



Rebuilding Business After a Crisis

Practical ideas from 12 industry professionals to help you find clarity, reshape your business, and successfully move through your transition period into a new business model

Produced by Cath Duncan (CD Consulting) and Ganga Harvey (Indra Consulting) as a service to the Australian business community.

STRATEGISE

PLAN

LEVERAGE

ALIGN

Crises create unique conditions that cause us to (re)think and move, often more freely, to change.

In the weeks or months to come, as you hit the reset button, the operating context for your business may have been altered forever.

This guide was written during the Covid-19 restrictions, to help businesses adjust after the initial lockdown period. However, we realised that the content remains relevant for any business undergoing wholesale change or facing a crisis. We have not altered the content, and recommend that you understand the period of Covid lockdowns as a current example of a crisis with wide-scale impacts. Are you facing your own crisis now? The question is:

Are you ready to respond, pivot and innovate?

It is easy to feel paralysed in the face of so much change and uncertainty. To help you find the clarity you need to plan for the future, we give you access to 12 experienced business leaders from around Australia to seed ideas and direction.

We asked each one to share their thoughts on Three P's:

PREVENT What to put in place immediately to minimise risk

PREPARE Where to focus next to prepare your business for the *new normal*

PREDICT How to strategise for future success

This guide isn't intended to be a complete action plan or an exhaustive list of things to cover. Rather, we hope you will use it to stimulate your thinking about the areas of your business that might need attention.

Each contributor/expert has given us permission to include their contact details, so if you'd like to tap into their thinking, you are welcome to get in touch.

Appreciation and thanks to our generous contributors. We genuinely appreciate their professional collaboration.

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About Indra Consulting

Ganga Harvey is a **Change, Culture and Leadership** consultant with a strong emphasis on **business results**. She has broad experience in both people-related and process-related aspects of business. She began using the *4 Disciplines* long before they were called that and codified in the recent best seller by McChesney. Ganga has worked with clients in a wide range of sectors, including businesses facing the challenges of managing diverse workplaces, experiencing high growth, implementing extensive cultural changes and/or going through difficult economic times.

Her key areas of expertise are leadership; inspiring, crafting and leading change; team and individual development; and "doing something great" as an organisation or individual. She builds strong self/team awareness in her tailored programs, challenges and pokes until there are "ah-ha" moments and facilitates change and growth from those insights. There is no doubt that **she will inspire your team, build competence and confidence, and orchestrate change.**

Ganga integrates **Talent Analytics** into her programs – they provide the science behind the *gut feel* of managers and leaders, make visible issues that were obscured, and shorten the process of development and change.

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About CD Consulting

Cath Duncan founded CD Consulting in 1995. Applying **Social Ecology** approaches to organisational development, she is respected by a broad number of stakeholders for her **uncanny ability to critically think, diagnose, create and apply** effective and down-to-earth consulting solutions. **Cath specialises in strategies that build adaptive organisational cultures of growth, leadership and accountability.**

A high-level strategic thinker, Cath inspires confidence and passion in both internal and external audiences. A Master of Applied Science, Social Ecology, majoring in Organisational Development, Cath is an adaptive leader with the required mindset to motivate, facilitate, lead, coach and mentor people to perform at their very best, **especially during times of transformation and change.**

An experienced facilitator and public speaker, Cath brings an energy that makes any meeting feel thoughtful, cohesive, participatory, and even enjoyable. Hear what people say about her on her LinkedIn profile.

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There is no getting around it – as we emerge from the restrictions of COVID-19, our lives will be different. With each defining event (9/11 and the Bali Bombings are others in my lifetime), we lose some innocence, gain new knowledge and find our perspective is altered.

My focus moving forward is to let go of past norms that no longer serve us, and to build on possibilities. At the same time, we need to act intelligently, decisively and with urgency.

Prevent: Leadership for Change: Difficult times give us the opportunity to develop stronger and more mature leadership ability. Be proactive. Don't expect any part of the business to remain the same. **Create change** rather than simply react or adapt to change. Our nature is to be paralysed by large changes, but they can be reframed as opportunities. Review every part of the business, let go of past norms and challenge thinking. **Focus on five things.** First, your own resilience. Then on your people, customers, suppliers and cash flow. Prepare for waves and cycles of change as the world shifts into the new normal.

