

Overcoming the COVID-19 Crisis Through Pandemic Preparedness

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By Analysts [Roberta Witty](#), [Venecia Liu](#)

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Pandemic preparedness requires extensive organizational planning. The uncertain time frame of disease outbreaks means security and risk management leaders should arrange short- and long-term plans for protecting employee health, assessing third-party exposure, and ensuring continuity of operations.

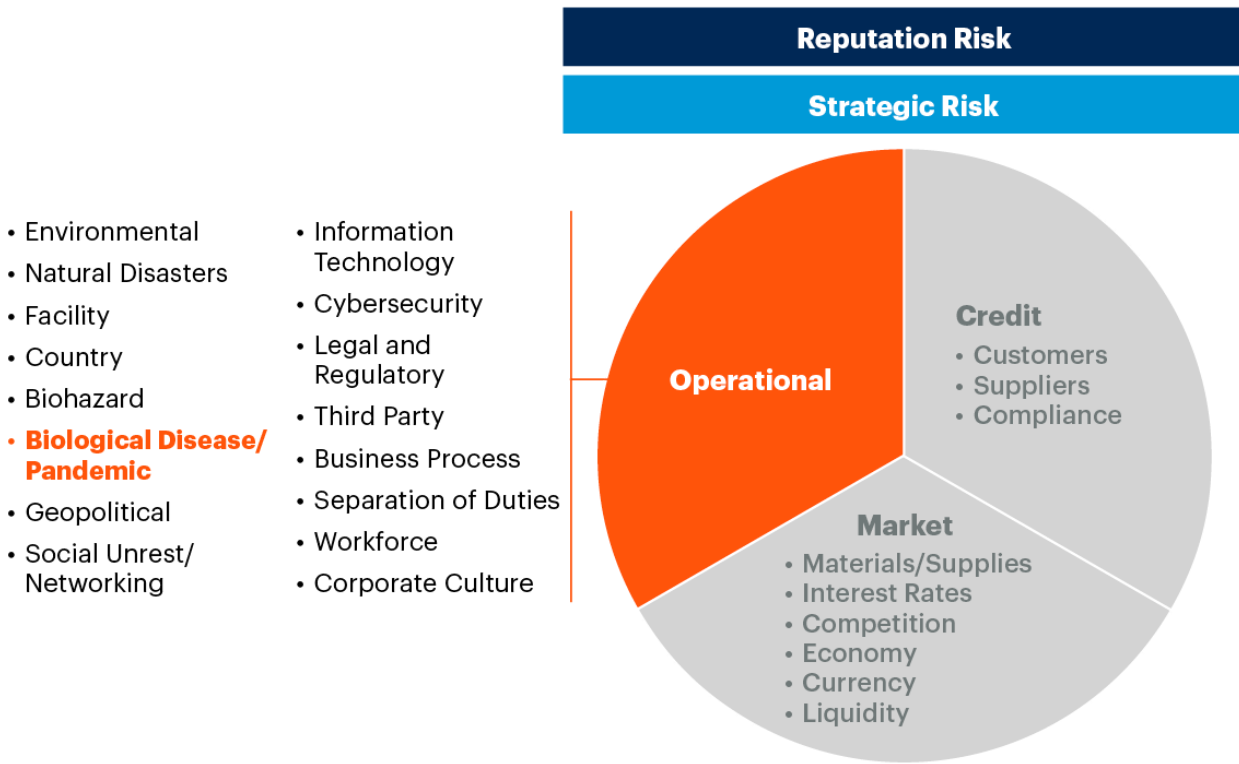
Analysis

The new coronavirus strain (COVID-19), which emerged in Wuhan, China, is the latest reminder that companies need to plan and prepare for large-scale outbreaks of the dangerous disease. Such a dynamic situation, which could span months and expand well beyond the Asia/Pacific region, has the potential to be as or more disruptive to an organization's continuity of operations as a cyber intrusion or natural disaster.

Even before the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global public health emergency on 30 January 2020, companies had already begun taking steps to reduce their exposure. This includes quarantining people in apartments in the hot zone of the emergency, restricting travel to China, closing stores and factories there, and ordering employees in affected regions to work from home. As of 11 March 2020, the WHO designated the coronavirus as a pandemic. And the U.K. registered the coronavirus as a "notifiable disease," making business insurance claim payouts more likely.

