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The Impact of Covid-19 on Management Efficiency and Effectiveness

2020 will be a year that we never forget. All the good things have been overshadowed by the bad. Australia declared a state of disaster amid massive bushfires, President Donald Trump underwent an impeachment trial, peaceful and violent protests erupted on our streets in response to police brutality, cities lost control of their people and many influential people died. All those horrible things pale in comparison to COVID-19, a virus that has devastated the world.

In the United States, there have been 10.3 million cases of COVID-19 and 240,000+ deaths. Depression rates have tripled, and other mental disorders have increased since the country shutdown (Boston University School of Medicine, 1).

The United States government shut down due to COVID-19. Because of that shutdown, the economy suffered. Between March and May, the United States lost 20.6 million jobs, leading to an unemployment rate of 14.7% (Soucheray, 1). However, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate dropped to 6.9% on November 10, 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1). This economic recovery began when the country opened its economy and has been aided by the hard work of the American people. Levi’s is investing in data and AI to digitize the consumer’s experience (Perez, 1). Kroger shared its strategic response to COVID-19 in a written playbook for its peers. Some of the advice includes “identifying high-risk locations, analyzing staffing in areas badly impacted by the virus, and urging a focus on speed rather than tooling" (Lauchlan, 1). These only scratch the surface of the innovations and creativity in response to COVID-19.

This paper will discuss how business efficiency and effectiveness have been both positively and negatively affected by Covid-19. It will look at resource, output and input management. It will also examine how businesses have solved problems and adapted to the changing environment.

Resource management is the process by which businesses effectively manage their various resources. Those resources can be intangible (people and time) and tangible (equipment, materials and finances). Resource management is used in financing, staffing, physical space, equipment and technology. Resource management has the responsibility of meeting challenges like managing panic, retaining employees, remote/online management, lack of crisis management skills and new safety regulations.

This section of the paper will look at one problem that affects management's intangible resources. Then it will explore how resource management has adapted to this problem. The problem is poor employee mental health.

In response to the pandemic, people have become fearful, stressed, depressed and insecure. The CDC reported the following about the adverse psychological effects of Covid-19:

> "To assess mental health, substance use and suicidal ideation during the pandemic, representative panel surveys were conducted among adults aged ≥18 years across the United States during June 24–30, 2020. Overall, 40.9% of respondents reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral health condition, including symptoms of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder (30.9%), symptoms of a trauma- and stressor-related

> disorder (TSRD) related to the pandemic† (26.3%), and having started or increased substance use to cope with stress or emotions related to COVID-19 (13.3%). The percentage of respondents who reported having seriously considered suicide in the 30 days before completing the survey (10.7%) was significantly higher among respondents aged 18–24 years (25.5%), minority racial/ethnic groups (Hispanic respondents [18.6%], non-Hispanic black [black] respondents [15.1%]), self-reported unpaid caregivers for adults§ (30.7%), and essential workers¶ (21.7%)" (CDC, 1).

These psychological problems carry over into business. When employees are forced to work remotely, they feel more isolated. Isolation leads to a myriad of mental problems; the main ones being covered previously. To cut costs, businesses are sending employees on unpaid leave or letting them go. In Georgia, 43% of the employers have reduced employee salaries and more than 50% of companies have reduced staff (PwC Georgia, 20). The fear of being let go looms large over millions and it causes employees to be less loyal to the company. Companies are also spending less money on developing their employees. This impacts employee's motivation and well-being, as well as a company's efficiency and market success.

Many companies across the United States are working hard to fix the problem of poor employee mental health.

Culligan Water is a water treatment and bottled water company. They provide education and solutions to water issues with an emphasis on customer satisfaction.

During Covid-19, Culligan concluded that if they wanted to survive, they needed to focus on employee mental health. Culligan believes prioritizing employee mental health helps deepen employee's trust and commitment and will sustain their business strategy. They are giving employees access to various resources, including an onsite "HealthSource Solutions Well-being Program Manager" and health coach, a "virtual well-being portal", and Employee Assistance Program counseling. (Adams, 1). Culligan is now also offering the following at no cost to employees: "weekly self-care videos, 1:1 health coaching for employees and their spouses, manager well-being calls, weekly well-being communications, live meditation sessions and activity breaks, resiliency and stress management activities and morale-boosting activities." (Adams, 1). Several company owners spoke on mental well-being in a companywide video. They shared their mental health activities and encouraged employees to practice self-care. They strongly suggested that employees utilize company resources. Culligan is using testimonials from inside the company to inspire Culligan employees to take care of their mental health. (Adams, 1).

