

MARKETING

12-step pre-recovery checklist for CEOs

April 14, 2020



Checklist is key

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When we begin to see a turn in the COVID-19 pandemic, the most important responsibility for business leaders will be to prepare a game plan towards full recovery.

We are going to need to quickly but rigorously assess our current relevance to our customers, understand the competitive exposures, and re-tool our offerings and go-to-market strategies to get back on track.

This approach is based on the research-substantiated framework published in our book [The Growth Gears](#). All royalties from 2020 will be donated to the American Red Cross.

Your 12-step checklist

Insight: The most important driver to the success of your recovery planning is the insight you pull from your changing marketplace. Here is your checklist:

- We know how our markets have shifted. We have spoken to our customers and prospects with enough frequency that we know what they need, how we can help them make money or for consumers, improve their lives and how that can inform decisions we need to make.
- We have been watching our competitors and have deep insight as to how they will respond. We know their hiring trends, product plans, how they have been communicating to their people and their customers. We know what we are up against.
- We have solicited insights from our company employees, who have been in the thick of the crisis, dealing with customers, suppliers and partners. We know the pulse of our own business, and what impact that's having on our abilities to respond to changing customer requirements.
- We are tracking the economic drivers for our business and customers' businesses and have determined what key indicators to watch and have a resource for tracking (e.g., [ITR Economics Trends Report](#) no charge for 90 days)
- We are attuned to government actions that will not only impact our operational health but may shift

requirements for the markets and customers we serve

Strategy: Your strategy checklist is critical as it lays the groundwork for how you will execute. It is where you put your market insights to work.

- We have revisited the markets and segments we serve. Prioritizing anew and eliminating ones that no longer make sense. We know how we will reach each, considering distribution changes, ecommerce initiatives and resulting impact on margins and topline contributions.
- We have taken a fresh look at our offerings. Letting go of ones that are no longer a priority, ready to reinvest in our most promising offerings, where their features and pricing are aligned with new market requirements. We know how we will fare competitively.
- We have reviewed, tuned or completely overhauled our positioning and messaging both for our company and our offerings. We are prepared to adjust as our markets and economies recover, reflecting anticipated evolution in our value proposition.
- Overall, we have considered any number of disruptive moves that could be major game changers for our business. Essentially, we've looked for **blue oceans** that we are uniquely suited to swim and thrive in.

Execution: Aligned with your strategy, execution is where we get things done. But it starts with ensuring we have the right resources and go-to-market strategy.

- The first area to assess in the execution checklist is the realities of the resources we have or need to deploy. We have looked at our people (inside and outside the company), our financial resources (for programs and promotion), and the systems or technology we will need to execute.
- We know the core tactics we will use to reach our tightly defined target buyers. We know how we will combine digital tactics with traditional methods and what timely and recovery-relevant content we will need. We know what we are willing to spend on each tactic because we understand the lifetime value of a new customer.
- We know how we will measure our success, measuring each component of our go-to-market strategy. We are in alignment and agreement from finance to sales to marketing in what is expected and how we will hold each other accountable.

How else can you avoid random acts of recovery?

A terrific book that pulls the sales elements into this planning framework is called "Stop! Random Acts of Marketing" written by Karen Hayward, and a top seller on Amazon. There you will find additional tools for aligning your sales and marketing to take your further, faster in the coming recovery cycle we are all looking forward to tackling.



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