Agile Software Development (TCS 562)

Unit-II Agile Project Management
Scrum Case Study

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Graphic Era Deemed to be University, Dehradun

Case study of Deloitte:

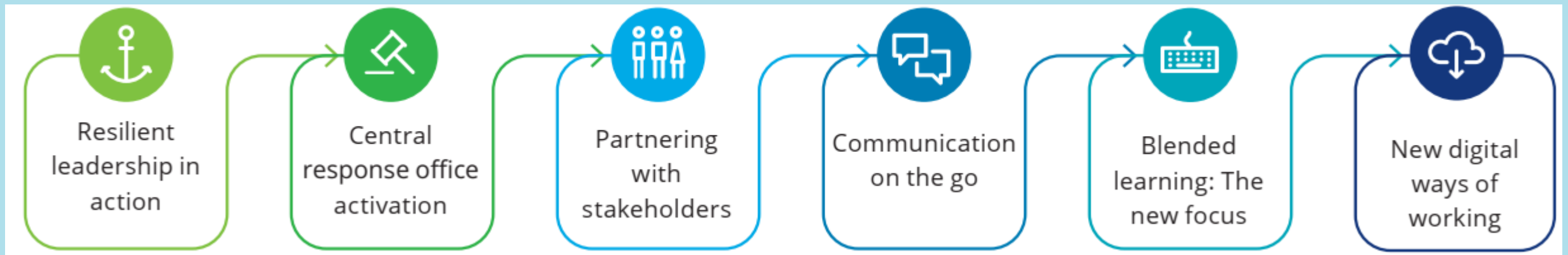## COVID-19: Impact on people, operations, and businesses

- COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic; triggering a public health emergency worldwide. Its impact on people, their health, businesses, stock markets, and other pillars of the global economy needs no emphasis.

- The COVID-19 pandemic can be summarized through the following facts:

✓ **Rapid spread:** The coronavirus, which first started in China and was reported in January, has quickly spread to more than 200countries1.

✓**Economic uncertainty:** In early April 2020, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that they anticipate COVID-19 to be the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression2.

✓**Uncertainty around the pandemic:** In the absence of any vaccination, the uncertainty around coronavirus is expected to remain high as cases continue to rise.

- To deal with the uncertainties and fight COVID-19, governments across the world have implemented various degrees of restrictions.

- For India, starting with a 21-day lockdown effective from 25 March 2020, the lockdown continues to extend with different terms and conditions with quarantine and **social distancing emerging as the key solutions.**

- In this spirit, barring essential services, all organisations have mandated employees to work from home.

- Different people react differently to complexities and uncertainties, including feelings of loss of control, anxiety around well-being, and conjectures around **financial insecurity.**

