

C-Suite Survey Results: Leading Through COVID-19

Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

June, 2020



F M G L E A D I N G



Methodology

Data Collection Methodology

BACKGROUND


- **As the COVID-19 virus began to take hold in the U.S., and with states implementing “Shelter in Place” orders, businesses had to adapt their operations, planning, and workforce to the changing conditions.**
- **Clients of FMG Leading frequently asked how other businesses were impacted and how others were responding to the health and economic crises.**

DATA COLLECTION

- **FMG Leading designed and administered an online survey to get a better understanding about the ways in which businesses were impacted by the crisis and how they were responding to the crisis.**
- **The “Leading Through COVID” survey was sent to FMG Leading C-suite contacts. To be eligible for inclusion, participant’s titles or roles contained “Chief Officer”.**
- **The survey was sent on May 20th and a reminder was sent on May 27th. The survey was closed on June 1st.**

SAMPLE

- **27 organizations participated in the survey. More than half of the respondents were in the CEO role.**
 - **Other roles include: Chief Operating Officers, Chief Financial Officers, and Chief Medical Officers**
- **Because of FMG Leading’s depth of clientele in the healthcare industry, 63% of the responding organizations came from healthcare.**



Finding #1:
The outlook on
recovery
remains split.

1. The outlook on recovery remains split.

KEY FINDINGS


- **Overall, leaders are still defining and adapting to their new normal, half are optimistic; half are pessimistic about their organization's economic recovery.**
 - 70% of organizations are in the process of “establishing a new normal”; 15% are just “getting oriented” while remaining 15% are “fully adapted”
 - Approximately half the respondents (48%) are somewhat or very optimistic.
 - Among the optimistic respondents, 15% are very optimistic.
 - Two-thirds of all organizations that participated in the survey have completed a reforecast exercise.

IMPLICATIONS

- **Leader quality is a key conundrum:**
 - 49% Of respondents are pessimistic, suggesting there's an opportunity to further help leaders clarify and act on recovery opportunities (near and mid-term) they may not be taking advantage of.
 - Improving on this while there is a degree of market forgiveness with customers will be critical.
 - Those who identify the right decisions and take action on the things they can impact today will likely emerge stronger, with tighter customer relationships that provide more opportunity for faster recovery and revenue growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Build lean leadership muscle, starting with you...**
 - Rapid self-assessments are crucial (how am I showing up against my decisions/actions v. intending to show up)
 - Identify key decisions, risks, opportunities against short-term time horizon (for yourself and your executive team).
 - Refresh leadership team operating models to drive clarity, focus, and accountability on priorities.



Finding #2:
Growing
revenues is a
top priority.

2. Growing revenues is a top priority.

KEY FINDINGS


- **Most leaders are focused on driving recovery by accelerating revenue growth, however, most don't foresee major changes to their go-to-market strategies and product/service lines.**
 - Revenue growth is the top priority for the majority of organizations (48%).
 - An overwhelming majority of organizations don't foresee any lines, products, or functions ending (85%).
 - 78% Foresee expansion during this crisis. Telehealth is the primary area of expansion and focus.

IMPLICATIONS

- **Ensure growth aspirations match customer needs and new realities.**
 - The need for a rapid strategy refresh is more important than ever. Key questions to explore include:
 - How have our markets and industry landscape shifted?
 - Are we focused on serving the right customers in the right way?
 - Do we have the capabilities to win with our customers going forward?
 - What if anything do we need to invest in now to help us win in the next quarter and/or half year?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Mitigate risk of strategic misalignment and potential missed market opportunities:**
 - Most leaders are focused on driving organizational recovery through accelerated growth, however “refreshing our firm’s strategy” was the second lowest priority among leaders.
 - This presents a fundamental question, or worse, a dangerous assumption that customer behaviors will remain largely the same – which could be a vital mistake.
 - All strategies should begin and end with clarifying how your organization will meet and/or exceed customer needs in a differentiated and profitable way.
 - Staying the course and focusing on creating value with pre-COVID-19 strategies could unintentionally create customer churn or brand risk.



Finding #3:
Right Leaders,
Right Teams,
Right Priorities.

3. Right leaders, right teams, right priorities.

KEY FINDINGS


- **Leaders are reasonably confident they have the right teams in place; to a large degree most believe the current crisis has strengthened organization and leader purpose.**
 - Most respondents (78%) have a somewhat greater sense of mission/purpose; only 8% have a lesser sense of purpose.
 - 74% of organizations are somewhat or very confident in their leadership team's ability to successfully navigate the coming months.

IMPLICATIONS

- **Potential mission-market misalignment risk with your customers:**
 - While most leaders have a stronger sense of organization and individual purpose, the question becomes, do your customers share the same perception?
 - Given the focus on revenue growth, with a low perceived need to adjust products or services, organizations will likely need to quickly revisit their go-to-market strategies to ensure they are still focused on meeting the right needs, at the right time, at the right place with their customers.
 - Customer buying behaviors and economic levels have likely shifted dramatically.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Ensure mission, vision, & values are aligned with market demands.**
 - Take this opportunity to evolve your organization's operating principles if necessary (how we talk, how we work, how we evaluate wins/loses).
 - Start with the customer in mind.
 - Quickly gather, incorporate, and act on internal feedback to realign organizational focus with customer realities.



Finding #4:
Agility and
flexibility will
determine pace
of recovery.

4. Agility and flexibility will determine pace of recovery.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Across the board, leaders strongly believe there is a mission-critical need to improve their organization's ability to execute rapid planning and delivery on recovery priorities, now more than ever.**
 - Capacities important to thrive include (in order of frequency):
 - Agility/Flexibility
 - Communication
 - Resource Management
 - Operational Readiness & Performance
 - Grit
 - Leadership
 - 41% of organizations feel comfortable making plans with a 4-week time horizon, and 30% with a 3-month horizon.

IMPLICATIONS

- **Balance the seeing and doing of leadership at a faster pace:**
 - Agility and flexibility were already established as mission critical organizational / leader capabilities well before COVID-19. However, the consequences of not being able to anticipate and take action on future risks and opportunities has likely increased 5 to 10-fold.
 - Leaders and teams throughout organizations will be required to translate smart decisions into focused action at a much faster pace... a pace that could either build new organizational muscle, or a pace that could accelerate leader/organizational burnout.
 - Creating organizational disciplines around rapid team decision making and execution is, now more than ever, a mission critical leadership requirement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Double down on team execution and rapid decision quality.**
 - Quickly assess the decision making ability of critical teams.
 - Start with teams that have disproportionate impact on growth and recovery.
 - Form and deploy taskforces to intervene with high risk teams (slow decisions, burnout risk, high turnover)
 - If necessary, re-deploy top talent into at-risk teams to improve the quality of decision making and execution on key priorities.

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