

Jog then Sprint: The Ways COVID-19 Slowed Business, then Sped it Up

The novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) is the pivotal issue of 2020, and may even continue into 2021 and beyond. The pandemic has taken the attention of nearly every person, organization, and government in the world. Its impact on society and economy cannot be understated.

From a business perspective, COVID-19 has been a lesson in adaptability. Businesses in all industries have pivoted by changing the way they work, communicate, organize themselves, create their products, and deliver services.

Lavergne had had to make changes in each of these areas to respond to ever-changing customer needs while increasing productivity going forward.

It has been hard. Do you recognize the phrase “necessity is the mother of invention”? We are living it.

Let’s look at how ways the pandemic has inspired businesses like Lavergne to pivot and change their processes.

Remote Employees, Virtual Teams and Office Changes

Here’s the big one: remote working with teams collaborating in a virtual space.

When the pandemic struck, millions of North American employees began working remotely. It was a dramatic shift. [Research from McKinsey Global Institute](#) found that 62 percent of employed Americans were working at home in April 2020, compared with just 25 percent in 2018.

While working from home presents challenges, many businesses are reporting rises in productivity as new systems are adopted to support the surge of remote workers.

How do they make that happen?

The McKinsey study interviews thousands of these workers and provides advice in four key areas to help companies move forward in the rapidly changing circumstances.

First, organizations must recast each employee’s role in terms of their remote working ability. Employees can be:

- Fully remote,
- Onsite with appropriate protocols, or
- A hybrid approach with some remote and some onsite work.

Second, focus on processes. These include business processes, people’s professional development as well as team-building functions. Digital channels, such as Microsoft Teams may be ideal to allow the natural watercooler discussion that usually happened in hallways and conference rooms.

Third, retool the workplace to better support remote employees. Instead of simply having faces staring at each other across a table or in Zoom windows, create remote collaboration opportunities such as virtual whiteboards to promote engagement and collaboration.

Finally, change the office budget to drive those remote opportunities. Specifically, revise your budget to:

- Let go of unnecessary office space. It takes time, but it will save money in the long run.

- Allocate funds for employees to furnish their home office. Ergonomic chairs, standup desks and dependable laptops with external cameras for team collaboration are just some of the tools they'll need to be successful.

Of course, technology is a key part of this transition.

Leveraging Technology

In some ways, the pandemic has forced companies to take a large step forward in terms of technology for collaboration, productivity and health. [Mobisoft profiled a range](#) of technologies companies are using, and found the approaches in two key areas:

1. Technology designed to keep onsite workers healthy
2. Technology keeping remote workers productive

Tech solutions monitoring workplace health can provide remote healthcare services, monitoring body temperatures in crowds, and track people's locations. Healthcare services are being delivered by autonomous services in some regions, such as vehicles in China or drones in Japan. Infrared sensors are being installed in airports and office buildings, while workplaces and health authorities encourage individual workers to download apps that will not only assist with contact tracing in the case of outbreaks but help monitor large crowds.

Making Remote Working Collaborative, Productive, and Effective

The second set of technologies are designed to help business be more productive:

- Online learning
- Remote working
- Digital conferencing

Each of these functions can be achieved using tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Slack – or through customized virtual events with collaboration software.

The initial investment in these tools may seem costly, but in the long run they're offset by the costs of travel and office space.

[Ernst & Young](#) said effective protocols for remote working must start at the top levels of the organization. Define a goal in getting your teams working remotely —optimize commuting, reduce office space, or implement more flexible working hours. This may require organizations adjusting their human resources policies and internal communications to support the new environment.

Privacy and security are the top priorities, making sure the platforms protect individual user data and allow sensitive conversations to continue online. One example is [Fintso](#), a web-based financial software used by independent financial advisors to ensure secure communications with their clients.

Lavergne's Virtual Reality (VR) Technology Brings Partners Closer

Lavergne has made significant strides on this front by successfully adding Virtual Reality (VR) to our technology tool box. For our company, we now do virtual team-building, training, instantaneous repairs, and virtual plant tours.

Driving technical collaboration at our international plants

For a global company with locations in North America, Caribbean and Asia, VR allows us to add remote collaboration around the world. For example, Lavergne had travel plans to launch a new facility in Haiti, but COVID-19 forced us to manage the project from a distance. Fortunately we had the technology infrastructure in place to facilitate:

- One-on-one video discussions for troubleshooting and technical support
- Installation assistance — helping teams install machinery by “walking them through” the steps
- Large conference calls with everyone communications together while seeing only one person's

camera

- Engineers and operators on opposite sides of the world needing immediate technical support

Virtual guided tours of Lavergne facilities

We're also connecting with customers and partners by offering guided tours of our facilities via remote video feed. Lavergne's plant tours come through two unique options.

The first way is travelling through our facilities via a live stream or guided tour of our [facilities and our plastic transforming technologies](#).

The second way is a self-guided tour via cameras installed at strategic locations throughout [Lavergne's facility](#). The cameras can be moved with software and joystick. Does that sound like a video game? In many ways, that's exactly what it's like!

A Real Pivot to Innovation

COVID-19 has forced companies to take innovative action. With the right combination of mindset, tools and worker engagement, remote working can be helpful to many people in the long term.

Lavergne has already responded to the dramatic shift with new technology and tools continuing to meet our customer's needs. Going forward, we will be implementing:

1. Live HD calls even on low bandwidth
2. Remote camera management include zoom-in, take a photo, flashlight
3. Powerful video solutions

Lavergne's 2021 is set to be even more impactful with new facilities, more efficient global processes and superior product releases driving the creation of a pure Closed Loop for recycled plastics.

Subscribe to the [Lavergne newsroom](#).