



From Crisis to Momentum: Rethinking the Future of Work

by Michelle Mahony, Senior Principal and Chris Thornton, Principal

One in five people believe it will take between five months to two years to return to normal¹. And with the latest infection model expecting a two-year battle of the virus with ebbs and flows², it sounds likely this will last longer than many expected. But even if the crisis ends earlier than anticipated, one thing is clear: COVID-19 has transformed the world as we know it, and has already transformed organizations at a truly unprecedented rate. It's becoming more and more clear that there is no going *back to normal*. There is only *going forward*...into a very different world of work.

Right now, leaders are focusing first and foremost on the health and safety of their people as they transition back to the workplace. They are making sure the right protocols and PPE equipment are lined up for employees returning to the office. They are reorganizing their office spaces to

maintain social distancing. And they are surveying employees to make sure personal needs are cared for and met. It's a complex challenge that demands the careful thought and planning being given to developing robust "return to work" plans. Focusing on the present is necessary and vital, but it can also be a trap.

Leaders must also begin to focus beyond the present – beyond the "return to work" – and consider how their businesses will change in the future. They need to think about how these seismic shifts will affect their business model, which will in turn impact their entire organization. Things like team structures, policies, workflows, processes, culture, leadership and just about every aspect of the work experience. They cannot wait two years to think about these impacts – they need to plan for what's next now.

IN SHORT, WE NEED TO RETHINK THE FUTURE OF WORK AND HOW ORGANIZATIONS WILL NEED TO CHANGE.

So how do you balance the need to ensure your employees are safe and productive and your business is secure, while planning for the future? We have identified four external drivers that we believe are transforming the world of work.

1. Organizations will be valued “beyond shareholders”

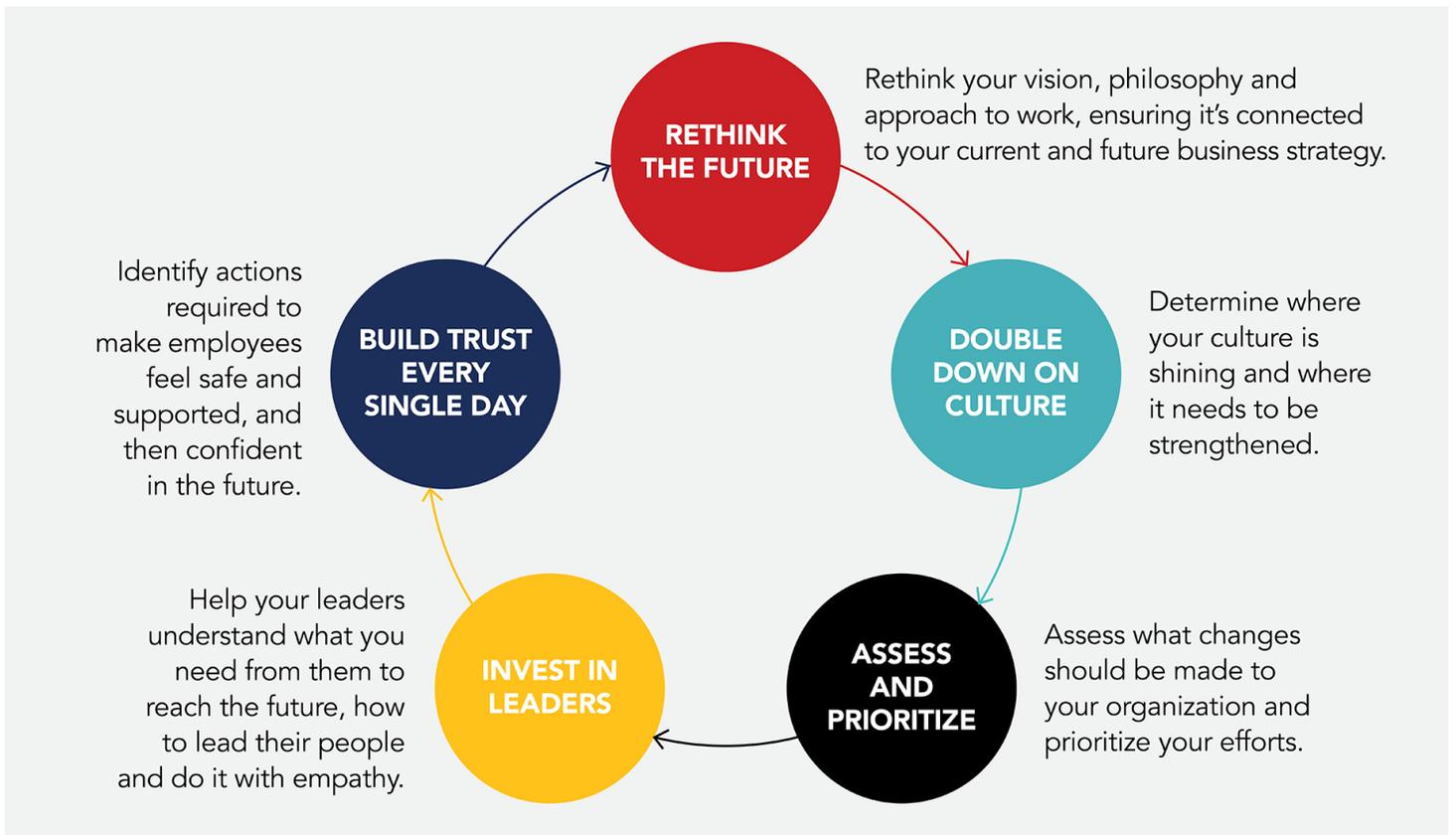
In August 2019, the Business Roundtable made a stunning turnaround when the CEOs of America’s largest businesses acknowledged that all stakeholders – workers, communities, partners – were as valuable as their investor shareholders. And with the #1 driver of reputation among consumers right now being how organizations are taking care of their employees¹, the companies that followed suit are certainly seeing the benefits now. Take Microsoft for example. They are continuing to pay all vendor hourly service providers their regular pay during this period of reduced service needs³.

