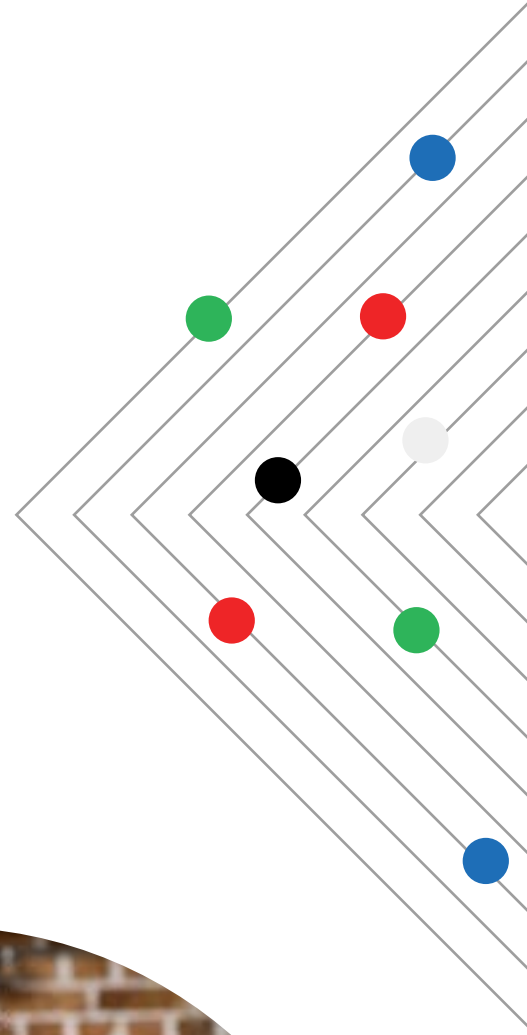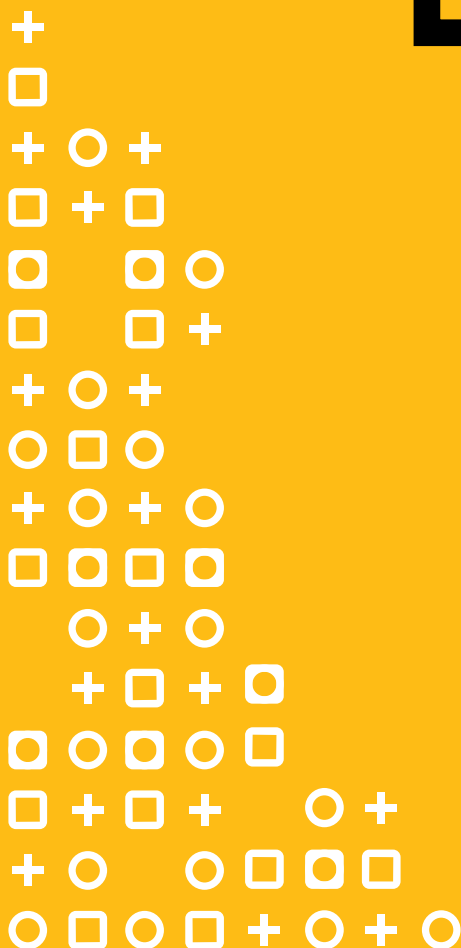# Mastering Risk and Performance in the Next Normal

Essential Practices For Enterprises and Employees

> **As we prepare optimistically to navigate the tumultuous waters ahead in post-pandemic economies, the constructs of work, the workplace and workforce are undergoing a fundamental transformation.**

# The future is coming

The working professional will emerge from the 'lockdown' into a world where she or he will be required to operate effectively, in a mix of traditional 'owned' offices, shared workspaces and/or in virtual remote places of their choice!

Traditionally, many leaders and professionals have had the mindset that in challenging times, working-from-home or from a remote location is a luxury or a benefit. With the need to maintain social distance—expressed better as physical distance—and the need to self-isolate to remain healthy and safe, many countries have asked enterprises to lock down, leading to entire workforces to 'work-from-home' and relook at location strategy. This will now become the norm, by necessity rather than an option.

And that puts the onus on enterprises and leaders to rethink on how individuals and teams interact, team and make decisions to achieve their goals.