Prepare: Build a Culture to support your vision: The trauma of this event will linger at a personal level too, perhaps for years. Take the time to check-in with staff, be compassionate and provide support at a personal level. Envision the future and share it through constant communication. Analyse the culture against your vision and know the strengths and gaps. The good news is that automated Talent Analytics can assist – use them. Integrating them into your change process improves decision making and helps close the gap between existing and desired cultures. The key is to **Measure, Pulse, Realign, Repeat.**

Predict: Do Something Great: The paradox of this unique time is that others are also looking for change, yet the pull of the old normal will be strong – for you, your people, customers and suppliers, and the business. It is the time to find your FOCUS. To help **future-proof your business**, create something significant that will make a difference to you and the business. Strengthen relationships. Work with suppliers to find novel ways to deliver products. Create a vibrant, engaged and resilient workforce. Know your customers and how they have changed and how they will change – change accordingly. Find ways of servicing them that were not possible before. Think globally. Most of all, **tap into experts** that can inspire, guide and challenge you.

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We've all had to implement at least some new business practices very quickly. Maybe they've paid off in the short-term but I'm concerned they might not be sustainable. I'll **prevent** those less than optimum practices from becoming the new normal by **revisiting my mission, business plan and process maps** to make sure going forward, the business accommodates the new world order!

I'll **prepare** for the new future by talking with stakeholders and reflecting on what we've learned through this extraordinary experience. Because I specialise in organisational culture and leadership, I'll be **checking in with clients, past and present**, to identify trends and additional interventions that will support healthy business cultures and growth.

Working backwards, our team will **lay out a path from our long-term aspiration to the mid-term (post-crisis pivot point), and from there to today**. We'll reverse-engineer a series of benchmarks and milestones at regular intervals along the way. A 12-month bounce-back plan will be our initial focus.

I **predict** that organisational cultures in many businesses will take a hit, especially if pandemic restrictions continue. The composition of a workforce will change too; either relying more on contractors and freelancers who can be let go in a crisis, or increasing investment in staff to make sure they can be agile.

The adequacy of **genuine leadership** qualities and behaviours have been tested in recent months. I predict that emotional competence, collaboration, genuine communication and humility will be leadership traits more highly regarded and expected in the future.

In the world of small and medium businesses, the need to sustain the quality of **supply chains, value chains, collaborations and accountable endeavour** will never be higher. New skills to manage the behaviour of those who don't report directly to you or work within the same culture over which you have primary influence.

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Prevent Chaos: Show leadership. Be agile. Gain knowledge.

- Act early using clear messaging that the organisation already knows well: Purpose, Values and Promise.
- Have a plan that everyone knows about (Board, staff, customers, funders, government and the community).
- Make sure your people know what their job is (clarify roles, tasks, priorities, check that tasks are completed).
- Communicate achievements regularly and to everyone.
- Ask the question frequently “Is there a gap in our plan?”
- Be transparent.
- Advocate on your sector’s needs with everyone.
- Be agile, flexible, gather information and listen to others.
- Check that your teams are ok. Manage, *with them*, their stress levels and the strategies they have in place. Reinforce that we are sprinting now but are in a long race. We need to take care of ourselves. This message must cascade down.

Prepare for More: Be curious. Learn & improve. Be focused.

- Look at the problems from the initial stage and prioritise improvement.
- What are the opportunities that you can leverage? New business, new efficient processes, new customers?
- Stay connected with customers and staff at all levels.
- Be seen and heard.
- Keep the plan implementation momentum going.
- Keep a good record of what you have achieved and the improved systems you have put into place.
- Work on the longer-term plan.
- Staff wellbeing must be understood.
- Leverage work that was a priority prior to the crisis and that needs to get done. Use this situation as a call to action.
- Continue to ask the question “Is there a gap in our plan?”

Predict: Imagine the future. Celebrate success. Leverage crisis

- Envisage what your organisation will look like in the future. Map out how you will achieve this.
- Identify the new processes and systems you’ll keep.
- Plan to celebrate your success at responding to the crisis.
- Complete business plans for new products and services.
- Share your vision of the future and lead.

REVIEW

DESIGN

INNOVATE

CONNECT

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The logo for Resonate, featuring the word "Resonate" in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font.

Prevent

First of all, and most importantly, **prevent the loss of values**. Act quickly to retain your company brand values. Reinforce them authentically with your team and your customers. Explore them with your teams so that they understand them well and know how to apply them.

Prepare

This is the time for review. **Review your data**. Understand who you are in contact with and who you need to be in contact with. Understand your finances and establish an accurate forecast.

Predict

Use your work on values and the results of your reviews to develop **communication strategies** and action plans to rebuild and create a new future.

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Prevent

It is very important that you **communicate** openly and honestly with your employees. Make sure that they feel supported and have the appropriate systems in place to support them. Employee Assistance Programs are an important resource at this stage.

Prepare

This is the time to make sure that your business is on a **stable footing**. In particular, assess what your business is entitled to from a stimulus perspective. Tap into the appropriate expert support to guide you in navigating the various packages and implementing them in your business.

