



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

# Recovery and business continuity in the next normal

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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## Overcome familiar challenges and new complexities

Business continuity is being threatened at unprecedented levels. Combined with the current complexities that organizations are now facing, maintaining business continuity requires new approaches to common problems. In order to deliver differentiated services, professional services organizations must consider methods that may challenge existing systems and operations.

How should organizations in consulting, advisory, research, staffing, and business and consumer services respond to these uncertain economic times? How can they respond with consideration for both the short term and long term? As organizations recover, reemerge, and look toward the future, several key areas must be evaluated:

- How is digital agility and transformation playing a role as a crisis unfolds?
- What are the best ways to support and empower an immediately remote workforce?
- Are client experiences and service delivery engagements being maintained?
- What level of support is the back office providing as priorities shift?
- Is organizational information and sensitive client data safe across new access points?

Here are some strategic considerations to focus on as you evaluate the impact each of these key areas has on your organization.

## Expand digital agility

*Are you developing and implementing agile operating models for scale and efficiency?*

- The health crisis and related economic downturn shifted everyone's priorities, thrusting digital capability and agility into the spotlight.
- As productivity, client engagement, and profitability are now challenged more than ever, finding new ways of accomplishing familiar tasks despite new complexities is crucial.
- Organizations must adapt and expand digital agility to thrive in the new digital economy and post-pandemic environment.
- Organizations should also review the digital transformation initiatives that were implemented or were on the roadmap prior to the health crisis and compare them with methods that have been adopted during the crisis.
- By building and developing greater digital agility, organizations can minimize disruption to clients, staff, partners, and business operations.

## Empower remote workers

*Are you creating a better remote workforce strategy to tackle modern challenges?*

- The pandemic has accelerated workforce trends, likely for the better—many of these changes are, presumably, here to stay.
- Most of the current workforce has shifted to working remotely, requiring new considerations to fulfill responsibilities and engagement.
- The problem is that most organizations don't possess a well-established, thoughtfully developed remote workforce strategy.
- Consider the organization's culture, identifying realistic roles, selecting the right people, and embracing new technologies.
- While the impact of the pandemic will eventually decline and there will be some return to the old normal, other aspects of our work, the workforce, and the workplace will never be the same again.

## Evaluate client experiences

*Are you reimagining client needs to consider their new priorities and expectations?*

- Clients have new, urgent needs and expectations since the pandemic and economic fallout.
- Clients now want to know that their collaborators understand their new concerns, shifting priorities, and even their humanity.
- To stabilize, recover, and thrive, organizations must avoid client inconvenience, lack of trust, and poor service—especially in times of uncertainty.
- Organizations should also consider fresh ways of deploying technology to help deliver on services.
- Your response during uncertainty will have an immense effect on client relationships in the post-pandemic reality.

## Enhance back-office efficiencies

*Are you improving back-office efficiencies to drive best-in-class performance and agility?*

- Organizational agility, productivity, and success heavily rely on the efficiencies of back-office operations.
- The efficiency of back-office operations has been challenged across numerous areas of the business amid growing complexity—and the new situations require new consideration.
- With the right planning and technology, organizations can integrate all their tools and processes together to improve work and optimize new practices that help sustain the business.
- Business planning, back-office accounting, and project management infrastructure are three key areas of opportunity for organizations.
- Technology plays a significant role in the back office. There is clear delineation between professional services businesses that use innovative software and technology, and those that are lacking.

## Elevate digital protection

*Are you protecting digital assets and client information by prioritizing cybersecurity?*

- Just as cybersecurity has reached epidemic proportions, new complexities associated with the health and economic crisis are elevating the importance of managing digital assets and alleviating cyber threats.
- Because an organization's data assets are tied to the life and health of the organization as a whole, it's vital to encourage staff at all levels to view their relationship to organizational and client data as a key responsibility, especially in times of flux.
- Creating an environment where security is a top priority is necessary to reduce the chances of a breach.
- Protecting valuable data, now and in the next normal, is best addressed by company leadership at the highest levels, well before any incidents occur.
- Initiatives to consider include fostering cultural awareness, incorporating security discussions in onboarding processes, and regular communication with staff. Organizations should also work closely with security and technology vendors, test staff knowledge regularly, and implement an open-door policy around data security.

## Thrive in the next normal

Identifying these concepts and challenges, as well as how they relate to your organization, is just the first step. Read the full best practice guide, "[Crisis recovery and business continuity in the next normal](#)," for more details on strengthening recovery efforts and business continuity in the professional services industry.

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