

COLUMNS

Post-pandemic pivot: Being dynamic beats being efficient

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Liz Elting is founder/CEO of the Liz Elting Foundation

By [Liz Elting](#)

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We have to keep moving forward. I do not think this has completely sunk in for a lot of people, but there is no "back to normal."

Whatever the world looks like on the other side of this, it is not going to look like it did in January.

Social distancing is in the process of reinventing how people work, blurring the lines between on- and off-the-clock, while typically undervalued roles such as supermarket clerks and restaurant workers have quickly been revealed as essential infrastructure.

Everything from the relationship between employer and employee to supply and distribution is going to have to change to account for the new realities we suddenly face.

Embrace flexibility. Being dynamic beats being efficient.

The last 50 years have seen the development of the just-in-time economy, where highly efficient supply lines keep products moving at lightning speed with minimal variances.

But the problem with efficiency is that it is dependent on conditions remaining the same, which given enough time, the world rarely does.

Efficient machines are almost by definition unable to accommodate a changing market.

Right now, all of our efficiency engines have ground to a halt, and rather than focusing on getting them up and running, we must instead work on building new, more dynamic business models that can move quickly when conditions change.

We need to keep our businesses humming as best we can, even in these uncertain times when international shipping, air travel and manufacture are all suddenly in limbo.

Identify your international vulnerabilities. I do not want to say that globalization is over, but I do think we are going to

see it reinvented.

Long supply chains have gone from being an advantage to a crippling weakness, as we are witnessing firsthand in this crisis.

Urgently needed ventilators require supplies from a dozen countries including China at a time when those supplies have never been harder to obtain.

Retooling your business for a post-pandemic world will mean finding domestic vendors for things we do not even currently manufacture, which creates a remarkable opportunity for the CEO savvy enough to recognize where his or her company can become that vendor.

As long as your business is dependent on overseas supply chains, you are going to be vulnerable to the next disruption and considering that this pandemic may come in waves, that will not be sustainable.

Understand emerging job-security considerations. Once we get through this and we will get through it businesses that survive will have to navigate a talent pool that has a new outlook on job security.

An estimated one-fourth of the U.S. working population has applied for unemployment so far, making previous highs look like mere blips by comparison.

That number is only going to increase the longer this stretches on as employers scale back to deal with lost business or shutter entirely. Retail employees are especially vulnerable to this.

ANY COMPANY that wants to thrive in the pandemic and post-pandemic world needs to recognize the financial trauma that this event is going to cause and make job security a major focus.

Can your employees trust that they will not be put on the street? Because they will flock to the businesses that can offer that, and with modern economic and cultural sensibilities placing a lot of stock in a company's values, those same businesses can expect a glut of new business.

"Worker care," much like "workplace culture" or something similar, is likely going to be a buzzword in the months and years to come."

Liz Elting is New York-based founder/CEO of the [Elizabeth Elting Foundation](#) as well as founder and former co-CEO of [TransPerfect](#).

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