Pandemics aren't your usual business disruption. Unfolding over months, these events require an extra set of activities that include consultations with epidemiologists, critical role identification and third-party evaluations. We consider a pandemic to be an operational risk that must be managed at the highest levels of the organization because it cuts across every department and location in which the organization operates (see Figure 1).

A Pandemic Is an Operational Risk
Organizational Resilience Risks



Source: Gartner
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Figure 1. A Pandemic Is an Operational Risk

Preparations must be far-reaching for the potential impacts of the coronavirus on personnel, operations and the supply chain.

The following research describes considerations and planning that leaders can undertake as the coronavirus outbreak continues. We will update it as more research is published over time and as the emergency plays out.

Research Highlights

Organizations should prepare for a pandemic because resources — internal and external — won't be available soon. The benefits of this preparedness planning work include:

- Minimizing the impact upon staff
- Minimizing the impact on the organizational supply chain

- Minimizing the impact upon service delivery
- Minimizing the impact upon the IT infrastructure
- Protecting the corporate reputation
- Reducing the financial impact
- Enabling the organization to return to a new normality sooner

The conditions of a pandemic that organizations need to understand to best prepare, respond and recover from such an event can be categorized in three ways. However, they all stem from one key condition: employee absenteeism.

A pandemic can result in a possible staff absenteeism exceeding 40% for extended and sequential periods, and organizations must understand what that means for their business operations and be prepared to make some hard decisions, if needed.

Overall Conditions

- A pandemic is worldwide in scope and of indefinite duration.
- A pandemic can be a moving target; you need to adjust your expectations and preparations as things change.
- Quarantines and travel restrictions may be in place.
- Economic conditions become distorted during a pandemic dislocation.

External Conditions

- Government essential services will be seriously disrupted during a large-scale pandemic; this may include delays in responding to all types of events, such as civil unrest or natural disasters.
- Power outages due to utility workforce reduction may be more frequent.
- Residential internet supply won't meet demand in a large-scale pandemic.
- Food rationing may occur.

- Hospitals may be overwhelmed.
- Fuel, albeit in full production globally, may eventually be in short supply as delivery staff become less available.

Business Conditions

- Multilocation enterprises will likely be more affected than those with a single location.
- The key business impact trigger will be a result of quarantines, travel restrictions, school closures and sick family members.
- Supply chain and third-party pandemic preparedness is critical.
- Technology can help organizations better adapt to the changing situation.
- Consider cultural and religious differences in preparedness plans.

As such, Gartner has a number of research notes categorized below to support organizational leaders in their pandemic preparedness activities.

Overall Pandemic Preparedness Advice:

- [“Toolkit: Pandemic Preparedness Briefing”](#): Security and risk management leaders should use this Toolkit as a guide and checklist of advice to ensure they have as complete a pandemic preparedness plan as possible.
- [“The Pillars of Pandemic Planning”](#) (Enterprise Risk Management) and [“Pandemic Planning: Responding to Coronavirus and Other Emerging Risks”](#) (HR): Pandemics aren’t your usual business disruption. Unfolding over months, these events require an extra set of activities that include consultations with epidemiologists, critical role identification and third-party evaluations. These notes cover concerns for various leaders throughout the organization.
- [“The Business Impact Analysis: A Digital Business Essential”](#): Digital business initiatives present more risks and opportunities for crises than enterprises experience today. Security and risk management leaders should use a cross-functional BIA as an essential tool in developing collaborative procedures in response to a major business disruption.
- [“Toolkit: Conducting a Business Impact Analysis”](#): A business impact analysis is the best way to estimate the effect of disruptions to service delivery. Security and risk management leaders should use this Toolkit to capture and analyze the data needed to determine the recovery priorities that will drive recovery strategies and solution development.
- [“Toolkit: Assessing the Effectiveness of Recovery Plans Following a Business Disruption”](#): A critical evaluation of recovery plans is essential to effectively ensure continuity of operations.

