



How Covid-19 is re-shaping the talent agenda

Building resilience

Survey findings and recommendations

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There is no doubt that Covid-19 in a short period has emerged as the most potent business disruptor. Everyone has felt the heat of this disruption in revenue streams, supply chain and talent. We have witnessed businesses of all shapes and sizes taking drastic measures to stay afloat during these challenging and unprecedented times. In addition to business impact, there have been significant impact on the workforce in terms of their emotional wellbeing, productivity, as well as their analysis of their future prospects.

To gain insights into how our people see Covid-19's implications for the talent agenda, we embarked on a survey, predominantly across East Africa. We wanted their thoughts on impact from an organization and individual perspective as well as pointers on how organizations can better prepare and adapt. This survey focused on the themes below:

- Coping mechanisms through the pandemic and supporting employees;
- Essential work skills based on lessons from Covid-19;
- What leadership skills expect to see post Covid-19;
- Updates to learning and development plans so that we can better help staff cope with the new normal;
- Critical measures to include in our performance management framework based on lessons from the pandemic; and
- What the HR team needs to focus on going forward with respect to its service delivery.

As business leaders it has become imperative to analyse how these changes are affecting our people and how best we can support them.

In order to build resilience for our businesses, there will be a necessary, and somewhat uncomfortable, shift in how we think and operate going forward as we adopt agility and new ways of working.

We recommend this report to individuals, people managers and business leaders who want the facts around the specific changes they need to make to navigate this period more successfully.



Brian DeSouza
Director and Head
of Consulting

Overview

About the survey

The purpose of our survey was to collate public perception on how the Covid-19 pandemic will change talent management and leadership practices going forward. The survey also sought to gain opinion on how companies can build resilience around their talent agenda going forward.

An overall analysis of participant pool for the survey is shown below:

Participant breakdown by top 5 sectors



Other Participants sectors

	Media, Public Relations & Communication
	Manufacturing
	Energy
	Sciences & Research
	Farming/Agribusiness
	National & Country Government
	Transport & Logistics
	Education
	Real Estate
	Retail

Highlights



Top 3 sectors in terms of respondents were Consulting, Financial Services and Technology & Telecommunication.



Consulting

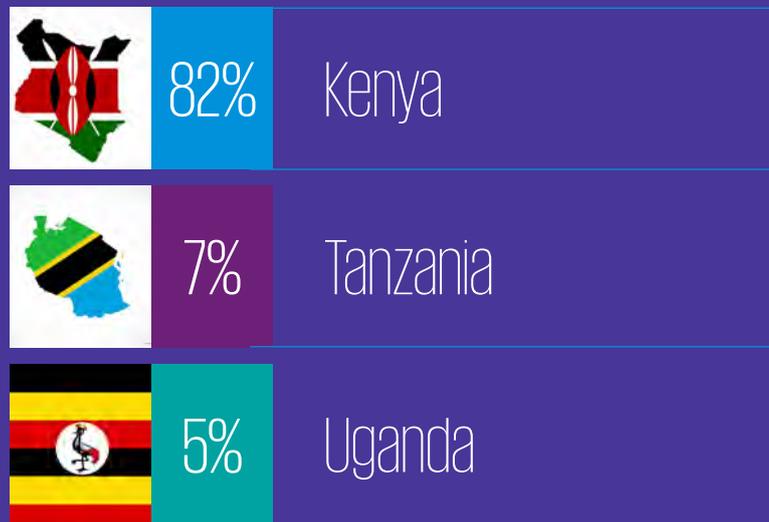
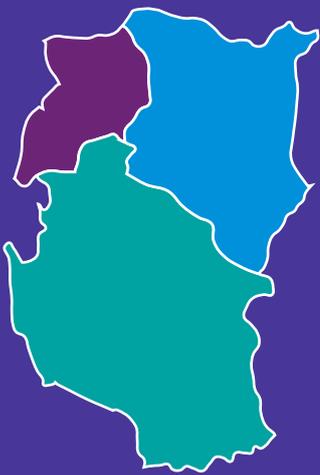


Financial Services



Technology and Telecommunication

Majority of the consulting participants were from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.



