



Strategic Communications Planning: Returning to Work as We Flatten the Covid-19 Curve

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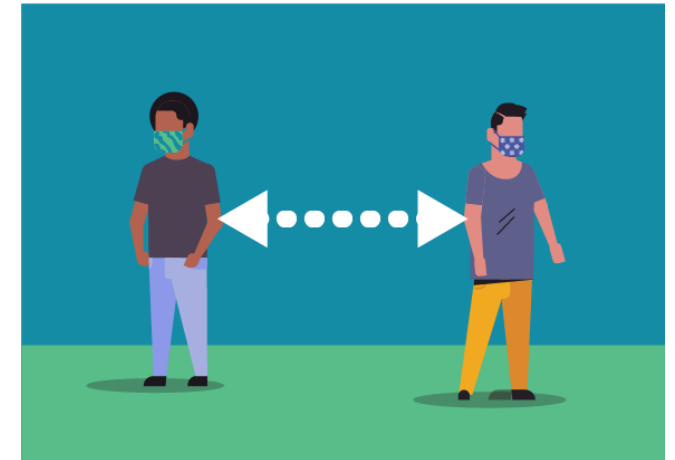


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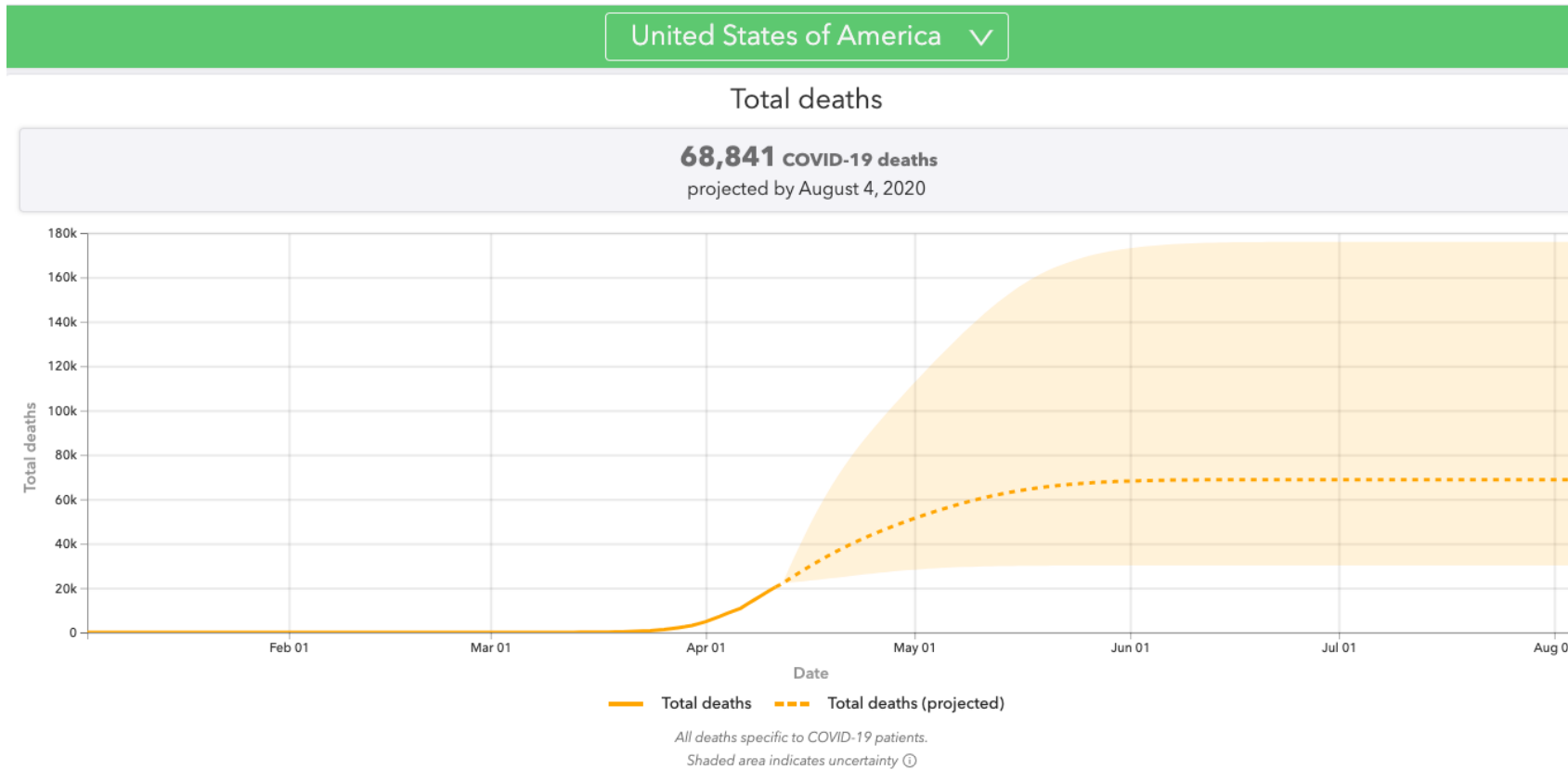
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INTRODUCTION

