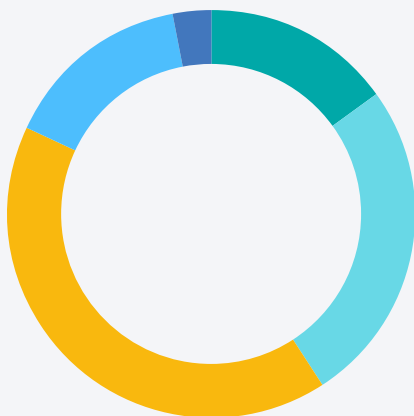


The Pulse Business CEO Index April 2020.

Q: Which one of these, if any, has been the most valuable to your business since the Coronavirus outbreak?

Key insights:

- Tech helps to keep things 'normal' in the age of Coronavirus
- When external events force you to take extraordinary action, business operational models must be flexible enough to change in real time
- A constant flow of information ensures that people can continue to talk and exchange ideas – and this can even enhance their response to the needs of the business and its customers



- 15% Flexible working
- 26% Government intervention / stimulus packages
- 41% Technologies that support virtual meetings and working remotely
- 0% Access to trustworthy data sources - please share...
- 15% Improvements in team behaviour as people take on a greater sense of social responsibility
- 3% Other (please specify)...

Sample: c175 CEOs based in the UK, April 2020

The story so far

Tech has been by far the most significant saviour for business continuity since the government's response to the Coronavirus pandemic brought normal operations to a standstill practically overnight – reflecting an overwhelming desire to keep things as 'normal' as possible.

When we asked which factor has been the most valuable to your business during the crisis, 41% of you said technologies that support virtual meetings and remote working have been essential. Knock-on benefits – enabling flexible working (15%) and improvements in team behaviour (15%) – were also acknowledged.



“Reliable video conferencing measures – love Zoom and Microsoft Teams! – have been invaluable in keeping the human element of work alive,” said one Pulse respondent, a CEO working in the healthcare sector.

In practical terms, tools like these have helped even large meetings to continue to take place as usual. Cloud-based software and data filing have allowed business support processes to continue uninterrupted.

While government intervention / stimulus packages (26%) were also welcome, there were underlying reservations about the length of waiting time for these to kick in – and even their usefulness to certain types of business.

“Continuing to operate as normal with minimal interruption has been great for the team,” was another response, this time from an insurance sector CEO. “The government packages offer little in the way of support for early stage companies so operating as normal has been critical to us.”

This ability to maintain normal communication has been vital across the board. The Chief Executive of a membership organisation pointed out that with so much revenue derived from running live events, face-to-face courses and other means of engaging members, being able to turn them into online digital offerings has been invaluable.

Preparation has been key. Businesses that already had a continuity strategy and technology infrastructure in place have been able to switch quickly to virtual comms models – although one CEO from the tech sector wisely noted that “Technology is irrelevant if people aren’t taking responsibility.”

The good news is that in many cases, people are stepping up and leading initiatives that serve customers and preserve the organisation they work for.

“Our whole business continuity strategy was built around ensuring that we could be up and running as normal within three hours of being told we couldn’t access the office building,” reported a Chief Executive from the housing sector.

“We’ve introduced greater flexibility around working hours for those not on frontline services, and the technology for everyone to work from home,” said the CEO of a Trade Association. “The staff culture has also shifted, so people are more aware of the importance and value of a membership body supporting its membership through a crisis. For us, the switch to remote working was almost seamless, and we were able to deal with a 50% increase in demand on our helpline while maintaining normal service levels.”

What happens next?

While the emphasis on technology’s capacity to support and enable business continuity during the crisis is not surprising, it was notable that nobody acknowledged the value of access to trustworthy data sources. Perhaps it’s simply a matter of priorities in such a fast-changing business climate – but one thing is certain: the data generated by businesses’ response to the crisis is certainly going to inform the evolution of continuity preparedness in a post-Coronavirus world. The new ‘normal’ will be very different.

✉ imogen@thepulsebusiness.co.uk

☎ + 44 7740 039889