46%

of the respondents work in large organizations with staff count of above 500 employees

87% Were below 40 years

8.7% Were between 40 - 49 years

3.3% Were between 50 - 59 years

1% Were above 60 years

Key findings

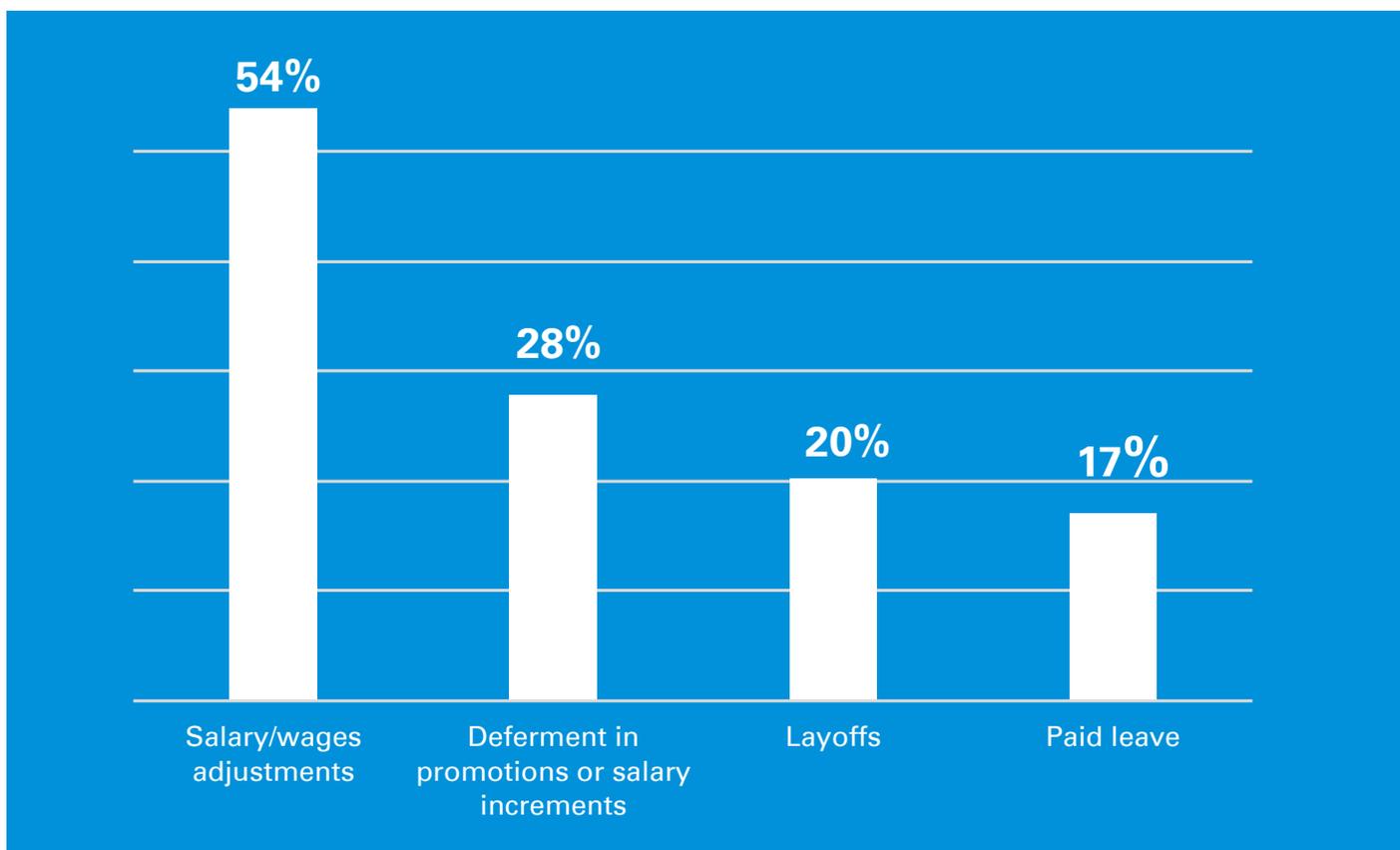
Coping strategies



Organizational coping strategies deployed so far

What strategies has your organization deployed from a business perspective to cope with Covid-19?

Below are the initial coping strategies adopted by the organizations that made up our response pool



Participants could choose more than one factor, therefore the sum of factors would be > 100%

Highlights

Everyone has been hard hit, and majority of the participants' organizations initially implemented a pay-cut or a deferment of increment as a way of cushioning the effect of the pandemic on the business.