The Devils Backbone Brewing Company (DBBC) is a brewpub located in Roseland, Virginia. It was established in 2008 by Steven Crandall. In 2012, DBBC constructed "The Outpost", a 15,000 square foot production facility and taproom, near Lexington, Virginia.

Devils Backbone Brewing Company is putting employee's minds at ease by increasing precautions. They have implemented daily temperature checks, distributed homemade masks and created social distancing criteria to protect employees.

DBBC is also creating fun and meaningful activities for employees. They have hosted a variety of "happy hour" sessions on Zoom for employees to hang out and have fun. These have included lip sync battles and Disney themed parties. DBBC hosted a Zoom meeting providing tips and training for parents with young children. They started a virtual book club and offered courses through LinkedIn Learning.

“Our standing policy of self-managed leave has been especially valuable for staff knowing they have the flexibility and support to take time off, even if that time is spent at home away from work,” a DBBC representative said.

In 2017, DBBC started an impact program called the Heartland Initiative, a series of programs and partnerships that support the local community. They created an Adventure Pack with the intent to support nonprofits that employees selected. Employees brewed a signature beer they called “Bell of Hope” with the goal of fundraising on MHA’s behalf and mission.

Overall, resource management is adapting to the changing environment by solving problems and creating solutions. (Adams, 1).

Output Management (OM) refers to the process by which organizations manage, structure and distribute data created from operational applications. These include customer relationship management (CRM), banking systems, insurance information systems, ERPs, retail POS systems, accounting software and more. (Watts, 1).

This section of the paper will look at one problem. Then it will explore how output management has adapted to this problem. The problem is incompatibility between organizational structures and their environment.

90% of U.S. commerce takes place in the physical world (Kelly, 1). Small businesses such as restaurants, bookstores and retailers built their businesses through brick-and-mortar operations and made money by attracting customers to come into a physical space, gather with friends and family and touch, taste and smell products.

E-commerce, online business transactions, is becoming a normal and common way to do business. Many retail and dining businesses are having a hard time adjusting to this new medium of exchange. One study found that 47% of restaurants believe the hardest challenge they face is shifting their business model to adapt to online ordering (Moessner, 1). 17 North American retailers filed for bankruptcy protection during the COVID-19 outbreak (Ali, 1). Also, e-commerce creates a more competitive business environment by allowing anyone to sell to everybody.

Many industries, like retail and dining, were not designed for online sales. In 2018, e-commerce accounted for only 9.9 percent of total retail sales in the United States (Statista,1). One study found that 92% of people bought retail items in person (Rekuc,1). 62% of people said they preferred dining in vs carryout and delivery (Kelso, 1). Both these industries, as well as many small businesses, rely on in-person transactions to generate the majority of their revenue.

COVID-19 is changing what people buy. In retail, there are fewer occasions for people to buy clothes. Big concerts, sporting events, weddings and holidays are all limited in capacity and frequency. Fewer occasions mean people have fewer reasons to buy clothes. Unlike retail, food is necessary for human life. That said, people are not eating out like they used to. According to Restaurant Business Online, “restaurants lost $120 billion in sales during the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 75% of the operators expecting the downturn to keep them unprofitable until at least the year-end holidays” (Thomas, 1). Many restaurants, particularly bars, thrive on selling alcoholic drinks. Because of Covid-19, people are not going out for alcoholic drinks. Nielsen CGA reports that average sales remain 68% below rates of a year ago (CGA, 1). Other industries such as entertainment, hotel and dental all have been negatively affected by COVID-19 (Pietsch, 1).

The pandemic has also positively affected some businesses. Professional services and home improvement are several companies that have grown during the pandemic. IT service providers, private tutoring and professional cleaning all saw increased sales during the pandemic (Vozza, 1). According to Houzz, requests for home professional leads increased by 58% during June 2020.

As we learn more about Covid-19, we will also be able to anticipate consumer behavior more consistently. If businesses can do that, they have a chance to survive.

An indirect consequence of the pandemic is companies' dependence on e-commerce. It is the reason many businesses closed; however, it can also be the means for their survival.