- To help employees navigate through this turmoil, several organisations have made counselling helplines and wellness sessions available to employees and their families.
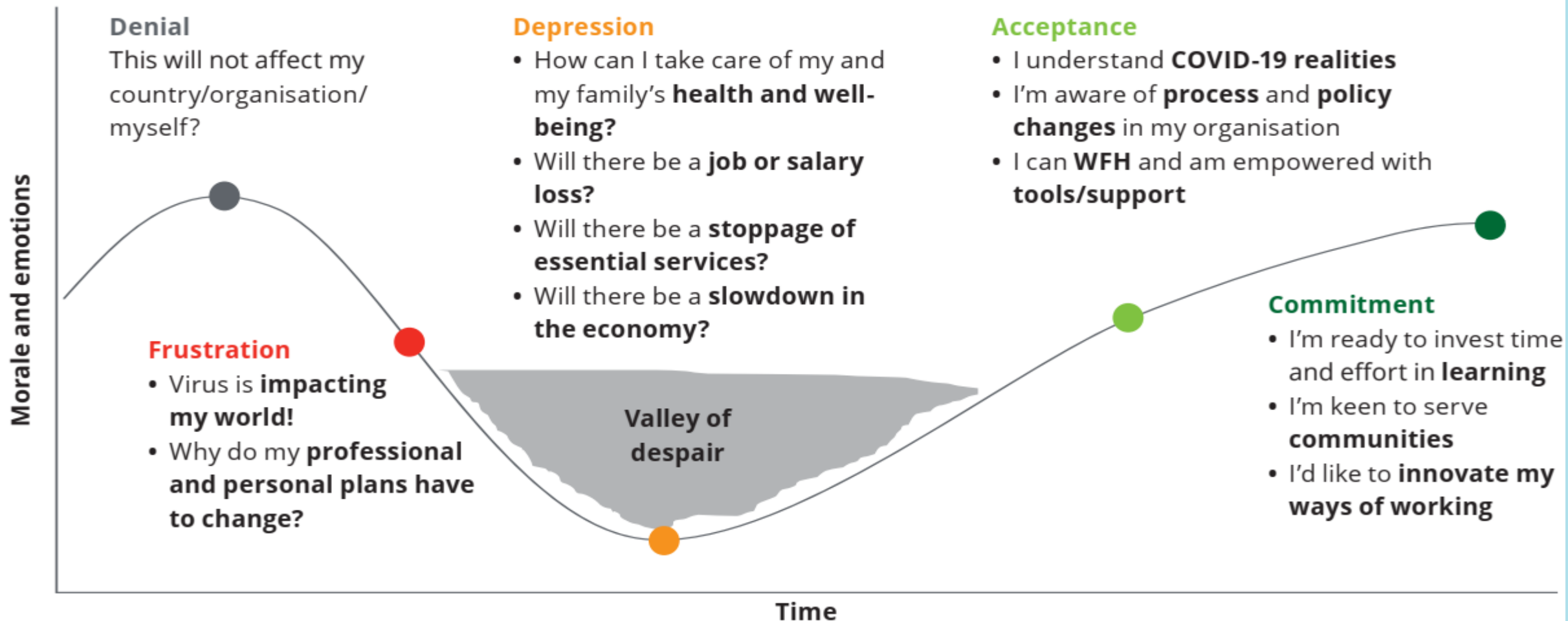
- This document **will help guide the enterprises** to build organisational resilience and emerge stronger using **a robust change management approach**. It will also address:

- How the **leadership can manage expectations and prioritise** the health and well-being of their workforce?

- How actions of a **central response office can help manage stakeholders and communicate better** (using tools to keep the workforce informed and engaged, thereby creating a more resilient and agile workforce)?

- How a **clear and consistent communication strategy** can be established to keep all stakeholders informed and address their concerns?

- How **new digital ways of working** can be adopted?

- How a **renewed focus on online learning strategies** can be leveraged to engage and upskill employees?

Change management approach to navigate through COVID-19

- This case study document offers a **holistic change management approach, with best practices from varied sectors** to address the **short term need of surviving this unprecedented situation**.

- It also looks at some **long-term trends** that this global phenomenon could bring about and provides guidance on how to best prepare for it.

- This approach can be leveraged by organisations to strengthen **their workforce through resilient leadership, internal and external collaborations, and open and honest communications** across stakeholder groups.

Resilient leadership in action → Central response office activation → Partnering with stakeholders → Communication on the go → Blended learning: The new focus → New digital ways of working

- Workforces across organisations are attempting to work through this change, while also solving for the change in their **personal lives.**

- In doing so, most are undergoing a range of reactions as depicted by the "COVID-19 change curve".

Denial
This will not affect my country/organisation/ myself?

Depression
- How can I take care of my and my family's **health and well-being?**
- Will there be a **job or salary loss?**
- Will there be a **stoppage of essential services?**
- Will there be a **slowdown in the economy?**

Acceptance
- I understand **COVID-19 realities**
- I'm aware of **process** and **policy changes** in my organisation
- I can **WFH** and am empowered with tools/support

Frustration
- Virus is **impacting my world!**
- Why do my **professional and personal plans have to change?**

Valley of despair

Commitment
- I'm ready to invest time and effort in **learning**
- I'm keen to serve **communities**
- I'd like to **innovate my ways of working**

Morale and emotions

Time

- Organisations and leaders need to actively coach their workforces through the stages of the curve and pull them up from the **"valley of despair,"** which is expected to have a deep impact on their morale and productivity.