This user-customizable Toolkit offers enterprises an easy way to assess the effectiveness of their plans following a business disruption.

- [“Managing Ambiguity in Crisis Escalation Procedures”](#): Crisis escalation procedures are often ambiguous, resulting in delays in getting critical information to those responsible for the crisis management plan, which leads to slower response times. This research provides heads of enterprise risk management solutions to this challenge.
- [“3 COVID-19 Scenarios for Fast Tabletop Exercises”](#): Does your company know what to do if COVID-19 spreads at headquarters or if a critical third party suddenly shuts down? Testing your pandemic response plan will not be your usual tabletop. Time is too short. Heads of ERM can use these tips and storylines for efficient, purposeful and productive sessions.
- [“COVID-19 Tabletop Exercise Participant Workbook”](#): Use this workbook to allow participants in tabletop exercises on COVID-19 to follow along with the presentation and record their actions and observations.
- [“COVID-19 Tabletop Exercise Facilitators Guide”](#): Use this guide to learn about tabletop exercises and their role in business continuity management and lead a tabletop exercise on COVID-19.
- [“COVID-19: Inoculate Your Workplace Against Racism:”](#) A pandemic, or even the looming potential of one, can fuel fears and xenophobia; anti-Asian sentiment has surfaced in the wake of disease that emerged in China. Legal and compliance leaders must combat online misinformation with credible facts and remind employees that respect for all is critical.
- [“Pandemic Business Continuity Guide & Template”](#): Customizable plan and template for preparing for flu pandemics.

Technologies to Help Manage a Crisis

- [“Market Guide for Emergency/Mass Notification Services”](#): Emergency/mass notification services solutions send critical and emergency messages to internal and external stakeholders in support of many use cases. Security and risk management leaders with business continuity management responsibilities can use this research during the EMNS procurement process.
- [“Magic Quadrant for Business Continuity Management Program Solutions, Worldwide”](#): Since 2017, the 2019 business continuity management program solutions market has broadened its IT disaster recovery management, crisis management and risk management capabilities. Gartner’s Magic Quadrant evaluates 15 vendors to help with the vendor selection process.
- [“Critical Capabilities for Business Continuity Management Program Solutions, Worldwide”](#): Gartner has identified 11 critical capabilities and four use cases to assess and compare disaster-recovery-as-a-service offerings from 15 service providers. Security and risk

management leaders should select a provider that best aligns with their business needs before purchasing a BCMP solution.

- [“Market Guide for Crisis/Emergency Management Platforms”](#): Crisis/emergency management platforms orchestrate and manage tasks, resources, communications, collaboration and data during a crisis. Security and risk management leaders responsible for crisis management should use these solutions to demonstrate command and control during a crisis.

In addition, travel risk management services solutions can help organizations to provide location-specific intelligence to their traveling workforce. Two vendors in this market are:

- [International SOS](#)
- [WorldAware](#)

COVID-19 Impact on the Supply Chain

- [“Supply Chain Brief: Navigating Procurement Challenges From Coronavirus Outbreak”](#): As the coronavirus spreads rapidly from ground zero in Wuhan, China, supplier ecosystems are being interrupted as labor, subassemblies and raw materials become scarce. Disruptions are likely to grow. Supply chain leaders focused on procurement can use this research to mitigate potential impacts.
- [“Supply Chain Brief: Global Supply Chains Prepare for Impact From Coronavirus”](#): The coronavirus could have a major impact on global supply chains, as numerous factory workers in China share accommodations on campus with many other workers. Supply chain leaders can use this research to put scenario plans in place to mitigate the impact.
- [“Supply Chain Brief: Global Logistics Networks Disrupted by Coronavirus”](#): Coronavirus is disrupting global logistics as several modes of international shipping grind to a halt in parts of China and movement in and out of the country is limited. Supply chain leaders responsible for logistics can use this research to evaluate the impact of this disruption.
- [“Coronavirus Requires Supply Chain Leaders to Adopt Enhanced Decision-Making Abilities”](#): Coronavirus is forcing chief supply chain officers to make extremely fast decisions with high levels of uncertainty to find workarounds for broken supply chain networks in China. This research outlines how CSCOs can use decision-making constraints to better respond to the impact from coronavirus.
- [“Coronavirus Alters Supply Chain Dynamics Impacting People, Products and Costs”](#): The new coronavirus, officially named COVID-19, has become an epidemic disruption, affecting supply chains through lack of access to markets, materials and most importantly staff. Supply chain leaders can use this research to put in place strategies to assess and respond to an epidemic disruption.

