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SPECIAL EDITION  
**CORONAVIRUS**  
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**Resilience in Action**  
Establishing a Strategy for  
Business Continuity

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### *How do leaders react in uncharted times? Have they planned for the future? What steps can they take to preserve business continuity?*

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned us upside up exposing the frailties of many systems which we rely upon to operate as a nation, industry, community, and practice. The soft underbelly of the built environment industry is now openly exposed putting thousands of jobs at risk. But this new open exposure also offers us a unique opportunity to envision a new way and steer the industry towards a new resilience. As Hillel said long ago, “If not now, when?”

At the heart of this crisis is a call for business continuity planning. By definition, “business continuity is an organization’s ability to ensure operations and core business functions are not severely impacted by a disaster or unplanned incident that take critical systems offline.” (INAP)

Global supply chains are severely impacted. From raw material extraction and processing to manufacturing and assembly to validation and certification assurance to packaging and shipping logistics . . . all are under threat in this present context of fearful uncertainty. Organizations that have irresponsibly placed their eggs in single baskets when it comes to supply dependence are now coming up short. This irresponsibility has resulted in wide disruption across global economics, governments, industries, and individual consumers. Businesses that single source without any contingencies expose themselves and their employees to life-altering disruption that in some cases may not be recoverable. The absence of business continuity strategies will always result in unnecessary loss.

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### An Approach

So, what's a straightforward approach to business continuity strategic planning? Here are few points to get us started:

- Creating human resource cross-training programs ensures more than one subject matter expert is available to carry the workload. Overdependence on key individual contributors is risk not worthy of responsible leadership governance.
  - Identify the key contributors in your organization.
  - Articulate their contributory value.
  - Create “knowledge contagion programs” that ensure knowledge, understanding, and expertise are learned across multiple resources.
- Examine the current supply chains that are required to operate. Rank each by their criticality to determine your most vulnerable exposure. Then plan for 3-deep sourcing,

identifying, vetting, and assuring adequate supply flows against your quality and timeliness standards. In other words, spread the goodness to multiple suppliers to mitigate critical supply risks.

- Perform an information technology business continuity audit. This is different than a disaster recovery plan which focuses on a negative episodic event. Business continuity planning is both broader and deeper, inclusive of all essential aspects of a business to keep it afloat during and after a negative event. Dimensions of a business continuity plan include:
  - Availability of and access to critical technology systems and data processing necessary to run the business.
  - Security of all essential technology assets both physical and virtual.

- Readiness to execute disaster recovery actions to ramp-up any disabled technology assets necessary for business continuity.

Now is the time for organizations to get serious, make investments of time and money, and defend the business with adequate protection. This current threat is but one episode in the overall life of your firm. Many more will come, both physical and virtual. Let's move out of reactionary fear-driven panic to proactive planning, sourcing, and assurance.

This is what good leaders do.

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