Practices related to engaging communication, aligning collaboration and empowering contribution, which together lead to sustained performance will need to be refreshed—and soon!

# Dealing with this emergent reality

For too long, the assumption has been that physical connect is what drives capability, because of the influence it wields on the ability of a workforce to communicate and collaborate. Many would argue that these will continue to be the fundamental engines to drive contribution, even as virtual operating models take centre stage.

Indeed, progressive enterprises and employees have found switching to distributed work setups and operating from remote locations overnight possible – but many have also found it challenging to be agile to make such transitions.

Over the last few years, organisations have understood that new technologies are the 'saviour' in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous times, as business imperatives change often, and across many dimensions. While technology has enabled agility, today these changes are occurring across all dimensions, and on a daily and even hourly basis!

One thing in common that leaders, organizations, and governments that have been able to channelize the energy generated in this time of anxiety in a positive way, is that they have all made investments in communication and collaboration technologies. That early adoption has helped their people to transition much more easily than others.

On the flip side, enterprises that were hitherto lagging in digital transformation with limited investment or technology adoption, have seen glitches and delays in redeploying capacity and a marked decrease in the ability to share information.

It's become evident that wherever the fundamental engines that drive contribution are humming, the transition to new operating models is much faster, cheaper and smoother!

As we navigate to the next normal, crucial questions need to be answered on how to enable people to get back to work, and help them feel back in control and relevant, while building proficiency in the skills that are now needed against growing productivity pressures.

As is the need to rebalance the sudden recalibration of performance expectations!

# Ensuring Business Continuity by Managing Risk

At KPISOFT, we understand that what leads to business continuity is the efficient and effective management of risk to performance. Today, this translates on sustained effort to make the right decisions to protect lives and livelihoods.

Organizational capability to reach the best decisions, at the right time, given available information, especially as it relates to enabling employee safety and required efficiency and effectiveness in a changed environment, are essential.

A lasting learning from the current crisis will show that decision makers who have invested in technology to augment intelligence with insight are better placed to survive and thrive.

Many of the organizations and leaders we partner with who have committed to investing in using actionable insights to drive actions, continue to move at a differentiated pace and sustain expected performance.

## Risk Index(es)

Where we see exceptional performance every day are places where decision makers have access to decision support in the form of what we term as risk index(es) – actionable insights which help teams and individuals answer questions at each stage of transition to the 'next normal' as they:

⭐ **RE**ACT

⚙ **RE**SPOND

▪ **RE**FORM

➤ **RE**IMAGINE
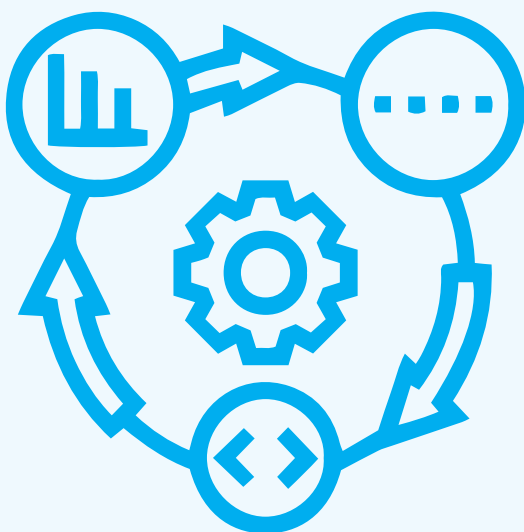
# **RE**ACT

- What are the immediate challenges to safety of lives and livelihoods?

———————————————

- What are the possible scenarios being considered, given available information on location, contact, health, travel history, compliance to disaster management guidelines?

———————————————

- What are the implications on various stakeholders –clients, projects, business units, people, partners?

———————————————

# **RE**SPOND

- How to translate insight from the information and data available to make the right 'lifeboat' choices?

———————————————

- For which roles, can work be done by a distributed workforce?

———————————————

- For which tasks in each role, are the technical, functional and professional proficiency to operate in a fluid construct, present?

———————————————

# **RE**FORM

- Which are the key result areas/indicators/metrics to be tracked going forward and what is the expected trajectory?