- [“Supply Chain Brief: Coronavirus Stresses Global Healthcare Supply Chains”](#): Strong demand for medical supplies and pharmaceuticals continues as the spread of the coronavirus goes global and shows no signs of abating. Supply chain leaders in healthcare can use this research to understand how the crisis may impact them moving forward and what they can do to prepare.
- [“Video: Coronavirus Briefing and Healthcare Provider Supply Chain Mitigation Strategies”](#): In this webinar from 25 February 2020, Gartner analysts discuss coronavirus research and provide updates. Additionally, Deputy Chief Security Officer and Operations Administrator, Trauma Center at Mayo Clinic, Byron Callies shares what they are doing to mitigate the associated healthcare supply chain risks.
- [“Smarter With Gartner: Coronavirus: How to Secure Your Supply Chain”](#): As the coronavirus outbreak spreads rapidly and exceeds the SARS outbreak in 2003, supply chain leaders must mitigate instant disruption and plan for future incidents.

CIO Considerations for Responding to COVID-19

- [“Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak: Short- and Long-Term Actions for CIOs”](#): COVID-19 has disrupted operations and will have prolonged impacts on continuity of operations, modes of working and growth patterns. CIOs need to respond to the crisis with both short- and long-term actions to increase resilience against future disruptions, and prepare for rebound and growth.
- [“React to the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak via Raising Business Model Resilience”](#): The global outbreak of COVID-19 is a crisis that may impact business models and disrupt continuity of operations of companies around the globe. This research explains how CIOs can contribute to the process of raising current business model resilience against external events such as the COVID-19 outbreak.

Forecast Analysis for COVID-19 Implications

- [“Forecast Alert: COVID-19’s Impact on Electronics and Semiconductors”](#): COVID-19 has distorted supply chain and manufacturing operations in China. It has led to a drastic drop in consumer spending on smartphones and PCs across China, resulting in lower worldwide semiconductor revenue for 2020 by \$10.8 billion and the annual growth rate being revised from 12.5% to 9.9%.

Remote Work Research

- [“How to Cultivate Effective 'Remote Work' Programs”](#): In an effort to reduce the cost of office space, leaders often encourage employees to work remotely. This research describes the essential first steps of creating remote work programs.
- [“Overcome the Fears, Embrace the Benefits and Launch a Remote Work Pilot Program”](#): CIOs need to take the lead to help managers and other stakeholders overcome their fears of

implementing a remote work program. The program can bring to the organization a competitive edge in the recruitment and retention of highly valued IT talent.

- [“Toolkit: Remote Work Policies”](#): Remote work programs benefit from having well-designed policies that clarify employee and manager responsibilities. Leaders can use this template to create policies for their organization.
- [“Why Bringing Remote Workers Back Into the Office Might Not Be the Right Answer”](#): Corporate giants such as Yahoo, Wells Fargo and IBM have eliminated their remote work programs, believing that will promote better collaboration and innovation. But CIOs should be cautious and first address these key issues before making the decision to halt a remote work program.
- [“Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Managing the Remote Worker”](#): This research will help CIOs assess what jobs and which individuals are suitable for remote working and provide strategies for effectively managing the remote worker.
- [“Market Trends: Acceleration of Remote Work Leads to a Shift in Enterprise Communications Services Consumption”](#): Leaders must address the changing enterprise needs as the digital workplace evolves and remote working becomes more common.

COVID-19 Implications on Network/Telecommunications

- [“Video: How to Ensure Business Continuity in the Face of the Coronavirus”](#): The recent spread of the new coronavirus, COVID-19, presents IT organizations with a unique challenge of ensuring business continues in the face of health issues outside of their control. This research helps I&O technical professionals plan for impacts such as a pandemic.

