# DON'T FORGET THE FUTURE
Let's not let the short term crowd out the long term

In 1847 in Vienna Ignaz Semmelweis discovered that handwashing was all that was needed to kill viruses (he referred to them as "corpse particles" because he did autopsies in the morning and delivered babies in the afternoon) and thus virtually eliminated childbed fever. His proof was convincing but was rejected at the time by the medical establishment for reasons of pride and tradition: many doctors both failed to adapt their behaviors in the short term and were blind to the lasting changes that antiseptic procedures would bring to "the normal way of doing things".
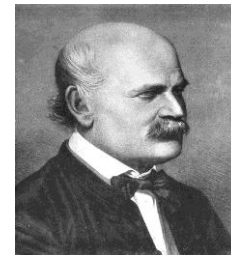
Ignaz Semmelweis, 1818-1865

Similarly, as we focus our attention on what we need to do to bring our organizations out of lockdown in the short term, it could be fatal to stay blind to what the future holds, to miss the opportunity to do what we can to succeed in the long term. In the past few weeks, we have done things we said couldn't be done, and we've made a decade's progress in distant-working techniques in two short months. At this juncture we need to act informed by a few clear assumptions about the changes we're likely to witness in the next 5 to 10 years.

CHANGES FOR NOW

In this relatively short confinement period, our normal lives have been upended and we have all felt the psychological impact: we are not collectively the same, and this will influence how we decide to refocus, rebuild and continue. We have a golden opportunity to think ahead and to design how we'll do things today with the realities of tomorrow in mind.

Across the world there are wide variations in guidelines for the reopening of our economies and businesses. Hard hit New York State, for example, is applying a matrix to inform their reopening plans, considering 2 key factors, how "essential" the enterprise is and how well it can reopen while respecting social-distancing guidelines.

Most jurisdictions will require us to wear masks in public and in the workplace, and many are introducing contact-tracing apps. While it's possible that we'll see a return to something like the old normal in second half of this year, it seems more likely that the next phase will be an 18-to-24 month on-again off-again "pause": the lethal Covid 19 will continue to peak periodically until the arrival of a treatment or vaccine, and there'll be no early off-ramp to normalcy.

Contact-tracing apps

The return strategies we're working on with our clients are varied, but tend to include options like…
- staggering office hours, morning or afternoon shifts, 2 days in office 3 days home etc.
- designating some positions for permanent teleworking
- reorganizing office, warehouse and other space to respect the 2m/6' rule
- introducing contact-less protocols, such as where paper delivery slips are replaced by phone scanning and PDF confirmations.

These kinds of measures should enable us to meet our local guidelines for reopening while at the same time reassuring our team members and customers that it's safe to do so.

ARCHITECTURE FOR THE FUTURE

We are not living in unprecedented times: our ancestors have dealt with major upheavals such as the 2 World Wars, the Holocaust, the American Civil War, etc. as well as murderous pandemics such as the Spanish Flu and the Black Death. Each of these led to major adjustments in social and economic life, and we may ourselves be at another inflection point in the history of humanity.


*The Spanish Flu
1918/1919*

As we go about reconfiguring our organizations for the return from lockdown, what are the lasting changes for which we should be preparing? Which of our new "different ways of doing things" will persist? What new developments should we anticipate now that our notions of what's possible have changed so much?

Every organization exists in its own industry sector, and each is experiencing change: some will be big winners, some big losers, some will continue much as before, but all will have to adapt to the new realities and continue to provide value.

It's already clear that certain sectors will grow, and some rapidly. These likely include…
- Government services, particularly the security forces and healthcare, and within the latter eldercare
- Utilities that provide the essential underpinning for our society, and particularly those that provide the energy of the future, electricity
- Construction and infrastructure
- Ground transportation
- Online shopping, home delivery and logistics: we already see Post Offices working flat out at Christmas levels
- Technology and digital transformation, particularly new developments in…
    - electronic devices
    - distant working and virtual meetings (Zoom, Webex etc. were not designed for these volumes)
    - augmented and virtual reality to enhance distant communications, virtual consulting and advising, telemedicine, remote or hybrid court cases, board meetings etc.
    - leisure activities not requiring physical proximity
    - 3D printing, AI and robotics
    - new platforms for everything from document management to local purchasing.