  _____

- What are the variables that could impact productivity and performance?

  _____

- Does each team and individual collectively have the platform and products that will enable communication, collaboration and contribution?

  _____

# **RE**IMAGINE

- What is the mental and physical wellness of people to perform?

  _____

- What are the mission critical the enterprise practices to remain competitive?

  _____

- What are the changes that need to be made in ways of working to sustain capacity and abilities to perform?

  _____

While most decision makers have the experience to help them ask these questions, the solutions on how to enable performance in the light of the many pressing unprecedented challenges and their implications, on what work needs to be done, how work will be done, who should do the work, and where the work will be done - will need to address the new realities that underscore the need for safety–both physical and psychosocial.

Using these Risk Index(es), enterprises can enhance the confidence of people to assess whether their team and organization is the right place for them to come back to.

The great "pause" that so many have experienced has led to reflection on life and work choices and many will now look to find meaning to be part of a group (or with an employer) that can enhance confidence by promising a commitment to personal wellbeing.

# Test of Leadership

Strong leadership will have to be demonstrated at all levels of the organization to put people first, economics second – and assess future scenarios, including the possible impact on investors and clients, and most importantly, how to recover.

New operating models for businesses will, require leaders to dig deep into their character and demonstrate commitment, compassion and courage.

Enterprises will demand leaders step up to bring their culture alive  - and statements hung up on walls will need to be exhibited in the halls!

Employees will also look to leadership to showcase the enterprise crisis management approach transparently. Clear line-of-sight to actions taken to ensure personal safety and work security will be expected by people.

**Prevention & Notification Actions taken such as:**

- timely alerts to employees on hotspots and safe zones

- access to crisis and continuity helplines

- tracking and alerting people on compliance with stay at home notices, movement control orders, quarantine and social distancing guidelines

- reliable wellbeing reporting

- access to assistance in timely manner

Organizations grow by enabling personal growth for individuals - and especially in these times, it will be crucial that people are provided insight proactively on how to stay mentally and physically energetic.

Enabling access to 360-degree Risk Assessment Index(es), which provide a forecast and early warning systems that lead to business continuity will enhance personal confidence to perform.

While there will be a need to look at infrastructure that allow for email and system access, network security, file sharing, messaging and video/audio conferencing to aid in maintaining contact and connect  – it is the tools that enable contribution that will help people to deliver to  performance in a new and unknown environment.

# Sustaining Strong Performance

We've identified seven practices that lead to a culture of goal achievement when people operate to deliver work in a  distributed workspace with a fluid workforce.

**Context**

**Communicate**

**Connect**

**Collaborate**

**Count**

**Contribute**

**Culture**

# Context

As professionals, we don't operate well on islands which disconnect us socially. We need to have a vision of the 'big picture' and why we are doing, what we are doing. Working remotely amplifies this need.

Team members working in dispersed locations, away from their managers and colleagues may face moments of doubt regarding their individual goals, the value of the tasks assigned to them, and whether they are aligned with the team and organizational mission.

We use the KPISOFT goal-alignment engine to institutionalise goal setting across the organization, where many people today have multiple supervisors, stakeholders and team members with whom they work, so these goals can be cascaded and reviewed on demand – and configured rules integrate them and give a clear collective and individual line of sight.

Providing timely information to team members on what they need to know and what they need to do can go a long way in ensuring everyone in the organization is on the same page.

# Communicate

In  a remote working situation, every unit of communication needs to be treated consistently with an equal amount of importance. Err on the side of repetitiveness to ensure it reaches all colleagues who are working from home or remote locations of their choice.

Leaders need to also step up how they communicate, because unlike a co-located environment, impact of their message on team cohesion is not as visible. A collective and shared "mission" allows leaders to focus on measurable metrics of success for all their team members periodically or on demand.

People working remotely will thrive on this timely

and relevant communication so conversations using data-driven contextual insights drive quality team engagement by putting meaning into tasks being done.

