

## COVID CRISIS: IMPACTS, LEARNINGS & PERSPECTIVES

Survey conducted from May to September 2019 with 23 EMEA C-suite level managers

Functions: Sales, Human Resources, International Marketing, Internal Communication, Finance, Legal, Operations, Regional Management, General Management

Industries: Asset Management, Banking and Insurance, Construction, Digital Transformation, Energy, Engineering and Design, Information Technology, IT, NGOs, Pharmaceuticals, Real Estate, Retail, Sport and Recreation

*“They didn’t know it was impossible, so they did it”*

Marc Twain

### IMMEDIATE IMPACTS

- **An impact on personal life**
  - An immediate shift to work from home: *“we were catapulted in WFH overnight!”*
  - A huge impact on workload: *“the first weeks were extremely violent; we worked our guts out”*
  - An unprecedented work life integration: *“I’ve never seen so many kids and pets, it’s cool to see the human side of our colleagues’ life”*
- **A transformation in leadership**
  - An increased level of autonomy and responsibility: *“there was no choice but empowerment”*
  - A case for common sense: *“We did it on trust and the desire to do well together rather than on patterns and matrices of responsibility”*
- **A new direction for the business**
  - Priority on securing business continuity, job safety and cash flow: *“the leadership team provided strong guidelines: 1/ spend as little as possible and produce, 2/ save the year, 3/ organize the after-crisis”*
  - An acceleration in decision-making and change processes: *“The context and the case for change was so obvious that we went much faster on the why: no need to convince a lot of people that we need to change”*

### KEY LEARNINGS

- **Men and women made the difference**
  - People rose to the challenge: *“employee engagement has exploded”*
  - Managers at the heart of the fire: *“the biggest leadership challenge I’ve been through, there is no playbook”*
  - The emergence of new talents: *“some people revealed themselves”*
  - A strong magnifying effect: *“Hard workers worked even harder, and shirkers even less”*

- **Companies have adapted**
  - From 1:1 to global, communication as the cornerstone of crisis management: “it was critical to nurture communication”
  - Simplification as a survival tool: “We did a lot of things we didn’t know we could do”
  - A vital need of connection, of social and informal interactions: “ad hoc and spontaneity create soul and dream”

## PERSPECTIVES

- **In terms of business:**
  - A chance to learn from the crisis that cannot be missed: “It’s like a reset. What do we keep, what do we throw?”
  - A readiness to challenge old perceptions and beliefs: “I was never a big fan, I had it all wrong”
  - An opportunity to reinvent the business (change in jobs, digitalization, simplification and agility development, implementation of hybrid work, evolution of workspaces, streamlining the organization, etc.): “this can be the biggest technology driven organizational change in a century, this is propelling us into the future of the world of work”
  - A necessity to innovate in terms of innovation: “If we really had had a need to invent, to design, to be innovative, it would have been more complicated”
  - A steppingstone to rethink human resources management (hybrid work agreement, management of psychosocial risks, learning and development, social dialogue, newcomers’ onboarding, management of international mobility): “take care of your people, they will take care of the business”
- **In terms of management:**
  - A concrete challenge to restore safety and trust: “we will need to regain people’s trust and bring them back in a positive way, without putting pressure on them”
  - A compelling need to work on alignment. “Dysfunction and misalignment that was inconspicuous in office setting has now clearly surfaced”
  - A new culture of leadership to develop: “We will need to redefine what makes a team a team, the backbone around which you can navigate, a minimum code of conduct, an anchor: what is common? What is necessary?”
  - A growing necessity to closely watch the impact of the crisis on people’s mental health (loss of meaning, lack of emotional connection, need to organize resilience, absence of perspective...): “The teams are exhausted and have experienced a kind of trauma, some are afraid: the crisis and always there and weighs on”