Secure Remote Access

- [“4 Steps to Implement a Perimeterless Digital Workplace”](#): Digital business expects an agile workforce independent of location and device. I&O leaders must drive employee agility by creating a perimeterless digital workplace to enhance customer responsiveness and employee engagement, and yet minimize security risks.
- [“Market Guide for Secure Enterprise Data Communications”](#): Cloud-based secure connectivity options are slowly replacing traditional VPN scenarios. This research helps security and risk management leaders choose the best solutions for their use cases, including application-centric and demand-driven connections.
- [“Market Guide for Zero Trust Network Access”](#): Zero trust network access replaces traditional technologies, which require companies to extend excessive trust to employees and partners to connect and collaborate. Security and risk management leaders should plan pilot ZTNA projects for employee/partner-facing applications.

Collaboration and Meeting Solutions

- [“Run Live Digital Workplace Webcasts and Town Halls That Electrify and Engage”](#): Application leaders responsible for digital workplace programs are tasked with employing technology for one of the highest-stress scenarios – town hall broadcasts. To deliver compelling and successful events, application leaders must create engaging experiences that connect content and technology.
- [“Enable More Productive Meetings With Google G Suite or Microsoft Office 365”](#): Employee attitudes toward meetings are tainted by frustration due to poor planning and unproductive outcomes. Application leaders should enable access to capabilities within the cloud office suites to make meetings more effective and productive for their employees.
- [“How to Evaluate Cloud-Based Meeting Solutions”](#): In a recent Gartner survey, 65% of companies used cloud-based conferencing, with 27% in the process of deployment. Cloud-based meetings have evolved, enabling new ways of working, and bring new challenges. This research guides application technical professionals in selecting a cloud-based platform.
- [“How to Pick the Right Meeting Solution and Save Money”](#): Application leaders in IT who are responsible for unified communications and collaboration strategies need to acquire innovative and cost-effective meeting solutions that will fuel increased collaboration, in order to support the changing nature of work in the digital workplace.
- [“How to Select Collaboration Technology Using Gartner’s ACME Framework”](#): Digital workplace application leaders should decide on collaborative tools only after they understand the activity, context and motivation of the work. We introduce the Activity, Context, Motivation and Enabling technology decision model for selecting enabling technology based on these factors.
- [“Magic Quadrant for Meeting Solutions”](#): Meeting solutions blend communications, collaboration and content sharing to enable informal and formal meetings anywhere. Along with its Critical Capabilities companion, this research will help application leaders for meeting solutions find the vendors best suited to their needs.
- [“Market Guide for Workstream Collaboration”](#): The workstream collaboration market continues to evolve in the way organizations are applying the technology. This Market Guide should be used by application leaders to understand usage shifts. These trends will inform digital workplace efforts to improve employee collaboration and team performance.

Employee-Monitoring Implications for Remote Work Employees

- [“Market Guide for Employee-Monitoring Products and Services”](#): Security and risk management leaders must be aware of the increasing concern over employee malfeasance and deploy solutions to discretely gather evidence. Vendors are increasing analytics capabilities, allowing them to not only act as investigative tools but also to alert on high-risk behaviors.

- [“Employee Attitudes About Monitoring Technologies and Privacy”](#): Wi-Fi tracking, occupancy sensors and similar tools can gather insights about how employees use space, but most CRE teams must overcome their own concerns about privacy to do so. You might be surprised to learn how employee acceptance is evolving and how much transparency helps.

Leadership Council Advice for COVID-19:

Corporate/External Communications Leaders

- [“Responding to the COVID-19 Coronavirus and Other Outbreaks”](#): Viral outbreaks, like the COVID-19 coronavirus, create uncertainty and can disrupt business operations. Corporate Communications leaders must take a “people-first” approach and regularly assess risk to inform and deploy their crisis communications plans.

Human Resources Leaders

- [“Smarter With Gartner: 10 Questions for an HR Pandemic Plan”](#): Business disruptions like coronavirus mean turmoil for employees and work. Answer these 10 questions in your HR outbreak management and pandemic plan.

