

7 Actions Businesses Need to Take Now

Your Playbook as the Economy Reopens



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The U.S. economy is experiencing a major shock as a result of the biological crisis. With the mandatory shelter-in-place requirements, every organization has weathered some level of interruption to its business activity. As the economy begins to reopen, every business is going to need to reassess its situation across a number of different factors. Fortune favors the bold, and in order to get through this crisis, organizations must take decisive action.



NetSuite has interviewed, surveyed and researched hundreds of organizations in March and April 2020. We have looked at companies ranging from the smallest businesses to the largest. We've examined nearly every industry with a particular focus on manufacturing, wholesale distribution, retail, technology, service providers and nonprofits.

While no list can be comprehensive, the **NetSuite Brainyard** research team has aggregated the questions and steps being taken by the best run and most agile organizations. This playbook is designed to be a checklist for business leaders so they can take action and move their organizations forward.

We break down the actions into the following areas:

1. Business Model
2. Financial Check
3. Scenario Planning
4. Health/Safety/Legal
5. Customer Retention & Acquisition
6. Packaging/Pricing/Payments
7. Organizational Alignment

Business Model Assessment

The first step is a comprehensive situation analysis of your business. This is a rigorous assessment of what has changed and what hasn't. Evaluate what's working and what isn't. How have your operations changed, and what do you need to do differently in order to move forward? Institute weekly tracking and measurement around your key performance and business indicators. Metrics are going to be the key markers to not only measure your current state but also help you make decisions on what to do next.



Checklist

- Review all key performance data and top metrics.
- Establish the baseline metrics that you will use to measure change.
- Examine the year over year, month to month and even week to week changes.
- Examine which of your customer segments are buying and engaged. (If you don't have enough internal data, there are a variety of external sources of industry segment health.)
- Assess your sales channels, and, if possible, shift resources to best performing segments.
- If customer segments, business models and product or service offering success have narrowed, it's time to reorient your workforce around them — that could mean all-hands-on-deck for sales, marketing, engineering, supply chain and other business processes.
- Talk to you customers and prospects. Get feedback on what you can do for them right now.

Financial Check

Managing cash flow is always a priority, but this situation has elevated that requirement. Is your business profitable or not, and how much cash runway do you have? Tight management of payables and receivables can help augment working capital and serve as a bridge. Reach out to your bank and other credit facilities, and discuss potential cash resources. Explore all alternative funding sources, as the climate for privately held companies to raise equity financing can be difficult.



Checklist

- Run sensitivity analysis and put additional scrutiny to your sales forecast.
- What is your operating expense run rate? If you aren't profitable, what is your burn rate?
- Review all cash flow projections and working capital needs.
- Continue to explore ways to negotiate to defer payments — on leases and toward suppliers, prioritizing suppliers and vendors that are critical to driving top line growth.
- Continue to take action around expediting receivables, with an eye toward changing net payment terms, creating incentives for early payment, providing varied payment options and asking for deposits on custom orders.
- Get even leaner on inventory, scrutinizing metrics like turnover and fill rate. And consider all avenues to liquidating stock.
- Keep looking at funding avenues. Exploit lines of credit to extend your runway. Revisit conversations with investors about extending that runway.
- Take a hard look at how workforce actions (furloughs and cutbacks) have impacted your ability to drive revenue, and tweak accordingly.

Health/Safety/Legal

The biological crisis means the way every business operates will undergo some change. This will have a major impact on every constituent of your business. And it will require a diligent look at all health, safety and legal issues that arise from coming back to work, opening up for customers and engaging with your suppliers and partners.



Checklist

- Examine and work within city, county and state regulations on reopening facilities.
- Craft a facilities plan for your warehouse, plant and offices that includes an assessment of how closely teams work together, cleaning and hygiene supplies and cleaning services. Consider whether your environment dictates providing protective equipment such as masks and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Create health safety policies and guidance for employees and customers, including posting signs and developing communications about physical interactions and hygiene.
- Assess your need to screen workers and/or customers as they come in contact with your facility and your confidentiality policies around doing so.
- Ensure you've communicated explicitly about how employees should report to human resources if they become sick or start experiencing any symptoms.
- Make sure to have scenarios mapped out in case an employee does develop the virus. Will you close the offices? How will you communicate what has happened, and what will happen next?
- Determine policies around paid sick leave and parental leave.
- Consider which travel restrictions your company will apply.
- Examine whether implementing shift work, or simply more flexible working hours, will help comply with the employee guidelines.
- Understand your obligations under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, or FFCRA, which mandates paid leave for certain COVID-19-related situations.
- Stay up-to-date on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and state guidelines.