2. Consumer behaviors are changing fast

Customer spending and behaviors are changing rapidly with increases in some areas like groceries and massive decreases in other areas. 65% of consumers are currently postponing purchases and travel, and 52% intend changes to their buying behaviors to continue¹. This means that companies need to go from putting the consumer first to becoming consumer obsessed, to meet them where they are and where they will be in the future.

3. New capabilities, mindsets, and culture are here

From siloed roles to flexible workforce. From ability to adaptability. From a culture of knowing to a culture of learning. From what you do to why you do it. Every organization is going to need to realign capabilities, mindsets and their cultures to the new world.



4. Purpose has proven supreme

The connection between purpose and action has become very real during this crisis. Companies who are taking actions to ensure they are walking the talk and leading with purpose will be remembered, and those who don't will likely suffer consequences. Airbnb is an example of a company who connected their purpose of belonging and connection both in rethinking their business model and in how CEO, Brian Chesky treated the employees who were let go. He led with transparency, empathy and compassion stating: "We have looked across severance, equity, healthcare and job support and done our best to treat everyone in a compassionate and thoughtful way."⁴

The implications and weight that these drivers carry are already having an enormous impact on organizations, and things will never be the same. Based on this, we have developed five areas that will help you to go from jumping from crisis to crisis, **to creating forward momentum.**



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Michelle Mahony is a Senior Principal at Daggerwing Group. She is passionate about helping organizations navigate through transformational change, with an eye towards creating leaders and employees who are energized, rather than exhausted, by the opportunities change creates. Within this context, she helps clients foster cultures that deliver the desired experience for customers and enable employees to thrive, and she co-creates inspiring yet down-to-earth solutions to solve organizational challenges. In her spare time, she enjoys singing 70's pop songs badly while playing her ukulele, buying old musty records and spending tons of time in the woods and on snowy mountains.



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Chris is a Principal at Daggerwing Group where he works with companies to improve employee engagement by successfully executing strategic communication and change programs. In his previous experience, he led the internal communications function at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the global technology communications team at Pfizer. However, he's most known for his skills in the kitchen. Chris and his wife were featured in the New York Times for their love of pie.

For more details listen to our webinar on the topic [here](#). We are just starting the conversation. Watch this space for more information as we continue to unpack the future of work in detail. In the meantime, **reach out...we are here to help.**

¹ "COVID-19 Mindset: How Pandemic Times are Shaping Global Consumers", Fleishman Hillard: <https://fleishmanhillard.com/wp-content/uploads/meta/resource-file/2020/covid-19-mindset-how-pandemic-times-are-shaping-global-consumers-1586478116.pdf>

² Woodward, Aylin. "The COVID-19 pandemic could last for 2 years, according to US experts." World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/coronavirus-pandemic-last-2-years/>

³ Hyder, Shama. "Coronavirus Champions: A Running List of Brands Getting it Right." Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shamahyder/2020/03/15/coronavirus-champions-a-running-list-of-brands-getting-it-right/#3763f3725815><https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/realestate/quiet-silent-apartment-home-workout-coronavirus-exercise.html?searchResultPosition=3>

⁴ Kelly, Jack. "Airbnb Lays off 25% of its Employees: CEO Brian Chesky Gives a Master Class in Empathy and Compassion." Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2020/05/06/airbnb-lays-off-25-of-its-employees-ceo-brian-chesky-gives-a-master-class-in-empathy-and-compassion/#6ef771beee30>