Financial Services Leaders

- [“How Commercial Banking Leaders Can Manage Coronavirus Impact Through Pandemic Preparedness”](#): Pandemic preparedness requires extensive organizational planning. The uncertain time frame of disease outbreaks means commercial banking leaders should arrange short- and long-term plans for protecting employee health, ensuring continuity of operations, and planning for remote working, if needed.
- [“How Operations Leaders Can Manage Coronavirus Impact Through Pandemic Preparedness”](#): Pandemic preparedness requires extensive organizational planning. The uncertain time frame of disease outbreaks means financial services operations leaders should arrange short- and long-term plans for protecting employee health, ensuring continuity of operations, and planning for remote working.
- [“How Retail Banking Leaders Can Manage Coronavirus Impact Through Pandemic Preparedness”](#): Pandemic preparedness requires extensive organizational planning. The uncertain time frame of disease outbreaks means retail banking leaders should arrange short- and long-term plans for protecting employee health, ensuring continuity of operations, and planning for remote working, if needed.
- [“How Wealth Management Leaders Can Manage Coronavirus Impact Through Pandemic Preparedness”](#): Pandemic preparedness requires extensive organizational planning. The uncertain time frame of disease outbreaks means wealth management leaders should arrange

short- and long-term plans for protecting employee health, ensuring continuity of operations, and planning for remote working, if needed.

Marketing Leaders

- [“March 2020 Update: Actions CMOs Must Take Now to Prepare for the Impact of the Coronavirus and COVID-19 Disease”](#): COVID-19 coronavirus is impacting global business operations at an alarming rate, and the epidemic is also affecting marketing planning, operations and execution. CMOs must develop a range of contingency plans to address changing customer needs and disruptions to workplaces, events and tactics.

R&D Leaders

- [“Pandemic Preparedness for R&D Leaders”](#): Pandemics aren’t your usual business disruption. Unfolding over months, these events require an extra set of activities that include consultations with epidemiologists, critical role identification and third-party evaluations. R&D leaders should reference this guidance to plan a response.

Gartner Invest Response to COVID-19

- [“Gartner Invest Analyst Insight: SARS Proxy Points to Minimal Impact of Coronavirus on IT Services Industry”](#): Uncertainties surrounding the impact the coronavirus may have on global spend loom. Notably, however, the last pandemic, SARS, had little to no impact on IT services. Clearly, we are not making a call on the severity of the coronavirus; rather, we are highlighting data surrounding past similar events.
- [“Gartner Invest Analyst Insight: Coronavirus: An IT Services Update”](#): In late January, we published our early, high-level assessment of the coronavirus and its potential impact on the IT services industry. At the time, we assessed the risk as low, but with the caveat that the situation was fluid. In recent days, the situation has deteriorated, prompting this update.
- [“Gartner Invest Analyst Insight: Impact of Covid-19 on the Semiconductor Industry in 2020”](#): Covid-19 will negatively impact 2020 semiconductor revenue growth, especially devices serving the handset industry. Most of the negative impact will occur in 1H20, with Gartner forecasting a strong rebound in 2H20.
- [“Gartner Invest Analyst Insight: Owing to Coronavirus Uncertainty, Apple Backs Away From March Quarter Guidance”](#): Highlighting the uncertainty around the economic impact of the coronavirus, Apple warned that it is not likely to meet 2Q20 revenue guidance, owing to production and demand issues in China. Gartner quarterly forecasts for smartphones, PCs and tablets are under review and likely to be reduced for 1H20.

Evidence

[“Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases,”](#) Johns Hopkins Center for Systems Science and Engineering.

[“Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Outbreak,”](#) World Health Organization (WHO).

[“Outbreak Tools,”](#) European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

[“Latest Travel Document News,”](#) International Air Transport Association.

[“Coronavirus \(COVID-19\),”](#) World Economic Forum.

[“About Us,”](#) China CDC.

[“Latest Alerts,”](#) ProMED, International Society for Infectious Diseases.

Recommended For You

[Lead Your Employees Through the Emotional Side of COVID-19](#)

[Toolkit: Pandemic Preparedness Briefing](#)

[A CIO’s Guide to COVID-19 Communications](#)

[Critical Capabilities for Business Continuity Management Program Solutions, Worldwide](#)

[Magic Quadrant for Business Continuity Management Program Solutions, Worldwide](#)

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