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# Preparing for High Tech's New Normal: Short Term Actions with a Long-Term View

by Devin Bedwell and Wynchester Whetten

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*Kalypso is a people business. We don't have manufacturing plants or production lines, but we do have industry expertise and deep experience with clients that do. To meet this moment, we're working hard to capture what we know and share it. We hope you find this article useful as you think about what you can do to reduce your risks today and prepare for the future.*

While the high tech industry is not immune from the impact of the pandemic crisis, in many ways high tech companies have fared better than most. In general, data is already digital, structured, and governed. High tech workforces are already accustomed to remote working. Modeling and automation systems are widely leveraged in production, reducing the need for human intervention and close physical proximity between human operators.

One of the greatest impacts of the pandemic on the high tech industry is the spotlight it has shined on single points of failure in ultra-streamlined supply chains, making them vulnerable to disruption. Travel restrictions and regional shutdowns early on brought attention to single points of failure, while the drawn-out duration has shown that 'waiting it out' is not a sustainable solution.

With more people working remotely, demand for products in certain high tech segments (such as network appliances, computing resources, and webcams) has dramatically increased. But with factories slowed, materials unavailable, and design decisions delayed, there has been no easy way to react to the new demand. This presents both challenges and opportunities for high tech companies.

## What Can We Do About It Now?

Despite the challenges of the current global crisis, there are steps high tech companies can take to respond in the

short term that will set them up for success in the long term:

- **Be quick to evaluate and reprioritize, starting with products and customers** – It is not possible to produce all technology series at full volume for all clients on schedule, but not all series and customers are rated equally, and sale price isn't the single most important factor. Business priorities have drastically changed, so the product mix and operating volume have changed. Understand where product is going and give priority to components and customers fighting on the front lines. Then, continue to audit internal processes. Is your emergency response framework clear, simple, quick to activate, and sustainable? Do you have an intake framework for decision making that is both nimble and robust?
- **Keep track of what you are learning** – It can be easy to go into crisis-fighting mode solely focused on execution, but those that take time to reflect in the moment and keep track of what is working – and equally important what is not working – will be better positioned for both recovery and future resilience.
- **Focus on people** – More than ever it is important to clearly manage expectations across the ecosystem: employees, customers, and suppliers. Be clear on your priorities and what that means for them, how they can help, and how you are helping. And be just as clear about what you are intentionally not doing. Clear communication and a people-centered approach in times of crisis will bring loyalty in times of prosperity.

## Reimagining Business as Usual

This crisis will eventually pass, and we will adjust to the evolving new normal. So, what does the new normal look like for high tech? It will be built on the lessons we are learning today for a more resilient future.

First, companies must prioritize the elimination of single points of failure in the supply chain. Efficiency cannot be the only supply chain goal – it must also be resilient to be robust. This means redundant suppliers and manufacturing, as well as regular pressure testing to find the points of failure. A regional disruption cannot result in a global supply chain failure.

This new normal also presents enormous opportunity for high tech companies. They provide the enablers the global population relies on to mitigate and navigate through a crisis, including devices, network appliances, bandwidth, and software services for remote working, reduced travel, video conferencing, and remote collaboration. In the aftermath of COVID-19, companies, governments, and schools will continue to assess their technology solutions and allocate budget to improve their capabilities by transitioning from ad hoc to defined.

Today's crisis has demanded digital focus, resulting in a significant spike in demand for new devices and innovative services – some companies that provide these services have seen their valuations double or triple in this pandemic. In the transition to recovery, high tech companies will have new demand to serve these markets and provide solutions – and this demand did not exist before.

## Preparing Today for the Post-Crisis World

The industry must start now to prepare for the post-crisis world. Now is the time to understand (1) how your company fits in the changed ecosystem and (2) the opportunities to help and serve that come with your position.

The opportunity is not only to understand the new ecosystem, but also to shape it! Ask yourself how you can work with people and businesses in your own community – including schools and local government – to provide hardware, software, technology, services, and training to ease the burden of recovery, and to prepare for the challenges that will come with the next crisis.

High tech companies should take five steps to navigate the crisis today to position themselves as leaders in the

new normal:

- Eliminate single points of failure in the supply chain – build in resiliency to be robust
- Re-prioritize products and customers
- Track learning in the moment
- Take a people-centric approach
- Plan, plan, plan – future scenarios, roadmaps, partnerships, and services

Evaluate key drivers of your business, hypothesize how they can change (or have already changed!), and [create scenarios](#) based from those hypotheses. Force rank them and develop roadmaps for the most probable. Aside from the value of the thought power, these investments lead to new partnerships, signal that you are in it for the long term, and help break out of the heaviness of today and into the rebuilding of tomorrow.

Eisenhower is famous for saying “Plans are nothing; planning is everything.” While execution must be focused and must adapt to the changes of each day, high tech companies that take the time to tackle planning for tomorrow now will have a voice in shaping the future rather than perpetually responding to it.

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