been affected? Have my employees lost motivation? Are they feeling confused or fearful of what the future may look like in this business?
- To what degree have we as a business invested in building team capacity before COVID 19? Was it a priority? How did we view Capacity Building? As an afterthought, or as a costly expense? Do I now view it as a necessary investment in building our number one asset, our employees?
- How can we build team capacity and be prepared to reach peak performance during the Recovery Phase of COVID 19?

- What type of training should I focus on during Response Phase of COVID 19 and after, during the Recovery Phase?
- What trainings are urgent and/or essential? Schedule in the short-term. What trainings are not urgent and/or nonessential? These can be scheduled in the mid-term or long-term timeframe.
- What key areas should be focused on? Safety regulations and procedures during a pandemic, new employee policies and norms, whole wellness (body, mind and emotional), operations and management tools, customer service and experience during COVID 19 and customer service and experience after COVID 19 are just a couple of pertinent topics.

Essential Capacity Building During COVID 19

Communication

Consistent and meaningful communication is essential in order to build and maintain engagement, positivity, trust, relevance, strong connections, and ownership of revised Business Model and Company Culture. Be open to question and answers (Q & A) sessions to keep the whole team informed to daily and weekly updates on all pertinent topics that will affect the business, employees, customers and community during and after COVID 19. Under no circumstances should your business go back to doing things as before the crisis.

Safety

Monitor each employee health but maintain confidentiality. Build your team by being empathetic to needs (work-based, personal, health and emergencies). Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) offers general guidelines for employers and employees at [OSHA: Control Prevention](#)

Emergency Response Guidelines:

If nonexistent, now is the time to create, implement and train your whole team on emergency response steps and guidelines.

Inform your team on:

- employment laws which pertain to COVID 19 disruption and how these laws may change once the Recovery Phase is up and running
- revised federal, state, and business sector policies
- guidelines on work responsibilities during COVID 19 and after (include work-from-home policies)

COVID 19 Resources to access:

U.S. Small Business Administration - [SBA: Coronavirus \(COVID 19\) - Small Business Guidance & Loan](#)

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - [EEOC: Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - [CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019, \(COVID-19\), May 2020](#)

Along with the stated recommendations, COVID 19 Disruption is a timely turning point to install new tech tools, train the whole team, evaluate the implementation and make any necessary adjustments in order to make your operational and management processes efficient and effective. In the long-term, this will positively impact your reduction in costs and savings in time across the board.

Moving forward towards the Recovery Phase as a small business owner/entrepreneur requires the pivoting of your business. No better time than now to assess and build team capacity and strengthen company culture. A high performance business team will only be the end-result of a well-developed Capacity Building program. Invest in your team, and your team will invest in your small business.

Community and Economic Development and Farm, Food and Enterprise Development of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach have built a Business Development team to serve Iowans with direct Technical Assistance on assessing your Business Model. For more information contact Victor Oyervides, Retail Business Specialist, at (319) 321-9623 or oyervide@iastate.edu.

The set of “Stand Strong After COVID-19 Disruption: Steps to take now” Series is part of tools and resources that the Iowa Retail Initiative of Community and Economic Development of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. To learn about these resources and the complete Iowa Retail Initiative program visit <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/iowa-retail-initiative> and contact Lisa Bates, Community Development Specialist, at (515) 357-8185 or lbates@iastate.edu.

Our next topic in this Series - Stand Strong After COVID-19 Disruption: Steps to take now is “Systems”.

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