



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Business continuity in the next normal

Professional Services

Overcome familiar challenges and new complexities

How should organizations in consulting, advisory, research, staffing, and business and consumer services respond to uncertainty? How can this response include consideration for both the short term and long term?

New threats to business continuity have reached unprecedented levels and introduced new complexities that may require your organization to rethink how it's approaching common problems. In order to deliver differentiated services, you may need to consider methods that challenge your existing systems and operations. As you look toward the future, these are some key areas to evaluate:

- How is digital agility and transformation playing a role today?
- What are the best ways to support and empower a remote workforce?
- Are client experiences and service delivery engagements being maintained?
- What level of support is the back office providing as priorities shift?
- Is organizational information and sensitive client data safe across new access points?

Here are some strategic considerations to focus on as you evaluate the impact each of these key areas has on your organization.

Expand digital agility

Are you developing and implementing agile operating models for scale and efficiency?

- The pandemic and related economic downturn shifted everyone's priorities, thrusting digital capability and agility into the spotlight.
- As productivity, client engagement, and profitability are now challenged more than ever, finding new ways of accomplishing familiar tasks despite new complexities is crucial.
- Organizations must adapt and expand digital agility to thrive in the new digital economy and post-pandemic environment.
- Organizations should also review the digital transformation initiatives that were implemented or were on the roadmap prior to 2020 and compare them with methods that have been adopted since.
- By building and developing greater digital agility, organizations can minimize disruption to clients, staff, partners, and business operations.

Empower remote workers

Are you creating a better remote workforce strategy to tackle modern challenges?

- The pandemic accelerated workforce trends, likely for the better—many of these changes are, presumably, here to stay.
- Most of the current workforce shifted to working remotely, requiring new considerations to fulfill responsibilities and engagement.
- The problem is that most organizations don't possess a well-established, thoughtfully developed remote workforce strategy.
- Consider the organization's culture, identifying realistic roles, selecting the right people, and embracing new technologies.
- While the impact of the pandemic will eventually decline and there will be some return to the old normal, other aspects of our work, the workforce, and the workplace will never be the same again.

Evaluate client experiences

Are you reimagining client needs to consider their new priorities and expectations?

- Clients have new, urgent needs and expectations since the pandemic and economic fallout.
- Clients now want to know that their collaborators understand their new concerns, shifting priorities, and even their humanity.
- To stabilize, recover, and thrive, organizations must avoid client inconvenience, lack of trust, and poor service—especially in times of uncertainty.
- Organizations should also consider fresh ways of deploying technology to help deliver on services.
- Your response during uncertainty will have an immense effect on client relationships in the post-pandemic reality.

Enhance back-office efficiencies

Are you improving back-office efficiencies to drive best-in-class performance and agility?

- Organizational agility, productivity, and success heavily rely on the efficiencies of back-office operations.
- The efficiency of back-office operations has been challenged across numerous areas of the business amid growing complexity—and the new situations require new consideration.
- With the right planning and technology, organizations can integrate all their tools and processes together to improve work and optimize new practices that help sustain the business.
- Business planning, back-office accounting, and project management infrastructure are three key areas of opportunity for organizations.
- Technology plays a significant role in the back office. There is clear delineation between professional services businesses that use innovative software and technology, and those that are lacking.

Elevate digital protection

Are you protecting digital assets and client information by prioritizing cybersecurity?

- Just as cybersecurity reached epidemic proportions, new complexities associated with the health and economic situations elevated the importance of managing digital assets and alleviating cyber threats.
- Because an organization's data assets are tied to the life and health of the organization as a whole, it's vital to encourage staff at all levels to view their relationship to organizational and client data as a key responsibility, especially in times of flux.
- Creating an environment where security is a top priority is necessary to reduce the chances of a breach.
- Protecting valuable data, now and in the next normal, is best addressed by company leadership at the highest levels, well before any incidents occur.
- Initiatives to consider include fostering cultural awareness, incorporating security discussions in onboarding processes, and regular communication with staff. Organizations should also work closely with security and technology vendors, test staff knowledge regularly, and implement an open-door policy around data security.

Thrive in the next normal

Identifying these concepts and challenges, as well as how they relate to your organization, is just the first step. Read the full best practice guide, "[Business continuity in the next normal](#)," for more details on strengthening recovery efforts and business continuity in the professional services industry.

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INF-2359930-en-US-0421-2