



## MEETING THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS WITH A CONTAGIOUS RESILIENCE

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Since COVID-19 became a pandemic, the concept of resilience has been widely discussed. It's not always clear what is meant, though. Resilience is the ability to absorb shocks, cope with change and improve performance going forward. As a multi-level idea, resilience is analysed at the level of countries, individuals and companies.

### **Resilience as doing good for oneself**

How countries react to shock is in the spotlight. Italy, for example, is facing off coronavirus challenge that hit it earlier and harder than its neighbours. [The country](#) became a window for the world into what happens when a healthcare system is ultimately overwhelmed by an exponentially increasing number of cases. Italy has proved itself to be resilient. Italians have beat the virus by simultaneously isolating and [singing together](#) out of their windows. Like countries, also individuals, whether they are leaders or supporters, need to boost their resilience in this time of self-confinement. Seeking resilient responses to the changes, also companies find new ways of operating to soften the blow, control damage and ensure business continuity.

### **Reframing resilience**

Yes, in times of corona resilience gets the crown. However, we tend to talk about resilience to ensure companies maintain performance, sustain operations or to speed up a company's return to a solid financial performance.

Clearly, companies that are resilient have a competitive advantage. However, the question is: is resilience misunderstood? If one country has all the masks and the one sought-after vaccination to stop the virus, the question still remains: who are they going to trade with when it is all over? If people, or indeed countries, make themselves resilient without caring for friends, peers and 'others', they underestimate the impact an individual can have. Such resilience based on a self-centred pursuit to stay well while the world falls apart threatens missing out on those opportunities that a bigger framing offers.

### **Spreading resilience – doing better by making others better**

Consider how a virus spreads. It eventually becomes a pandemic because it can spread faster than it is dying. The exponential rise in infections has taken many a leader by surprise. Self-isolation makes sure that the virus does not spread beyond us or reach us. This is effective, but it is not the best we can hope for. Similarly, resilience that seeks competitiveness helps like self-isolation does; it limits the potential for exponential growth and slows the rise of the virus. Understanding resilience in an ecological way helps to realize its true potential for companies, countries and individuals.

Spreading resilience is the key to withstanding crises and emerging more resourceful when they are over. Supportive countries can make others more resilient. Individuals have shown, too, that they can help others deal better with the crisis. Resilient companies grow beyond themselves and have an impact on their economy and society. Seeking answers to the question "How can we become resilient?" is very important us all whether as citizens, individuals, company employees and/or shareholders. However, facing a crisis that threatens

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humanity, as regards every element of global economies, enterprises and governments, forces us to pose the strategic question: How can we make our partners and ecosystems more resilient?

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### **Countries coming together**

The importance of strong administrations with strong skills is clear. But not all countries are endowed with robust healthcare systems, competent public administrators and courageous politicians. [And so what if coming together](#) were the key?

Undoubtedly, some actions by countries illustrate what not to do to further undermine solidarity. Consider Germany’s reluctance to export medical supplies to its partner countries; a reputation in tatters because of wrong decisions. Sequestering medical supplies in this way appears counterproductive both because they were destined to help an ally and because they start this unfavourable ball rolling: resilience for oneself only.

There are some cross-country positive examples: German hospitals taking French corona virus patients in need; masks being sent from China to Europe. Also, technology from Israel helped identify infection faster around the world. Japan [is offering its domestically produced Avigan, the anti-flu drug, to 20 countries in the world for free](#).

But these examples are sparse; the industrialized world needs to rise to the challenge of spreading resilience to support countries that are [yet to develop resilience](#). And this is because spreading resilience could help avert the impending catastrophe in emerging markets.

### **Individuals helping others**

When Bono sings “[Let your love be known](#)”, he is not off the notes. We have seen individuals mounting heroic efforts to help others. Retired medical staff are returning to work to fight the virus and have in tragic cases even given their lives for others. Pictures of Italian nurses overcome by exhaustion are reminders of firefighters during 9/11 in their dedication. Ms Bhosale, the team leader at Mylab Discovery, managed to complete India’s first testing kit and the submission for approval by the Indian authorities shortly before giving birth to her daughter. Mother and daughter are well, and India has a test kit too. Not everyone is a hero, but everyone can help.

### **Companies rise to the rescue**

Numerous companies have shone brightly. Companies’ decisions have indeed revealed their resilience. Driven by purpose, with their decisions they transmit their resilience to their stakeholders.

BrewDog, the brewer, started producing a branded hand sanitizer, the ‘punk sanitizer’, seizing the opportunity that the virus presented. This increases the supply of what is increasingly hard to find in supermarkets. Note, too, that the company announced it would [give it away for free](#) to those in need.

Whole Foods and Target are changing their operations, like many supermarkets around the world. They have acknowledged their critical role as lifelines supporting consumer societies. By introducing special times for [senior people and vulnerable guests](#), and ensuring the racks are stacked, they are doing their bit to help flatten the curve.

Devising new ways to avoid closing, [supermarkets in Switzerland](#) require customers to queue in such a way that ensures that no more than one person per 10 square meters is in the shop at any moment in time. Dutch supermarkets usually only open to businesses are now also open to private customers, to support the economy with the supplies needed.

Then there are banks, like the Royal Bank of Scotland in the UK, that have started allowing their customers to defer mortgage and loan payments by up to three months. This prevents a large number of unnecessary defaults and supports the UK economy’s overall resilience.

In China, companies such as the appliance giant Haier has turned its large-scale production facilities into a site for the [mass production of masks](#). Its industrial internet platform COSMOPlat went online in Shanxi Province in February and started producing 100,000 masks a day. China’s online grocers like Hema and DingDong Maicai have tripled their daily in one quarter to 9 million, and are forming a cornerstone of China’s growing infrastructure to support self-isolation.

[Even Apple and Google](#), who not always work in harmony, have agreed to work together in tracking the spread of Covid-19. Together the two tech giants will support developers with API and strive for interoperability through apps of public health care authorities. They also announced the development of a Bluetooth enabled platform to track contacts to fight the pandemic for all.

For the best possible outcome, boosting your own resilience and spreading it go hand-in-hand. Resilient companies need to take care of themselves first to take better care of their ecologies. Back when we still flew, we heard instructions about putting our own oxygen masks on before those of children or those we care for and the logic still applies. Consider the online retailer [Okado and its move to supply itself](#) with 100, 000 test kits. Also, by testing its employees the UK is supporting its self-isolation infrastructure.

### **Offer carrots or receive the stick**

Countries are sovereign. Companies and individuals operate within the jurisdictions of their sovereign. Besides the natural urgency of crises, this adds to pressure on companies and individuals to choose spreading resilience. Countries may suggest first and requisition next. But business leaders have to choose when to act.

When governments begin to evoke wartime rights and requester products they and companies may serve the world but too often, governments misunderstand companies' capabilities. When a government seeks to organize production centrally, the results can be suboptimal. Companies need to take initiative earlier. This bolsters companies' reputation, spread resilience and their competitiveness. Amplifying resilience companies can help people, partners and position well for the best possible start when the virus fades.

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