Scenario Planning

Forecasting is hard in normal times, and in this environment, it is downright difficult. Even so, you must build out a handful of scenarios that are based in reality and assume a wide range of outcomes. Every organization must relook at its forecast for sales, expenses and cash flow and retest its assumptions. These scenarios should include modeling cash flow, burn rate and liquidity.



Checklist

- Review all sales forecasts and build in realistic assumptions that assume ongoing lockdowns, a gradual reopening, and a moderate recovery.
- Review all hiring plans, salary raises, bonuses, commission payments and other employee related planned expense growth.
- Examine working capital, payable, receivable and all cash flow related assumptions.
- For many product-based companies, supply chain disruptions have been problematic. Plans should include continued interruptions and potentially increased costs, which will require modeling alternative scenarios and associated costs and delays.
- Scenario planning includes building in further risks, including employees getting sick, continued or new supply chain interruptions, loyal customers going out of business and even secondary health outbreaks. Your models are only as realistic as your risk assessment.

Customer Retention and Acquisition

While it may be difficult, it's paramount that every organization focus on retaining and servicing new customers, whether you are selling a product or a service. This also may be your best source of revenue, since you already have an established relationship. New customer acquisition might be trickier, but this is where low-cost, guerilla marketing strategies can come into play for both business-to-business or consumer sales.



Checklist

- Focus efforts on industries or segments that are essential or least impacted. Pare back your efforts in areas where the prospect is unable to buy. Much of that data is publicly available.
- Reassess how you go to market. Make sure to focus on your value as a partner and how you're caring for your employees, customers and community. Demonstrate how you're able to help.
- Reassess your pre-COVID marketing and sales messages, emails, cold-call scripts and any external branding.
- Take into account the uncertainty that current and potential customers feel. What could you do to alleviate worry? Can you offer money-back guarantees? If training is required, can you make that part of the deal? The more you compensate for unknowns, the better.
- Understand which marketing channels give the biggest bang for the buck. Driving demand through SEO is less expensive than simply buying search terms. Email marketing, properly targeted based on buyers' needs, can be immensely effective.

Packaging/Pricing/Payments

With so much disruption to business, taking a fresh look at your product or service packaging, pricing and payment terms is a useful exercise. Are you better off bundling more into your offering or simplifying unbundling? Can you offer promotion pricing or discounting to certain segments to spur demand? Does offering payment term flexibility or use of credit make sense? All options should be on the table as a catalyst to spur sales.



Checklist

- There's a requirement for disciplined discounting. If you do offer a concession, ask for something in return, such as an extended contract term.
- Be thoughtful about passing on increases in raw material costs. At some point, it may become unavoidable, but cash-strapped customers will notice, so be prepared to explain increases and avoid even the appearance of price-gouging.
- Rather than simply cutting prices, consider bundling value-adds to increase loyalty while protecting margins and customer lifetime value.
- Assess whether you can create a subscription model for a lower monthly cost versus a large one-time payment.
- Many software companies are offering extended free trials or upgrades in service tiers as a gesture of solidarity and support. Product-led software business models are increasingly popular anyway, so maybe now is the time to try this approach.
- Be creative. Selling \$100 gift cards for \$75 is a good deal for customers and ensures they'll visit once it becomes feasible.
- Give salespeople crystal-clear parameters on what constitutes a discretionary discount and what triggers approval by a supervisor or higher.
- Highlight initiatives your company has undertaken to support the community. Even before COVID-19, consumers cared about the social values behind the brands they purchased. That's elevated now.
- Can't accept online payments? At minimum, set up PayPal or Venmo so there's a contactless option.