Predict

It is difficult to accurately predict the end date, but these challenges will eventually end, Our actions today will impact how resilient the business is and how quickly it can bounce back. **Be balanced, innovate, pivot** where you can and support your employees.

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Prevent

Control what you can, put on your own oxygen mask first so you can be the leader your people need, reach out to your own networks – those trusted advisors and networks you belong to. Be authentic, be transparent – it's ok to show vulnerability. Be visible – the way you did this in the past may now need to be different.

Start taking notes now and in the moment on your and your organisation's journey and learnings along the way. These insights will help you as you reshape your business and review strategies such as those for business continuity planning when the time comes for this.

Prepare

Now is a good time to evaluate the ways your company can **strengthen connections and purpose**, both within teams and society as a whole. Connect and realign your people with your company's purpose and values. This helps to anchor people and keep them connected to the organisation.

Communicate, communicate, and keep communicating with your leadership team, as a group and individually. You and they should continue to proactively and consistently check in with your employees, keeping them across the status of business operations, potential effects of the crisis on employee jobs, and any changes in work expectations.

Invest in your people – provide access to learning and career development opportunities. For those whose roles are impacted, provide the same transition support you provide in "good" times. Your people will remember how they felt the organisation treated them as they left, and this has a longer-term impact on your company's brand and ability to retain and attract future talent.

Predict

We are truly experiencing the **VUCA world** in a way we never have before.

Shifting to a learning and growth mindset will enable you to focus on the future. What will be the cornerstones of your "new" organisation? Start to lay these foundation stones now. What is possible? What will be different? What will your business take forward? What will you leave behind? How do you start communicating this to your key stakeholder groups so they come on this journey with you?

**PUT ON
YOUR OWN
OXYGEN MASK
FIRST**

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Prevent

The important thing to do now is to ensure your business is on a **solid footing**, as much as is possible given the significant changes that have taken place. This includes: ensuring your team is well resourced and managed effectively with empathy and consideration for their circumstances; your customers are receiving clear, timely and authentic communication; financial resources are being optimised; and your internal processes are being maintained (or indeed, improved) to ensure integrity of service and/or product delivery.

Prepare

Every business will need a path to return to what will be considered the new 'business-as-usual'. This will require careful consideration of **how the business will best function** given what has been learned during the coronavirus season. Maybe some team members are happier and more productive working from home? Maybe business procedures need to be reassessed to provide greater flexibility while still getting the job done? Maybe your market has shifted with new expectations or performance standards having arisen? Maybe customers are no longer available (e.g. gone out of business or moved buying patterns online)? Or maybe new opportunities have opened up that you can expand into. Within the business, this evaluation process may feel a bit uncomfortable, like a combination of strategic assessment intertwined with operational planning. It will need to be agile, forward thinking and encourage innovation.

Predict

Assessing core capabilities and strengths within the business will be critical. It would be a mistake to simply strive to return to what you had before without considering other options. How will you develop the skills, resources and focus required to be successful in the new normal? This may mean a sharper focus on developing employee capability (including management, leadership, resilience and decision-making skills), reassessing workflows and workforce structures, investing in developing additional revenue streams such as new markets or new products, and reassessing the purpose and vision for the company. How much has the world changed for you and your customers? How do you and your team need to respond? How much time do you need to achieve that? How will you ensure your business evolves? Who will take action?

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Prevent

Prevent any unnecessary and/or excess costs at this stage.

Negotiate with your suppliers to see where you can cut costs.

Prepare

Here's your chance to take a step back and have some real **strategic thinking** time to work **ON** the business as opposed to working **IN** it.

Use this time to identify and shortlist the 20% of the projects/things that would have the 80% impact on your business using the pareto principle and focus on that.

Predict

Once you've shortlisted the opportunities and projects to focus on, start spending time **working on them** before the market has had a chance to rebound.

There's been many examples of companies in the past that have grown market share as they come out of a crisis by following this 3-step framework.

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During this time it helps to think of your organisation as an **ecosystem**. It consists of interdependent people, processes and technology. It is dynamic and constantly changing under the influence of the external environment. Every ecosystem adapts to change or disappears. Your organisation is no different.

Prevent

A healthy ecosystem is resilient and sustainable. In a crisis, **unpredictable susceptibilities** are revealed. A healthy ecosystem will adapt, but it's up to you to **keep your organisation healthy while understanding what could lead to its decline or collapse**.

