

## Responding quickly in challenging times

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A changed and changing working environment (physical and electronic, financial and corporate) – for us and our clients – causes confusion and barriers to work, with significant risk of relationships and projects breaking down. Some of this will be out of our hands, but recognising what we can do to overcome this will require new and unfamiliar working practices. **Clear leadership and communication at both corporate and individual level are vital.** The quicker we accept this and adapt the better. This might be common sense, but it requires not just recognition and acceptance but **action** too; these are three different things.

My experience is that the teams and individuals who think *'I can do this'* are off to a good start. Teams and individuals who find new ways to **work quickly** and **make rapid decisions** (both about working practices and professional decisions on their projects and matters) will adapt swiftly and begin to thrive. That might be about:

- working hours; for many there is unlikely to be a single, continuous working shift day.
- location; not everyone will have a home office.
- communication; fragmentation of the 'normal' working day and limited face-to-face contact means less certainty that someone is working and contactable. Use the media that will best hit your audience. Picking up and responding to messages quickly becomes essential for projects to move forward.

The key lessons and practises from this are:

1. Take **personal responsibility**
2. **Accept the situation** and recognise the barriers to work
3. **Consider the options available** for making it work **and choose one**
4. Make **rapid decisions**
5. **Implement them**
6. Don't worry if something doesn't work – **be adaptable and agile** - return to step 1

**If you stand still, you fail** (from Sun Tzu's *"The Art of War"*). Moving swiftly through steps 1-4 maximises the time available for step 5, which is what we used to recognise as work. If you find yourself at 6, regroup, go back to the top and get yourself back down to 5 as quickly as possible.

**Our clients will be facing their own struggles** and will **thank us for finding a way to help them.** To do that we need to help ourselves – this isn't intended to be holier than thou or patronising. My experience of disaster recovery and emergency planning is that there is a mindset That Can and a mindset That Can't. Inevitably there will be those who Think They Can't and they need support so they convert to Think They Can!

What works for one may not work for another – hence **being adaptable and agile**. If we **share the best practices** as they emerge, we can learn from each other.