*Electricity
Energy of the future*

*Alpha CCO:
A compliance platform*
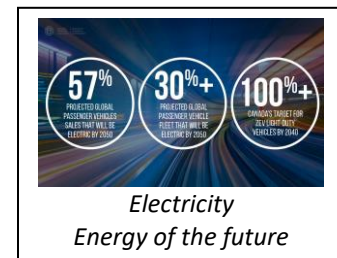
Initiatives to develop existing technologies will accelerate, enabling new innovations in how we work.
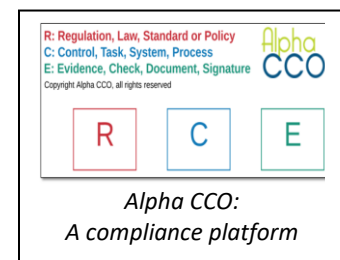
Panier Bleu
A local shopping platform

Buy British promotion

Shapeshift 3D:
New tech for healthcare

- Local economies, as a premium is put on local autonomy and self-sufficiency. This will particularly affect
  - healthcare, including the production of personal protective equipment for healthcare workers, and the manufacturing of equipment, in many cases using 3D printing.
  - agriculture, where we're already seeing initiatives to "buy local" given the vulnerability of supply and the variability of produce quality from far away, with the related increase in jobs and infrastructure such as greenhouses.

On the other side of the coin, we should anticipate that 10 to 15% of businesses will fail and won't reopen. Many will be in the categories hardest hit by the fallout from the pandemic, including..

- restaurants, particularly those that can't switch to a profitable business model (e.g. increased home deliveries and pick up) to replace close contact sit down service
- the hospitality industry in general: everything from hotels to guided tours to cruise lines
- other travel related businesses including airlines, where it seems that for at least the next few years international travel may well require a 14-day quarantine in both directions
- face-to-face group events and activities
- traditional retailers, particularly of apparel, and shopping centers
- personal service industries where social distancing will inhibit growth and margins
- the energy sector, other than for electricity generation.

Airlines
Covid 19 groundings

These often-dramatic shifts in how the world works are likely to have an impact on every organization. We should watch, for example, to see…

How sectors adapt. Some sectors will be able to adapt better than others to the new circumstances. Principal among these is probably education, where distant learning, especially at graduate and adult level, is likely to become much more prevalent. Another example is the repurposing of manufacturing to produce for growth sectors such as healthcare as other sectors struggle

How governments respond. For example, the creation of "Health Corps" to reinforce organizations running care homes, disinfect mass-transit, and/or to do the contact tracing we'll need for the next couple of years. Initiatives like this can provide socially valuable

employment, similar to the "New Deal" programs of President Roosevelt in the Great Depression

How people view their careers. It seems likely that many of us will seek a more diversified career, viewing ourselves as our own small business, cultivating a portfolio of clients, and developing unique skills and capabilities. This will reduce employment risk in a rapidly changing world, much as a balanced investment portfolio minimizes financial risk

How organizations organize. It seems likely that the typical organization (neither scaling up nor struggling to survive) will be characterized by fewer people, less use of bricks and mortar, and more use of online platforms. Several of our clients are using a 60, 20, 20 rule-of-thumb against which to test their potential new organizational plans…

- 60% of team members would be core, the team to guard the organization's ethos and values, ensure mission fulfilment, and drive strategy
- 20% of current complement would be replaced by technology, typically platform technologies or new technologies such as 3D printing, AI, robotics etc.
- 20% would be contractors working on a contingent basis, consultants, gig economy subcontractors, etc.

This complement would work in a blended environment, part physical and part virtual, deploying new tools as they are developed and distributing work: fewer people will need a central place of employment, so models like this are likely to reduce overhead.

These configurations will require more attention to what we've become used to over the past few months, more explicit procedures and performance measurement, and more structured communications and teambuilding for the virtual community.

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PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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Managing all this swirl of rapid change requires systematic planning and management, especially since what will develop over the next few years is hard to forecast.

The adoption of an end-to-end perpetual-motion approach to planning is essential. These E2E plans must begin at a high level of strategy, with particular emphasis on industry sector scenarios, but must connect directly to the grainy level of projects in what we might have previously called the operating plan.

There must be a seamless relationship between strategy and execution, and the plan, the hypotheses it's based on, and the effectiveness of its tactics must be reviewed and adjusted on at least a quarterly basis.

*The L&C Model
End-to-End planning*

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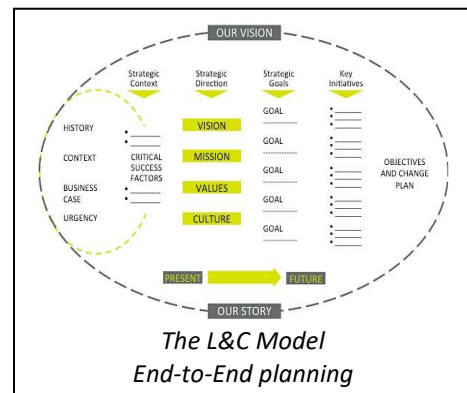
"…tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today…"

African proverb

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