Restaurants took a commerce concept from other industries and called it food subscriptions. Customers sign up for a plan with a restaurant and their food or drinks are delivered or picked up at a designated time. Panera Bread Company, an American chain store of bakery-café fast-casual restaurants, launched unlimited coffee subscriptions for $8.99 a month (Sugar, 1). Katz Deli in New York is offering its pastrami, corned beef and brisket on a $150 per month subscription (Fosina, 1).

Many companies have partnered with food delivery apps such as Uber Eats, Grubhub and Doordash. Grubhub reported that the number of diners that use the app for delivery services grew to 27.5 million in 2020 from 20.3 million in 2019 (Kats, 1).

Businesses are installing delivery services. The Seattle-based nonprofit Ventures created an online store for local products to be bought and delivered to consumers. SeoulSpice, a restaurant chain in Washington, D.C., is selling goods from three other local businesses through a new online bodega (Brookings, 1).

Restaurants are also improving their delivery services that were in use before Covid-19. They have created heat-and-eat dishes. These dishes can be frozen, refrigerated or microwaved in the containers they come in. They can be sold premade or as packaged ingredients. Restaurants take their favorite dishes, package the ingredients with instructions, and deliver them as meal kits. Gwen Holtsclaw from ScrubOaks Restaurant in Fayetteville, North Carolina described how her business is using heat-and-eat dishes. "To boost our takeout, we've added something called ‘Family to go for 4. We've taken our top entrees and now you can get Chicken Alfredo, enough for four people, for what it would cost for three people in the restaurant" (Plumlee, 1).

Restaurants are no longer operating just as a place where customers pay for prepared meals. They are becoming grocers. While restaurant sales have declined during the pandemic, grocery sales have increased considerably. Grocery stores across all states have seen a surge of shoppers searching for supplies and stockpiling food. 8 states have had over 50% sales growth (Sweet,1). Grocery Ecommerce has drastically increased too (this point will be touched on in more detail later on). This suggests that the demand for food is still very high, but the medium consumers use to get food has changed. Consumers are eating at home and buying food online. Restaurants discovered this and are adapting.

“Grocery stores sell a lot of 5-pound bags of flour and are having trouble keeping shelves filled right now,” said Camila Domonoske of NPR. “Meanwhile, restaurants and bakeries have easy access to flour and extra to sell.” (Domonoske, 1).

Belinda Carrasco, the owner of Josy’s Grill in Odessa, Texas, describes how her restaurant is selling groceries. “We’re calling it a pantry minimart,” says Carrasco. “We set up mini traffic cones to attract attention and direct customers to our store, where up to ten customers are allowed in at a time to purchase takeout food or shop at our pantry mini mart" (Plumlee, 1).

Retail is using apps, social media and other technologies to adapt to e-commerce.

The Barcelona-based bridal company, Pronovias Group, created a digital showroom. Customers can shop the latest collections of all the group's brands, schedule a virtual tour of all the products, find, research and evaluate information and purchase items (innovations, 1).

Tractor Supply Company, an American retailer that offers products for home improvement, agriculture, and lawn and garden maintenance, created curbside pickup and same-day/next-day delivery for all its stores. They also designed their first mobile app that allows customers to receive notifications of discounts, new products, company news, etc.

Crate and Barrel, a retailer offering indoor and outdoor home products, redesigned their company structure to be more efficient and deliver products faster. "The time horizon in which we make decisions, act, take risks and launch products to market has shrunk from months to weeks now," said Chief Digital Officer Farhan Siddiqi.

Sam's Club developed a concierge app that provides quick and contactless shopping for consumers who need to buy goods in bulk and in a socially distanced manner.

> "On Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., Sam's Club's elderly and at-risk members can park in designated parking locations A Sam's Club team member then greets these members at the designated locations with a mobile ordering device in hand and takes a mobile scan of their club membership cards The Sam's Club members then relay their orders to Sam's Club team members Designated team members then go and

shop for the orders, bring them back out to the designated locations, take payment, and finally place the orders in the members' vehicles, all without the members ever having to leave their vehicles." (Walton, 1).

Lastly, Gap Inc. opened a new state-of-the-art distribution center with integrated automation and robotic capabilities. The distribution center can process 1 million units per day (Frank, 1).

Restaurants and retail are just two of many in-person businesses that learned how to process, structure and distribute through e-commerce because of the hard work of output management.

Input Management is a business process that efficiently manages and communicates all forms of incoming information. It includes gathering business-relevant data, selecting hardware and software, and integrating it into business applications. Input management captures structured or unstructured data from a variety of sources to supply it to information systems for more detailed processing. The systems that capture data include enterprise content management and/or data warehouse systems. The capturing process, or the input management process, uses scanning, imaging, OCR, barcode, ICR and full-text searching technology.