- To do so, workforces need to be **given ample information through their preferred modes of communication.**

- In addition, appropriate and quick adjustments need to be made in the **systems, processes, and structures** to drive the whole organization towards "acceptance" and "commitment."

- **A few early adopters have already initiated efforts to support their employees and customers.**

Resilient leadership in action

- Leading and inspiring employees amidst a global pandemic is only possible with **compassion for workforces and communities.**

- **The need of the hour is** for leadership to **focus inside and then outside**.

- This will enable them to lead from the heart and the mind.
Leaders also need to align their approach with their actions to take the organisation through the crisis.

- This situation requires clarity and **decisiveness** for embracing the challenge and managing the transition.

- **As leaders attempt to respond, they must also place the safety of their employees at the core.** In addition to the employees, it is crucial to **identify all critical contributors** to the business (such as customers, vendors, regulatory bodies, and partners) and ensure their inclusion in the strategies to keep the workforce safe.

- Listed below are a few fundamental qualities of leaders from Indian organisations that are **proving to be exemplary** through the crisis:

Empathy
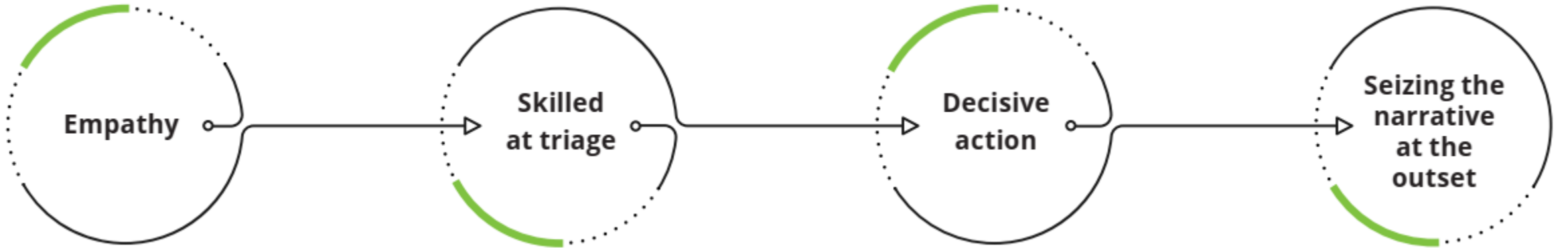
To be able to put themselves in the shoes of employees, customers, and their broader ecosystems and consistently connect and communicate with them.

Skilled at triage

To be able to stabilise their organisations to meet the crisis at hand while also finding opportunities amidst constraints.

Decisive action

To be able to take decisions with courage based on imperfect information. Leaders need to take quick actions to ensure physical, emotional, and financial security for the workforce and communities.

Seizing the narrative at the outset

To be transparent about current realities (including what they don't know) while also painting a compelling picture of the future that inspires others.

- ✓ The colossal scale of the outbreak and its sheer uncertainty makes it challenging for executives to respond. Organisations look up to their leaders for guidance on tackling the **strategic, operational, legal, and logistical challenges** in the crisis. The checklist below can facilitate leaders **to enable organisational survival and resilience through quick action:**

- ✓ Respond with a **people-first mindset.**

- ✓ **Build a cross-functional central response team** with experts from functions such as IT, Admin, HR, Legal, Media and Communications, Finance and Operations.

- ✓ Develop **crisis-response strategy** keeping all stakeholders in perspective.

- ✓ Activate **business continuity plans and disaster recovery mechanisms.**

- ✓ **Assess and procure IT tools and infrastructure** such as laptops, data cards, VPN, and firewalls to meet requirements.

- ✓ Assess **mission-critical tasks and defer** or deprioritise other **non-essential projects.** Allow well thought out cuts indiscretionary spends to maintain a healthy cash flow.

- ✓ Review **performance metrics** to align it with business and technology strategies. Also, regularly review the status of **engagement metrics** to continuously improve the new digital workplace in action.
  Prepare **temporary succession plans** for key executive positions and critical roles.

Central response office activation

- In an unprecedented crisis characterised by uncertainty, leaders should immediately establish a cross-functional team to develop a coordinated response effort.