To help employees cope with this, a lot of webinars on personal financial management as well as other webinars to provide emotional support sprang up.

- **It is important to ensure that these webinars continue to happen and are embedded in the regular training plans as a way to build long term emotional resilience.**

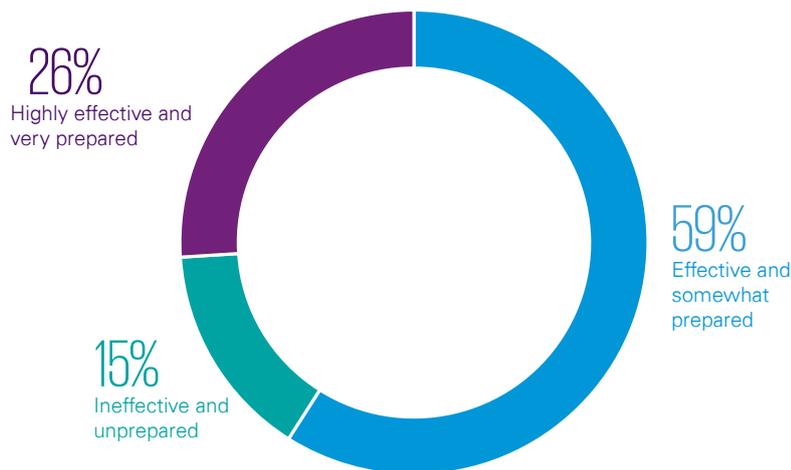
When asked about the changes to ways of working during the pandemic that they found most effective:

- **79%** said their organizations deployed **remote working**. Of this, 48% said they found remote working a very effective strategy. **This means that going forward, we have to perfect how this works as almost all staff expect that this will be a permanent feature of how we deliver value to our clients going forward.**
- In addition to remote working, 52% deployed wellness sessions and 44% held periodic leadership briefings, **again highlighting the fact that wellness sessions and leadership briefings will need to continue in the long term.**

Organizational coping strategies deployed so far

How would you rate the effectiveness of your organization in dealing with the impact of the pandemic on business?

Organization's preparedness in managing the pandemic



Highlights

Overall, respondents rated their organizations as effective and somewhat prepared, meaning that in spite of the noise, participants actually think that their organizations did not do a bad job in managing the impact.

We also asked about the top three (3) factors that could have further enhanced the preparedness and coping ability of their organizations:

- 58% mentioned having a business continuity plan could have helped;
- 49% said cash reserves and emergency funds;
- 42% mentioned that forward-looking pandemic-specific policies would have further enhanced the ability of their organization to cope.

Key considerations from this data

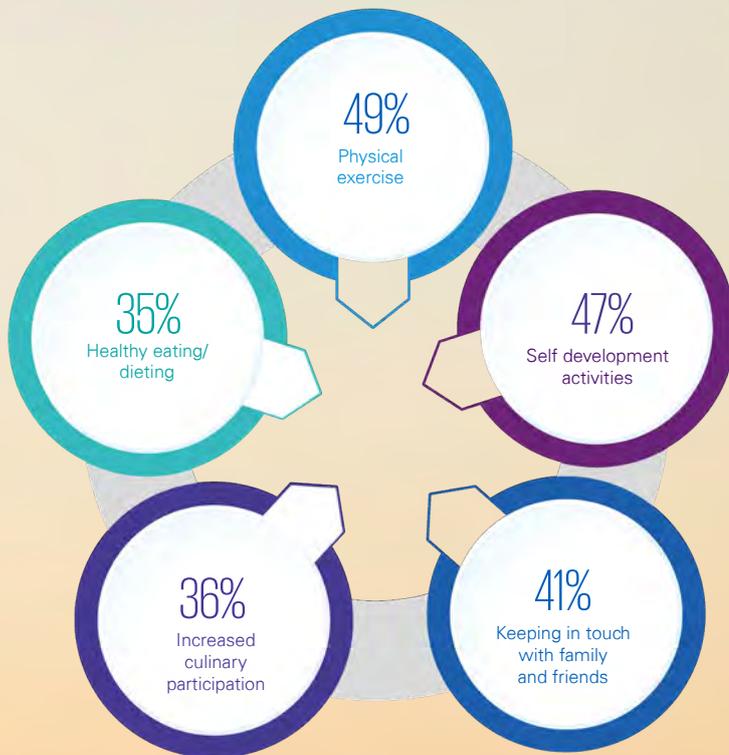
- Are you confident that your business continuity plan is robust?