This section of the paper will look at one problem. Then it will explore how input management has adapted to it. The problem is the inability to process and utilize information because of inefficient information processes and inadequate resources.

Covid-19 is increasing the amount of information businesses have to process. For most companies, incoming information has historically been paper-based. Information on paper is scanned and then processed through software. Paper is still a widely used channel for input management, but it is no longer the only one. Advancements in technology produced the Internet and mobile connectivity. Companies and their customers now message each other over mobile devices. They have profiles on social networks like Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn that they use to spread and receive information. Everybody that has a phone also has a camera that allows them to email photos of checks, scan QR codes or record movies of motor vehicle accidents to their insurance companies.

These additional channels increased the amount of information for businesses to process. Managers installed systems that deal with this information by forcing it all through a single channel, as though it was all paper-based. This causes input management to be very inefficient. Now managers have to deal with business-related information as well as Covid-19 information. This additional information only compounds the problem. (Hodkinson, 1).

The problem with having inadequate, business resources are employees are not able to process, analyze, and work with information. This problem is compounded by remote work.

Many companies instructed their employees to work remotely. Experts suggest that those with lesser education do not have adequate resources to work remotely. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 29% of American employees worked remotely in 2018. Studies show that among those workers ages 25 and older, 47% of workers with at least a bachelor's degree worked remotely and just 3% of workers with only a high school diploma worked remotely (Law, 1). According to Alight, only 42% of employees say their company does a good job of communicating overall (Alight, 1). This suggests that employees lack proper tools to work from home.

The problem of inefficient input management is ongoing. Companies have been struggling to adapt. Gary Hodkinson, an input management expert, believes that the solution is multi-channel processing.

> "Implementing a Multi-Channel Input Management system at the point of entry for these documents can enhance these existing DMS workflows. Instead of implementing single-channel solutions that will, inevitably, compromise on efficiency and productivity gains, these experts should offer multi-channel solutions that address the multiple inputs that their customers now receive, and not just focus on scanners and paper. Processing digital information in its natural form makes analysis much faster" (Hodkinson,1).

It also translates uncategorized information into the internal cloud (previous applicants, job advertisement reference numbers, etc.) and external cloud (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.).

"This additional intelligence can be used to automatically correct errors in the application, such as a misspelled job reference number, identify previous applicants and add information from social media that the HR administrator can quickly digest," said Hodkinson.

Emails that are classified according to the content of both the email and attachments can be automatically indexed and stored along with any automated responses.

"Because the email was processed in its native digital form, this means that the Internet headers can also be retained in the archive, thereby providing some guarantee of sender authenticity," said Hodkinson.

Managers are actively working on providing functioning technology for employees to work remotely. For example, the Wichita State Strategic Communications (Strat Comm) department made sure its employees had adequate resources for remote work. I work in the Strategic Communication department at Wichita State. I started my internship a week before Wichita State, along with every other college, shut down. My team made sure I had a computer and good internet. They also incorporated Zoom into their communication tools and relied more on Basecamp and Slack. Communication through these tools made my transition into a new job as painless as possible.

George Washington Law School canceled traditional classes in favor of remote learning. The law school told instructors to buy videoconferencing equipment they needed and promised to reimburse them, rather than attempting to distribute equipment to employees that may not need it. The law school posted technology recommendations on their intranet (a computer network for sharing information, collaboration tools, operational systems, and other computing services within an organization) (Wiki, 1). If faculty needed additional help recording a class or conducting a live lecture, they could meet with a media specialist.

In addition to providing technology for remote working, managers are making input management more agile and effective to make working from home easier. They are improving effective communication, supervision, productivity, re-aligning employee benefits and re-designing policies concerning remote working. In Strat Comm, my supervisor makes herself available during all work hours. Whenever I have a question, I can get a Slack in responses in minutes. Each week we have zoom meetings where we talk about our tasks, get updates and form teams for specific projects.

In conclusion, Covid-19 has had a great impact on resource, output and input management. In Resource Management, Covid-19 caused poor employee health. In Output Management, the pandemic caused incompatibility between organizational structure and environment. Input management could not efficiently use information and had inadequate resources for remote work. Managers and their teams found innovative ways to deal with each of these problems. Those innovations will carry businesses forward as they seek to navigate the new world of Covid-19.

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