Organizational Alignment

Once you have gone through your checklist of actions, the last and extremely important step is to get your organization aligned and focused. Ambiguity and uncertainty about the future is fine, but your business can have clarity in its strategy, tactics and objectives. Make sure you communicate frequently with your employees and present a clear vision externally to both customers and partners.

In recent surveys, it was gratifying to see that customer experience and satisfaction were typically among the three or four most important success factors selected by business leaders. COVID-19 has made the customer the only thing that matters.



Checklist

- Consider running town halls and all hands meetings, which are effective vehicles for internal communication. Executives and other decision makers are humanized in this format. Include time for Q&A, even fielding anonymous questions so employees aren't shy about asking tough questions.
- Answer those questions as plainly and as honestly as possible. Confidence, inspiration and transparency matter. You can have those and be uncertain about the future.
- Consider a weekly communication, like a newsletter that recognizes contributions from around the organization.
- If it makes sense, implement daily team huddles at a departmental, functional or even geographical level, which can be an effective way to develop a consistent approach, message and set of expectations.
- Develop a customer message, and make sure it comes through consistently, whether it's being delivered by sales, on your website, in direct email communications or in virtual events held to serve customer needs.
- If your customers need guidance, determine whether you can create content — in written or video form — that is helpful and tactical. Now is the time to show this level of partnership wherever you can.

Summary

We recognize that every organization is asking itself a common set of questions. Having a checklist ensures that you don't overlook some of the critical actions that will be required as your business responds to a reopened economy. We'll continue to talk to customers and assess the successful strategies they put in place as the next few months unfold, and we'll share those learnings and their stories on our [Business Now Resource Guide](#).

For now, we'll leave you with a few short stories about how some NetSuite customers have been adapting their businesses during the COVID-19 crisis.



Your Stories

Thursday Boot Co.

Thursday Boot Co. switched up its manufacturing operations to make and donate needed HK-19 polypropylene masks instead of boots. The company produced about 2,000 masks per day, with a goal of donating at least 14,000 to healthcare workers. It also donated nearly \$150,000 from a recent warehouse sale to nonprofit organization Direct Relief.

T3 Expo

T3 Expo is a general contractor for live events. Within the first week of the nation declaring a pandemic, the company shifted its strategy to focus on turning New York City's Javits Center into a hospital, building out hospital rooms for those fighting COVID-19. The company has continued its efforts by building and distributing hospital beds for other facilities in need. Furthermore, as an industry partner, T3 Expo facilitated conversations to help communities and companies leverage resources to assist them during the crisis.



SmileDirectClub

SmileDirectClub is the first-ever direct-to-consumer teledentistry platform, helping people straighten their teeth through clear aligner therapy. Amid COVID-19 closures and social distancing, SmileDirectClub extended its services by sharing its platform with all licensed dentists and orthodontists nationwide, enabling them to continue seeing patients virtually. The company also utilized its 3D printing capabilities to create and distribute complimentary medical-grade face shields — up to 10,000 per day — to doctors and nurses on the front lines and those in oral care who had to perform emergency procedures during the pandemic.

Kiva

Kiva is an international nonprofit organization expanding financial access to help underserved communities thrive. With circumstances around COVID-19 weighing heavily on small businesses, the organization saw a 10x spike in demand for its capital in the United States alone. As a global organization working in over 80 countries, Kiva understood how economic changes can impact international communities, and thus, it expanded its loan services beyond the normal scope. Currently, more U.S. businesses are eligible for its zero-interest loan offering, the maximum of which is now \$15,000 vs. the usual \$10,000.

Boll & Branch

Bedding brand Boll & Branch is committed to helping hospitals who desperately need assistance. The company has partnered with U.S.-based mattress and pillow manufacturers Sherwood and Downlite to not only produce needed bedding but also keep workers employed. It is donating 1,000 mattresses and 5,000 pillows to hospitals and emergency operations in New York, while also offering a 10% discount to help fund the project.



Jvion

Jvion, a healthcare AI company, launched a free map that helps healthcare leaders localize vulnerable populations and identify factors that influence that risk — helping them better allocate resources as COVID-19 hits communities. By using the map's data, health systems can more adequately plan for utilization of their resources, deploy preventive or mitigating care and anticipate the short-, mid- and long-term impacts of public health decisions, such as school and business closures.