- Social distancing is working, but must remain cautious
- The way business is done will be different
- Health and safety of employees/customers is paramount
- Must communicate changes in clear, compassionate ways
- Now is the time to start planning for next steps



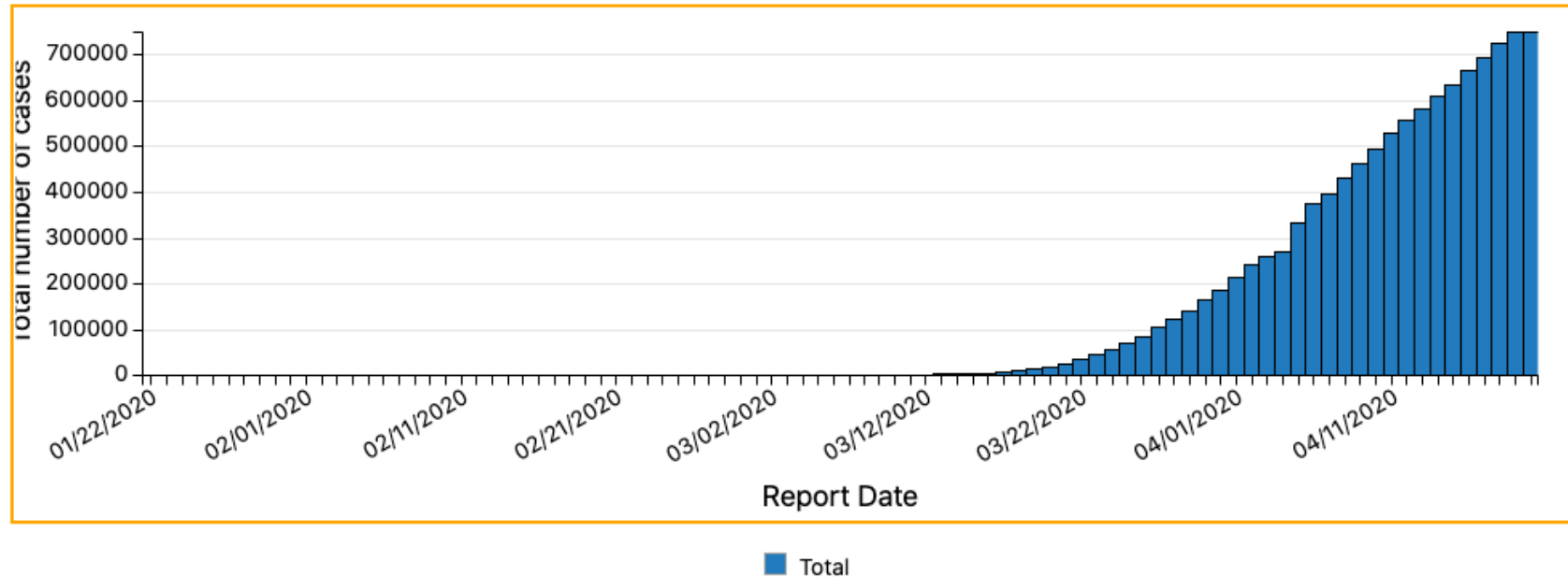
THE IMPACT OF “FLATTENING THE CURVE”