Prepare

In a healthy ecosystem, everything is there for a reason. **Know your organisation's values and purpose**. Why do they exist and who do they serve? These underpin your planning and actions because they indicate why survival matters. Next, **consider the people, processes, technology and finances** you need to see you through the current crisis and any adjustments needed. Finally, **communicate your plan**. As we all struggle to adjust to the current reality, we are reminded of our interdependence and common humanity. With all our interactions, in our organisations and beyond, **now is the time to be more present, vulnerable and authentic**.

Predict

Your analysis and planning have made you more strategic about your organisation's long-term sustainability. You've gained a detailed understanding of your purpose and values in action. You know what is essential for survival. You have experience adapting to rapid change. You know that most inputs and outcomes are relatively simple to manage and adjust according to your current needs and financial resources, provided you have the data you need to make informed decisions.

However, it is the living parts of a natural ecosystem that are the most dynamic and susceptible to disruption. In your organisation, **this is your people**. Prepare for the future by **building on what you now know** about the processes, practices, attitudes and behaviours that are relevant, constructive and sustainable. Document what needs to be done, by whom, and what outcomes are expected. Make it available. Refer to it often. Update it as necessary. Hold yourself and your team accountable. You can't control the future, but your ecosystem will be ready to adapt and survive.

ENGAGE

PROMOTE

INSPIRE

INFLUENCE

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Prevent

Ensure a **positive perspective** – even though internally there is great uncertainty, you must represent a clear and strong performance.

Message – keep communication clear and regular (this thing is changing by the hour.... try and keep up).

Cash – hold cash, eliminate (not reduce) non-essential expenditure.

Prepare

Next is now, ie you have ring fenced and there is no playbook for COVID-19 so:

Promote – very few businesses can pivot quickly and adapt to new opportunities, but you can promote what you do, for whom and why, e.g. *Promote Local or Australian Made*.

People – humanise the story. Look at coffee shops and cafes – no doubt they have been hit but they innovate, they are doing take-aways, sell new stuff.

Predict

The hardest thing of all...

What's the Next Thing – what do people need, how will they act and how will it change things moving forward.

Life will not go back to normal, as an example International Travel will take decades to recover, domestic tourism will increase, caravan sales and local stays.

People will want to be with people again, after 3 or 4 weeks we are already sick of Zoom meetings - humans crave human contact. Just might look different.

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Prevent

Understand your numbers! What is your current financial position and what impacts have the current economic environment had on your business to date. This will give you some insights into what moves you need to make now – acting quickly might be the difference between surviving and not.

Prepare

Scenario analysis! You understand your current position, so you now need to turn your attention to the possibilities of what the future looks like.

Consider all elements/divisions within delivering your product or service and how Covid-19 could impact them going forward. This will give you a good frame of mind to think about the potential overall impacts to your business financially.

Run some different scenario's, this will give you a good insight and allow you to act quick if one of the scenarios starts playing out.

Predict

Be ready to go! Having the understanding of your numbers and the potential implications of what could play out, should provide you with some good insights on how to deal with what the future throws at you.

One of those scenarios is 'the other side'. This could be from a Macro point of view - when the world economic engine starts again. Or a Micro point of view - when something in your industry changes and demand increases.

Whatever it is that changes, you need to understand it's happening and make the most of it.

When it's time to go, you must be ready!

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ANGLICARESA

Prevent

I believe the key thing to do is to **protect the business from a cashflow perspective** – do all things necessary to ensure that the business will have enough money, and the confidence of your customers, bankers, and suppliers to ride out the storm. Then **cut your cloth to your new revenue envelope**. Next, keep staff engaged as part of this journey to make sure that on the other side you will still have a team of people who are dedicated to the success of your organisation. **Communicate, communicate, communicate!**

Prepare

At this stage, there are three main things. First, to work with your teams to decide how to **alter or launch services** that work in the new environment, and make sure that your team are energised and committed to this new way of working. Secondly, keep an eye on any **new opportunities and threats** that are sitting in your risk universe and plan what you need to do to mitigate or leverage them. Thirdly, **start painting a picture** of what the future could look like so that your team have something hopeful to work towards. I never under-estimate how important it is for the mental health and motivation of the team to have a positive future that we've co-created.

Predict

Everybody expects the future post-COVID-19 isolation to be different and that is **the biggest opportunity on the table**. If you have gotten through the storm well, then you have permission to change everything about your business, nothing is fixed. The process of reimagining from the Prevent phase (above) can take full flight now that the future market state is better known. I'd envisage **deep engagement with all the stakeholders** of the business to work out what would be the best path forward for the business

**Respond
Pivot
Innovate**

...Collaborate

The information in this pamphlet may not be suitable for you because it contains general information that has not been tailored to your circumstances. You should seek specific professional advice prior to acting on this information.