- What did the pandemic reveal to you on the effectiveness of your BCP and what will you need to improve?
- What adjustments do you have to make to operating policies, including people management policies?
 - Do have clarity on which roles can be completely remote vs which roles can be a mix of remote and on-site?
 - Work spaces and offices – how can you reconfigure?
 - Will standard hours remain as is?
 - In what ways do benefits need to change? What elements have become unnecessary? What elements should be added?

Organizational coping strategies deployed so far

How did our people cope during the pandemic?
What personal strategies did they deploy?

Personal coping mechanisms



Participants could choose more than one factor, therefore the sum of factors would be > 100%

Highlights

Almost 47% of the respondents have embraced physical exercise e.g. running and jogging to cope with the pandemic. A further 32% have taken up dieting and observing healthy eating. Organisations can:

- **Send periodic safety tips for physical exercise as another way of continuously engaging staff.**
- **Issue helpful tips on other vocational areas that seem to be of interest to their workforce.**

47% of the participants picked up self-development activities such as crafts, on-line courses, etc.

To support staff, leaders continue to share tips on how to balance the need to be productive against the need to maintain connection with wider family members and community at large in the context of Covid.

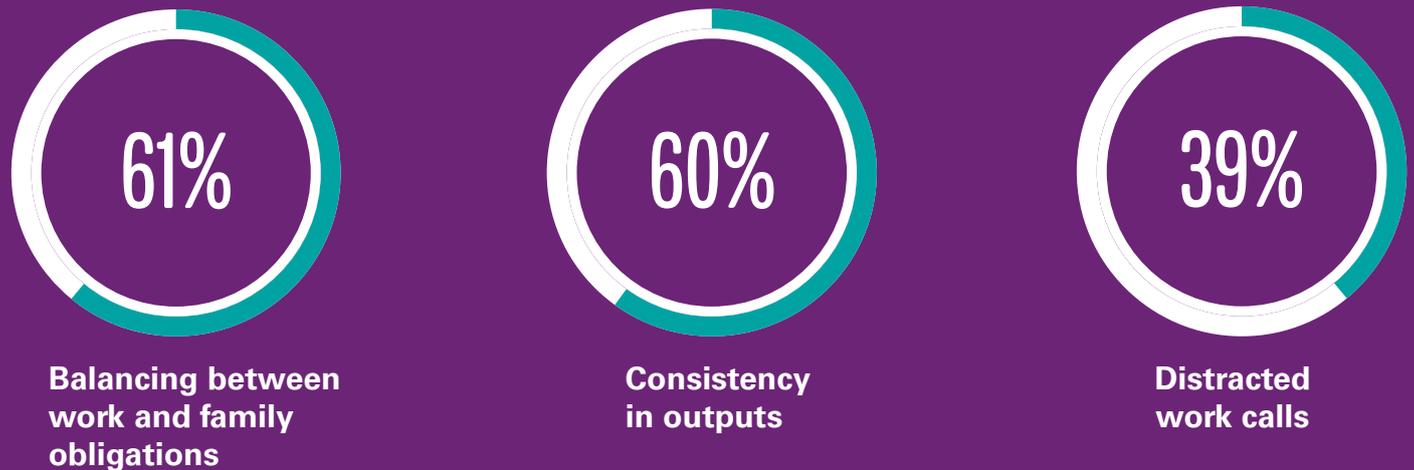
Work-from-home challenges



Key findings – Work from home challenges

What are the issues you are facing while working from home?

Top three (3) challenges of working from home



Participants could choose more than one factor, therefore the sum of factors would be > 100%

Highlights

The challenges highlighted by majority of participants with respect to working from home are:

- The need to balance work and family obligations
 - Some people have had to move back home to live with family and therefore maintaining a 'private' work station becomes difficult.
 - Others have had to deal with home schooling and had to become more 'present' in terms of participating in house chores.
 - For younger staff, tips on how to manage this dynamic should be continuously reinforced as this is a real life issue that many will continue to deal with

– The struggle to maintain consistency of outputs to match pre-Covid levels

- This calls for more emphasis on coaching and supporting our teams to deliver as opposed to standing aloof while we await deliverables
- **Continuous** skill development for supervisors, managers and leaders in terms of managing remote teams is now non-negotiable.