Virtual "water cooler" chats that mimic casual office interactions will also resonate with people today. Sharing information with team members with the help of targeted messages and videos is the interaction a multi-generational workforce expects.
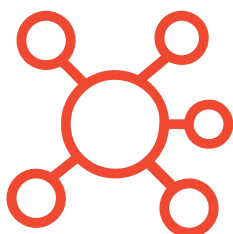
# Connect

Businesses and team leaders are understandably nervous about disengaged employees, especially if they are used to co-located physically and/or lack prior experience managing fluid workforces.

While mobile-friendly, cloud-based tools help leaders contact and connect with people periodically and on demand, whether this inspires action is hard to predict.

Team polls and interactive surveys help in doing a pulse/health check on engagement and enhance the quality of connect.

To translate this to be a distinctive experience, actionable and insightful nudges which share things people need to know or do, related to specific tasks and actions they need to take, creates a 'new experience' that can inspire action.

The ability to reach out and set up time for different types of interactions to check in, coach, or just meet for a chat, lead to emotional and social connect, which can be used to reinforce shared purpose.
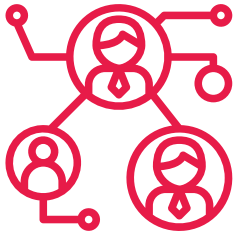
# Collaborate

For many team members, questions on "How do I partner with people whose help I need? Will I be effective given we do not work in the same place and I don't see the person I work with?" are being amplified.

Several interactions have shown that many times members of teams operating in working environments from remote locations of their choice are not satisfied with the technology tools available to them, especially when it comes to translating that contact into collaboration with each other or their leader.

Many of such tools while helpful in connecting people in teams, on-the-go or working remotely, lack a view of goals, tasks, and projects individuals own, share or need input on.

To turn contact or a connect to collaboration, tools need to allow for goals and performance metrics, as well as timely indicators that are approved, updated or shared, among team members.

# Count

Ensuring the accountability of each team member when operating in a fluid workforce and possibly in remote locations is as important as it is tricky.

While many leaders aim to do so using daily stand-up meetings, the focus tends to be on status versus innovating solutions and reaching outcomes. Having clarity on ownership and timelines for each task and goal enables a clear understanding of available capacity so team productivity benchmarks can be met.

Making metrics transparent and visible help drill down variance to performance targets and identify where and who needs to support or assist in ensuring achievement of the purpose.

# Contribute

Inspiring teams and individuals to strive with a growth mindset will generate opportunities for collective and individual performance to exceed expectations creatively and innovate.

It is essential that when flexibility in goal setting is needed, employee performance evaluation shift from measuring relative performance, to a more continuous input for development and celebration.

Psychological safety is also essential to seed new ideas, and to nurture them to opportunity and harvest as value for stakeholders. Leaders can enable this by ensuring a periodic structured feedback – as it provides a platform for structured counsel to enhance passion, upgrade proficiency, and increase productivity.

# Culture

The dual challenges of personal safety and economic uncertainty create an unprecedented work environment where every enterprises belief will be tested.

Leaders will need to align intentions, promises and actions taken to reflect these, as people will look for consistency and credible testimony on purpose and what the group stands for as we navigate paradoxes in these challenging times related to:

- Care for the Individual vs Attend to the Organization

- Bold, short term actions vs Enduring long-term values

- Convergence for Focus vs Divergence for Variety

- Learn from the Past vs Celebrate the Future

People will ask difficult questions on why they are working, and whether their personal values reflect in the beliefs they see in the enterprise where they are employed.

**Are you now more ready to answer them and more prepared to perform?**

# About KPISOFT

KPISOFT specializes in working with enterprises to adopt disruptive technologies and use augmented analytics, AI and behaviour science to exceed performance expectations.

Our proprietary platform enables enterprises to share timely, hyper-personalized actionable insights and nudges that help drive action to achieve desired outcomes for organizations, teams and individuals.

Unlike traditional platforms focused on "reviewing" historic performance, engage, enable and empower enterprises and employees to their aspirational future performance.

**We achieve this by:**

- Institutionalising the alignment of strategic, operational and people targets by leveraging our proprietary 'goal alignment engine

- Aiding' people to translate information to insight that enables them to take the right actions, at the right time, collaborating with the right teams, with the right skills and in the right place

- Using augmented analytics and behaviour science, this enhanced performance leads to personal growth and organisational success.

## For more information

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