- The **central response office (CRO)** is multidisciplinary and comprises various functions. They are designed to act and adapt as teams familiarise with the crisis and as conditions change. **Daily stand-ups of this cross-functional team** can help guide executives on where to focus their efforts, and be the integrated pulse for employees, customers, vendors, and partners.

- The **CRO** must also identify gaps and strengthen core capacities in surveillance, extend support to resources, logistics, and mitigate risks. To manage the current situation, the first task at hand is **creating a collaborative, open, and inclusive virtual work environment.**

The key CRO responsibilities can be summarised as follows:

- Drive **consistent messaging** across the organisation—the single source of truth for all.
- Manage **multi-channel communication** including confidential feedback and reporting channels.
- Share updates on the **latest public advisories from the local, state, and national political leaders** and health officials for organisational leaders to align on scenarios and actions required.
- Be at the center of all remedial actions across all work streams based on scenarios and triggers. **Coordinate with the functions and act fast.**
- **Set the governance** to enable cross-functional teams to work together.
- **Evaluate** any changes in the ways of working owing to the Business Continuity Planning (BCP) scenarios and communicate acceptable ways of working clearly.
- Provide **consistent guidelines to managers** to ensure employees safety and engage them.

- While the leadership is aligned on the way forward and the CRO is activated to drive the organisation through the emergency, a **task force also needs to be set up for forecasting and planning** with a mid-to long-term view.

- **It should also** look at **opportunities for the business to innovate its operating model by** leveraging new and digital ways of working. In this situation, it is essential to proactively engage and communicate with all stakeholders and bring them up to speed on a regular basis.

Partnering with stakeholders

- Identifying stakeholders (including staff, suppliers, customers, lenders, board of directors, investors, government agencies, and the media) is critical to minimise the negative impact, maintain control, and secure the support of the organisation to move forward quickly and convey confidence.

- Identifying and partnering with stakeholders is mission critical for organisations, given that **the top priority at the moment is to protect people and find new ways to serve customers.**

- Equally important is to **research ways to reach out to and collaborate with stakeholders leveraging alternative channels** and online tools.

- To achieve this, it **is critical to collaborate internally with various business units** by updating them on the business continuity plans **to have one source of truth for employees, customers, regulatory bodies, and partners.**

- This is also the time for the eadership to look up to the **board for governance and for guidance** to confront the uncertainty at hand.

- In these times, it is even more critical to be in touch with **clients** who may also have customers of their own.

- The message communicated to them may reach an even greater audience. In addition, it is important to evaluate how they can be supported in this time and agree on new ways of partnering. This is likely to forge even stronger relationships.

- **Unionised employers** need to collaborate with their **union leadership** to address concerns. Collaborating with and supporting **contractors and vendors** is also critical.

- They are the extended workforce in most organisations and their well-being and security need to be on the organisation's radar.

- Organisations can leverage the guidance below to partner with stakeholders and respond to their needs:

Identify stakeholders

Understand the effect of COVID-19 on employees and partners of the supporting organisations.

Deloitte has set up helplines for employees and their families to communicate any challenges arising from the pandemic and also report any encounters with suspected or confirmed cases. At senior levels, there are regular connects with clients and customers to help them navigate these times.

Provide support

Provide direct support to employees/ contractors that are severely impacted due to the pandemic.

A premier real estate developer has taken up the responsibility to ensure that sufficient food supply arrangements are in place for tens of thousands of workers who are currently staying at their sites. The group is also ensuring their medical welfare.

Develop solutions

Create tailored solutions to help resolve specific needs of each impacted group.

One of the largest online food delivery platforms has arranged an awareness drive for their delivery partners. Additionally, the company is providing them with free medical consultation through partners. Plus, in cases where delivery associates have to self-quarantine, the organisation supports them financially.

Communication on the go

- **Employees are likely to be exposed to conflicting information and feel anxious or confused about the best course of action.** Organisations need to have a clear and **focused approach to connect with their workforce** to effectively lead them during periods of uncertainty.