For organizations who will continue to work remotely, staff need to have a more integrated and structured work schedule which encompasses responsibilities relating to running a household, etc. These needs to be realistically scheduled into the work day, meaning start and close of day will be different from when work was on-site. Clear discussion and agreement between employee and supervisor on how this will look like is necessary.

Looking
forward



Key findings – Critical skills to develop and measure going forward

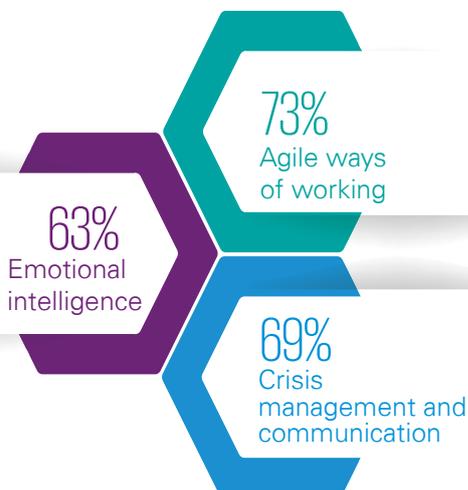
What essential skills do people need to bring to work under the current circumstances?

Essential skills that people need to bring to work going forward



What top 3 skills do we need to include in our training plans to help us function effectively post-Covid 19?

Top 3 skills that people want to be trained for



Participants could choose more than one factor, therefore the sum of factors would be > 100%

What skills should we now focus our performance management on based on lessons from Covid-19?

What performance measures should become important based on lessons from the pandemic?



Highlights

Dealing with the pandemic has taught us the importance of adaptability and its linkage to resilience. Of the skills listed in the survey, the following are the most highlighted as critical for staff to acquire/ demonstrate, be measured on from a performance management perspective and also be trained on:

- Flexibility and adaptability.
- Agile ways of working, including understanding of emerging technologies for productivity as well as innovation and creative thinking.
- Emotional intelligence and ability to manage crises, communicate effectively and instil hope as well as remain calm under pressure.
- Tech-savviness.

Staff want to be supported to build these skills. They also expect that these skills will be featured in organizations' performance measures in terms of what directly impacts business success going forward.

Leaders are urged to ensure that performance measures are refined to align with these skills and also ensure that learning and development programmes are focused on these skills in a bid to build resilience within the organization.

Key findings – Expectations from leaders going forward

What skills do you expect from your ideal leader going forward?



Highlights

The top 5 skills that participants listed as the attributes they most expect from their ideal leader are:

– **Effective communication**

– **Genuine empathy** - caring about our people as whole human beings, making sure that we truly acquire information about their perspective on issues and then demonstrating that we see said perspective and how it impacts their approach to issues – e.g. ‘I understand how this can be stressful for you, I know that from your perspective you are concerned about x,y,z. However, here is what we need to focus on for our business...’ vs ‘this is what we are dealing with and this is how it affects our business and this is what we shall do to tackle it...’

– **Authenticity** - People want to see that their leaders are human. They want:

- Their leaders to reflect and constantly communicate what they stand for and believe in.

- Their leaders to express themselves completely and often so that there are no broken telephones and grapevine on the issues that impact staff the most.

- Leaders who are not afraid to be vulnerable and who objectively assess things that have not gone well without coming across as defending a position.

- Leaders who continue to support them by reminding them about the overall vision (the end goal) and what will be in it for them to keep them motivated.

– **Visionary** - Staff want to believe in the goal and buy in to it and so want:

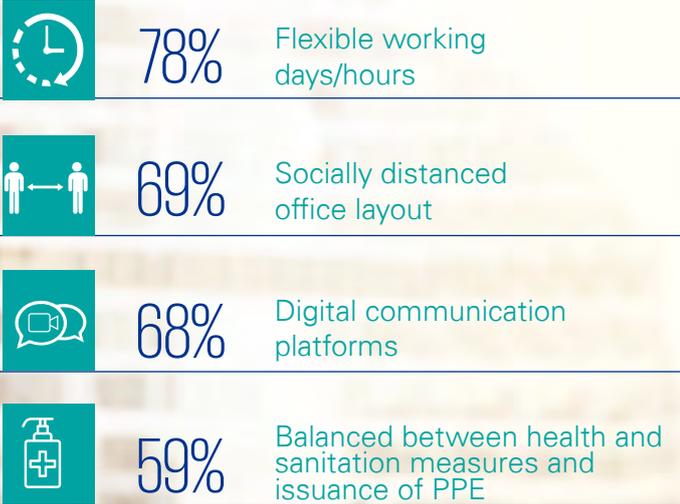
- Leaders who continue to support them by reminding them about the overall vision (the end goal) and what will be in it for them to keep them motivated.