Source: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at University of Washington

Number of COVID-19 Cases in the U.S., by Date Reported²

January 22 to April 20, 2020
(n=746,625)



Source: CDC

IMPACTS ON BUSINESSES AND CUSTOMERS

- Return to work driven by government guidance and consumer confidence
- Gradual effort—not a light switch
- Consumer habits have and will change
- Morning Consult Poll (April 2020)
 - **20%** won't feel comfortable going **out to eat** for at least six months
 - **25%** won't feel comfortable going **to the movies** for at least six months
 - **27%** won't feel comfortable going **to a concert** for at least six months
 - **30%** won't feel comfortable going **on a vacation** for at least six months

<https://morningconsult.com/2020/04/10/consumer-expectations-normal-activities-comfortable>

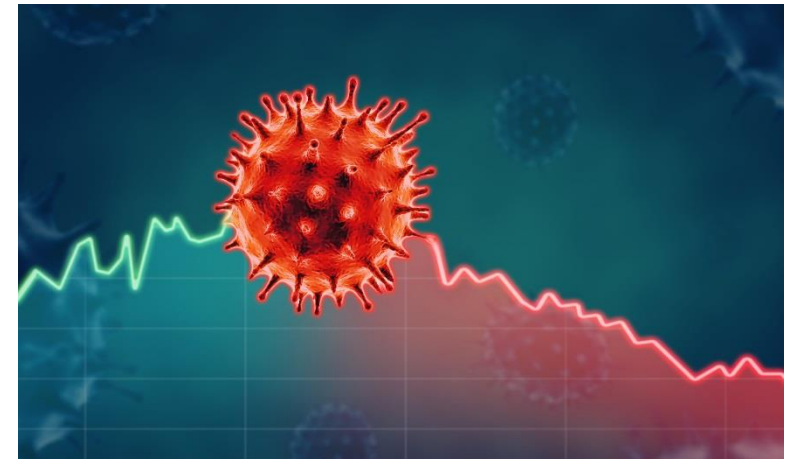
RESTART, REBRAND, RELAUNCH

- “New normal” and changing daily
- What worked pre-COVID-19 might not work now and vice versa
- Identify company’s strengths and weaknesses
- Review and realign expectations
- Monitor what colleagues/competitors are doing



KEY MARKERS TO RESTART THE ECONOMY

- Americans concerned restrictions will be lifted too quickly (Pew Research)
- Benchmarks to begin to return to work
 - Sustained reduction in new cases for two weeks
 - Hospitals able to treat patients without crisis measures
 - Adequate PPE for first responders
 - Greater testing capabilities and capacities
 - Phased plans with low-risk sectors (Rural vs. City)
 - Tools and education for employee health and safety
 - Be aware that COVID-19 may pop up again



EXAMPLES IN THE MEDIA

Bridgestone workers concerned about returning to work under new protocol

184
Shares



Updated: 10:42 PM CDT Apr 12, 2020



Kayla James ✉
Reporter



7 Midwest states say they'll partner on reopening their economies

Nation Apr 16, 2020 3:05 PM EDT

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Seven Midwestern governors announced Thursday that they will coordinate on reopening their state economies, after similar pacts were made in the Northeast and on the West Coast.

The Midwestern agreement includes Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky.

“We look forward to working with experts and taking a fact-based, data-driven approach to reopening our economy in a way that protects families from the spread of COVID-19,” the governors said. “Our No. 1 priority when analyzing when (is) best to reopen our economy is the health and safety of our citizens.”

The alliance of states in the Midwest joins two others that were announced earlier in the week: one on the West Coast and one in the Northeast. All together, the 17 states covered by the three pacts are home to nearly half the U.S. population.

Ohio's role in the agreement was unclear. A spokesman for Gov. Mike DeWine said his comments from Wednesday still stand.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR COMPANY TO CONSIDER

- What does restart, relaunch or rebound look like?
- What workplace changes are being made?
- What do employees want to know?
- How will you communicate this?



STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE GETTING YOUR BUSINESS UP AND RUNNING

- Work with senior leadership from all areas (HR, communications, legal, operations, etc.)
- Important to focus on the now, but aware of future
- Are your employees ready?
- Is your supply chain ready?
- NY Gov. Cuomo: “Reopen with a plan, with a smart plan, because if you do it wrong it can backfire.”
- The plan can come in pieces

“In the end, we will need a vaccine. Until then, we are living in a new normal. As employers, we shoulder a disproportionate share of responsibility as to whether coming out of this situation is successful,” Jonas Prising, Chairman/CEO Manpower Group

WHAT EMPLOYEES WANT TO KNOW

- Additional positive cases
- Changes in day-to-day operations/schedules
- Furloughs and/or reductions in pay
- Work from home options
- Hygiene and sanitation changes
 - Masks?
 - Temperature checks?
- Changes to sick leave or other policies
 - Flexibility for employees with children at home?
- Changes to travel/events
- Protests over re-opening



HOW TO COMMUNICATE THESE CHANGES

- Keep communication open and provide updates to employees
 - Email
 - Webinar
 - Pulse surveys
 - Virtual Town Hall/Zoom
 - Videos (More people are watching them)
- Employees look to you as a trusted source of news
- Adapt your message to other impacted groups (clients, vendors, etc.)

MESSAGING TOOLS

- Who is your audience? _____
- What is your goal/objective? _____
- What is your message? _____
- How will the message be delivered? _____
- What challenges will you face? _____
- What is your timeframe? _____
- How can you measure its success? _____



NEW PROTOCOLS
COMMUNICATIONS EXAMPLE



Valued Team Members,

As you know, we are taking the COVID-19 pandemic very seriously here at **ABC COMPANY** and starting next week, we will begin a gradual reopening of our physical workspace.

Employees that will be working in the office will be required to wear a mask when they are within six feet of fellow employees. This new protocol was developed in conjunction with the **LOCAL HEALTH AGENCY** and while it will be cumbersome, it is part of our commitment to keeping our employees healthy.

We also ask that if you feel ill at any time during the day, you notify your immediate supervisor and go home. We want to make sure that we try and prevent any illness from spreading in the office.

We have also increased sanitation equipment (wipes, etc.) in common areas like the office break room for your use. We encourage you to use them.

Thank you in advance for your adherence to these new protocols. Please contact your supervisor if you have any additional questions.

SCENARIO: CUSTOMER CONCERNS OVER RE-OPENING

Your business, a retail clothing store, has been closed since mid-March under your state's "Safer at Home" order. Beginning May 1, your state is lifting restrictions and allowing for your store and others to conduct business, but with restrictions (limits on number of customers inside the store, etc.). Your plan is to re-open the following Monday, May 4th. Your store has started to receive calls and e-mails from customers wondering what your store is going to do, and if it is safe for them to visit. Many have mentioned that other stores like yours have not re-opened.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



EXAMPLE OF WEBSITE POSTING



XYZ STORE Customers,

Thank you for being such loyal friends during this incredibly tough time in our nation's history. As most of you know, in mid-March we shut down our store per the state's "Safer-at-Home" order. With restrictions easing in the coming weeks, and after consultation with our store's senior leadership, we have decided to re-open **XYZ STORE** on a limited basis on Monday, May 4th.

The safety of our employees and our customers is our top priority. To that end, we will only be allowing **X** amount of customers inside the store at one time. We will also be working with a reduced staff. Those staff members will undergo daily temperature checks and will be required to wear masks at all times. We have also set up sanitation stations for both employees and customers inside the store.

We know this may be an inconvenience to you, but we appreciate your patience as we navigate this uncharted territory. If you have any questions, please e-mail us at **E-MAIL ADDRESS**, call us at **PHONE NUMBER** or ask one of our team members inside the store.

We look forward to seeing you back inside **XYZ STORE** very soon!

The **XYZ STORE** Team

CONCLUSION

- These are difficult times, but not insurmountable
- Be honest and transparent in communications
- Show compassion to employees and customers
- We will all get through this together!