- An inclusive **communication strategy for COVID-19 needs to be put into immediate action, based on a clear understanding of audiences** (internal/external), **message** to be communicated, and **frequency and channels** of communication (digital/print). For instance, essential service industries are communicating with factory workers through verbal communications and print media.

- Also, note that the **most important stakeholders in the communication plan are the leaders, therefore they need to be equipped and prepared to have conversations with the people, partners, clients, and other stakeholders.**

Some COVID-19 specific communication practices that can be leveraged include the following:

For internal stakeholders

- Encourage the regular **use of digital tools** to connect virtually, formally, and informally.
- Be sure to clearly **communicate HR policies** around medical and health insurance, leaves, absenteeism, **loans against salaries, etc.**
- **Educate** employees about **COVID-19 symptoms and ways of prevention.**
- Issue **specific travel-and immigration-**related communication.
- Inform employees about the available IT infrastructure, tools, and support to enable seamless remote working.
- Communicate the **new acceptable ways of working (timing, flexibility, etc.).**
- Create **channels for expressing emotions** and concerns in a healthy way.

For external stakeholders

- **Structure macro and micro customer messaging** on business response and the possible impact on customers.
- **Create or enhance external support channels** to manage and overcome temporary disruptions.
- Maintain **regular check points with customers** across levels for collaborative problem solving.

- **While virtual collaboration can be brought to reality with digital tools, employees will have to be empowered with support and information on well-being.**

- Below listed initiatives can help employees sail through high degree of uncertainty and disorientation.

- Consider a **dedicated hotline for inquiries** from employees.

- Consider bringing in **medical experts to facilitate Q&A sessions** with teams to stay aware and safe during this time.

- An **intranet page** that can be a dedicated one-stop solution for information, FAQs, previous communications, policies, and points of contact.

Blended learning: The new focus

- Training is critical for fully realising business change. Amidst the lockdown, employees across levels and functions are bound to have more time on hand.

- **Organisations are looking at this downtime as an opportunity to upskill their workforce,** and ensure that they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet future demands—strengthening the effectiveness and productivity of the entire organisation.

- **An effective learning strategy and plan along with a virtual training platform can help prepare the workforce for uncertainties of the future.**

Promote and enhance digital learning

- In India, where travel restrictions and work-from-home policies have been in place for a few weeks now, organisations are looking to embrace digitally enabled experiences that could help add more value and create benefits for its stakeholders.

- For leaders, this opens up **opportunities to promote existing digitally enabled offerings of learning** to benefit the workforce during challenging times.

- Direct communications reminding employees that learning does not have to stop when travel is truncated, may enhance attention towards available digital offerings.

A few trainings that organisations can focus on are:

Leadership

- Leadership in the times of disruption
- Leading virtual teams

Workforce

- Role-based and process-based trainings
- Cybersecurity awareness training refresher
- Adopting the new normal—virtual work culture
- Welfare and wellness sessions
- Organisational policy refresh (session on leaves, medical benefits, and care-giver)

New digital ways of working

- Virtual interactions, team conversations, and collaborations have become the new normal.

- A combination of technologies and tools to support remote work such as VPN infrastructure, access control mechanisms, and data security must be made available.

- In addition, policies, procedures, and trainings need to be in place to support organisation-wide remote work deployment.

- This will thereby reduce the **risks of misalignment and lack of collaboration** that arise from virtual teaming.

- It is therefore imperative for **leaders to adopt agile working principles.** To help them become effective in a remote environment, here are a few considerations:

- Deploy an effective BCP plan and **set up explicit expectations** to emulate business as usual.

- Establish **regular cadence for check-ins** with the top management.

- Establish a **cross-functional system to drive collaboration.**

- **Encourage middle management to have regular check-ins** with their teams over calls.

- **Acknowledge the risk** for change in performance.

- Ensure **robust compliance and governance** are in place to ensure security of client/organisation data.

People managers have a challenging task to manage their workforce remotely. **Under the new ways of working, the management might want to consider the following best practices:**

- ☑ **Show trust in your employees**—avoid micromanagement.