– **Ability to manage remote teams** – it has also become clear that our leaders at all levels need to continue to develop skills in terms of how to effectively manage people remotely.

Key findings – Expectations regarding work environment

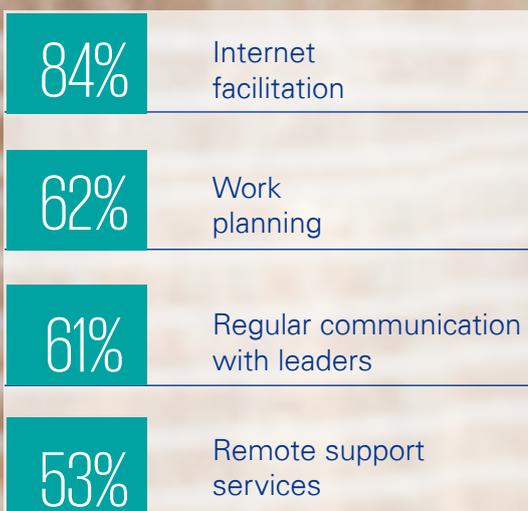
If returning to on-site work, what are your expectations on what should be provided by your organization to enable you deliver and feel safe?

Expectations from participants if returning to office for work



If work-from-home continues, what resources/ support do you need from your organization?

Expectations of participants if continuing to work from home





Highlights

We need to think about the modalities around returning to work. According to the survey, people expect the following to be addressed:

- Work hours
 - Will they remain as is?
 - Will we have to work from the office in shifts?
- Office lay-out: Current seating arrangements will need to be revisited.
- Is there a need to consider issuing PPE and will this be viable for your business?

If work from home is normalised for much longer, the following are expectations listed by participants:

- **Enabling resources** - businesses need to determine the optimal resources to issue to staff to enable them to work and meet expectations while working from home. This can include issuing laptops and mobile phones and facilitation of internet.
- **Data** – organizations need to figure out how much is enough and how can they provide this more efficiently.
- **Regular face-time with leaders** – this will need to be scheduled more regularly and periodically across teams, departments and the entire organisation.
 - A programme /schedule to help coordinate this so that it happens across board would be useful.
- Support services such IT and HR also need to continue to be optimized for remote support.

Key findings – Expectations regarding the HR team

What do you expect a high-performing HR team to focus on based on lessons from Covid-19?



Expectations of the future HR team

65%

Focus on activities that improve productivity

59%

Agile workforce planning

50%

Focus on equipping leaders to lead effectively during disruption

48%

Virtualization of learning

46%

Highly emotionally intelligent teams

Highlights

Going forward, participants expect their HR teams to:

- Identify and focus on drivers that result in **improved productivity** of staff and business.
- Drive **real-time planning** of work schedules with business leaders or at the minimum, enable them to create effective work programmes.
- Continuously **identify critical leadership skills** for a disrupted world (such as those mentioned in this survey) and have leadership development plans that will deliver improvements in those areas.
- Aggressively **innovate on delivery of learning** on an on-going basis.

Participants could choose more than one factor, therefore the sum of factors would be > 100%

Conclusion

The findings from the survey are clear but the benefit to us as businesses lie in what we do with the bits of insight.

I believe that raising our game as business leaders in these times will mean relentlessly asking the right questions such as:

- How are we as leaders prepared going forward to turn around productivity and performance?
- Do we have an actual plan that is based on a thorough analysis of what the future requires against our unique strengths and weaknesses as a business?
- Or are we chancing it based on industry predictions and hoping we make it?

Based on what we have experienced over the last few months, doing nothing is not an option. We need to ask the right questions with humility and gain clarity on what to change and how to change. That is the stuff that adaptable and successful organizations are made of. We cannot hope that we survive, we must do our best to position all aspects of our business, particularly our people, without whom we will have no business, for success! The people who attempt and plan intelligently for this are the ones who will be here for long.



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