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Open for business – can your business survive a worldwide crisis?**

*By Samuel Wilson, Chief Customer Officer and Managing Director of EMEA at 8x8*

We’ve recently seen a number of events cancelled due to serious health and safety concerns around Coronavirus. These large-scale events are months in the planning, with countless meetings scheduled and thousands of flights booked…now all disrupted. But that doesn’t mean that important customer and partner conversations can’t go ahead or be rescheduled.

[*Time*](https://time.com/5776660/coronavirus-work-from-home/) magazine has called the global Coronavirus outbreak the ‘world’s largest work-from-home experiment’ and the [World Economic Forum](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/05/how-epidemics-infect-the-global-economy-and-what-to-do-about-it) suggests global pandemics cause US $570 billion in economic losses to the world every year. So, as businesses ‘close down’ to prevent further spread of the virus, what are **your** back-up plans to make sure your company survives in the event of a global crisis?

It’s not just health pandemics that can derail business operations; terror attacks, infrastructure failures and even ‘natural disasters’ can trigger shutdowns. During these challenging times communities come together but businesses that have a continuity plan in place remain ‘open for business’ during the chaos.

These threats are continuously evolving, so your planning and business continuity strategy should be an ongoing discussion which focuses on the key areas that are critical to your business.

**Do you have the right technology to support remote working in place?**

Whilst businesses have a duty-of-care toward employee health and well-being, you can not expect your business to shut down completely. If you can stay operational during a crisis, you will inevitably start to pull ahead of the pack.

So what do you have to do? The first step in an effective crisis plan is to establish what remote working tools you have in place and how they can be used to keep business moving when disaster strikes. Once the technology has been tested and deployed, you need to educate and train your employees to effectively use the platforms and processes to enable remote working when required.

**Are your customers part of your backup plan?**

How do you communicate with your customers in the face of a crisis? Missed face-to-face meetings, lost orders, and general lack of service can all lead to disgruntled customers and loss of business if not addressed promptly. For companies that bill by the hour, the inability to contact customers could have a drastic impact on revenue.

Cloud communications software allows your team to communicate both internally and with customers, irrespective of location.

**Get your workforce involved.**

If a crisis were to hit, your workforce would be just as affected as your business operations, so including them in your contingency planning is vital. Your employees can tell you what they need to do their job effectively, therefore ensuring their feedback is captured is an essential step in any backup plan.

Through wider group involvement with business continuity planning, your workforce will feel part of the strategy with a vested interest in supporting the approach in the face of a crisis.

**Time to test run**

Once you have the technology and processes in place, it’s time to test them out. By holding regular ‘emergency drills’, you can assess how your business operations would be affected in a crisis. Business impact is likely to be minimised the more familiar employees become with the remote working system, processes and procedures - so frequent and regular drills are required.

In today's world, businesses need to remain as agile as possible with challenging and uncertain times ahead. It’s time to see continuity planning as a critical part of any business strategy – a static plan holds little hope.

**525 words (without title and author title)**