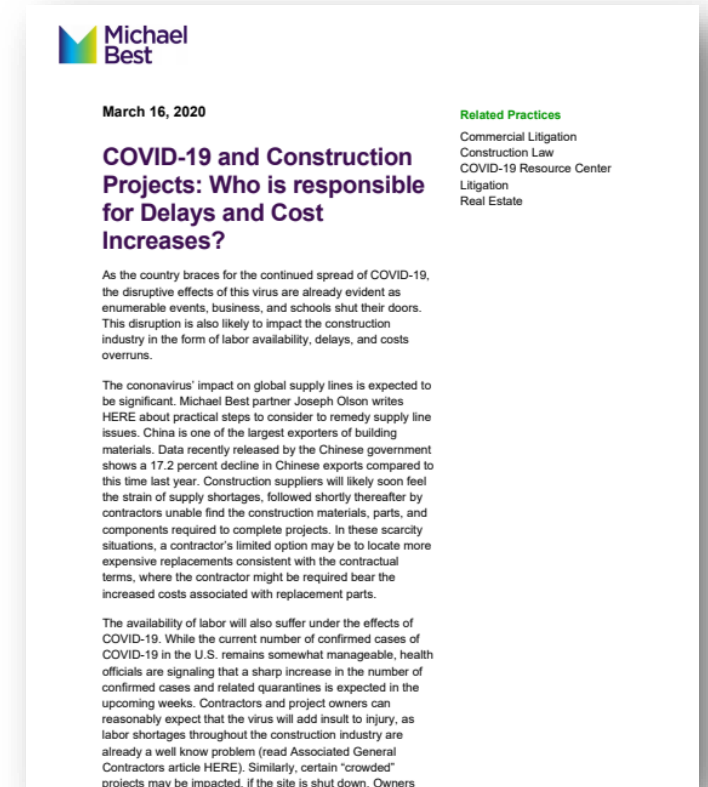



Q&A



Michael Best & Michael Best Strategies COVID-19 Resources

- COVID-19 Resource Center:
<https://www.michaelbest.com/Practices/COVID-19-Resource-Center>
 - Access to all COVID-19 client alerts
 - View upcoming COVID-19 webinars
 - Contact information for Task Force members
- Subscription options to Michael Best and Michael Best Strategies Alerts
 - Michael Best Alerts: <https://sites-michaelbest.vuturevx.com/5/9/landing-pages/subscription-form.asp?sid=blankform>
 - Michael Best Strategies Alerts: <https://www.michaelbeststrategies.com/connect/washington-d-c/#signup>



 Michael Best

March 16, 2020

COVID-19 and Construction Projects: Who is responsible for Delays and Cost Increases?

As the country braces for the continued spread of COVID-19, the disruptive effects of this virus are already evident as enumerable events, business, and schools shut their doors. This disruption is also likely to impact the construction industry in the form of labor availability, delays, and costs overruns.

The coronavirus' impact on global supply lines is expected to be significant. Michael Best partner Joseph Olson writes [HERE](#) about practical steps to consider to remedy supply line issues. China is one of the largest exporters of building materials. Data recently released by the Chinese government shows a 17.2 percent decline in Chinese exports compared to this time last year. Construction suppliers will likely soon feel the strain of supply shortages, followed shortly thereafter by contractors unable find the construction materials, parts, and components required to complete projects. In these scarcity situations, a contractor's limited option may be to locate more expensive replacements consistent with the contractual terms, where the contractor might be required bear the increased costs associated with replacement parts.

The availability of labor will also suffer under the effects of COVID-19. While the current number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. remains somewhat manageable, health officials are signaling that a sharp increase in the number of confirmed cases and related quarantines is expected in the upcoming weeks. Contractors and project owners can reasonably expect that the virus will add insult to injury, as labor shortages throughout the construction industry are already a well know problem (read Associated General Contractors article [HERE](#)). Similarly, certain "crowded" projects may be impacted, if the site is shut down. Owners

Related Practices
Commercial Litigation
Construction Law
COVID-19 Resource Center
Litigation
Real Estate