- ☑ **Relax the rules on business hours.**

- ☑ Define **governance processes, metrics, and oversight processes.**

- ☑ **Maintain a shared summary of tasks.** Soften deadlines for work that is not business critical.

- ☑ Share **WFH tips and tricks** through mails or online team connects.

- ☑ Continue internal communication check-in frequently.

- ☑ **For work that cannot be made remote,** evaluate safeguards that can be put in place, such as revised cleaning protocols, employee rotation, or personal protective equipment for employee safety.

- ☑ **Review** (and update, if required) **HR policies** such as flexibility at work, absenteeism, sick leave, caregiver leave, and leave of absence.

Respond, recover, and thrive

[Combating COVID-19 with an agile change management approach]
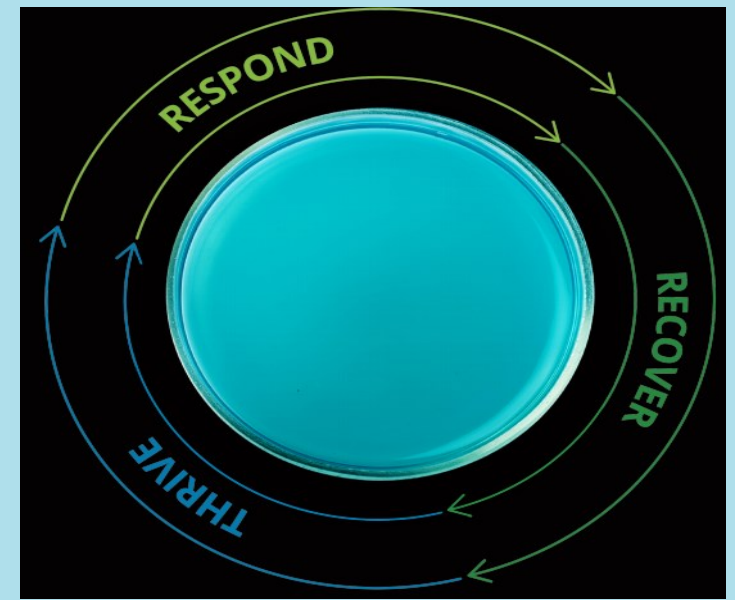
- **Changes in the business models, new ways of working**, along with the **digital culture mindset** which has emerged in organisations' response to the current situation are **likely to stay post COVID-19** and have the potential to become mainstream.

- **In the short term, putting people first** with a clear strategy and plan focused on survival is essential to lead workforces effectively.

- Additionally, the situation at hand has pushed the opportunity on organisations and leaders to ponder upon subjects such as **corporate social innovation and employee wellness.**

- Many organisations have quickly scaled up their corporate social innovation strategies to help society.

- Historically, organisations have taken a step back during a crisis. However, as the role of business in society continues to evolve, **businesses are rising to the challenge to promote a positive impact on society.** Additionally, organisations are encouraging their employees to contribute towards the nation, thereby adding one more dimension **"to promote mental and emotional wellness".**

- From encouraging overall wellness, to ensuring employees are financially secure during the outbreak, organisations across the globe have stepped up to take the lead in response to the crisis. The **time now** is also to **think about how to best prepare for the upcoming disruptions.**

- It is recommended that the crisis management teams **think ahead about how this situation could play out,** including the duration of the recovery period. They should indulge in scenario planning and continue to evaluate organisational
strategies and robust business continuity plans for each scenario.

- **Regularly reviewing the workforce adoption status and engagement metrics** is fundamental to **understand the challenges** of introducing remote ways of working in an organisation. This will enable leaders to find ways **of overcoming these challenges and sustain** digital ways of working.

- **In the long term,** with the advent of **Industry 5.0,** these new digital ways of working (telecommuting, virtual gatherings, on-demand education, just-in-case sourcing, agile IT and IT risks, and cyber security) that **rely heavily on technology and virtual environment enablement will continue to be a part** of the new normal.

- **COVID-19 may fundamentally challenge the organisational culture and the way work is distributed to and deployed by the workforce.** The key is to enable present workarounds and use them as an opportunity to shape the future ways of working with increased interaction between man and machine for better efficiency, effectiveness, and collaboration.