



The New Normal: How to Make A Comeback Plan

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#TheNewNormal

How to Make a Comeback Plan

Colorado businesses need a thoughtful comeback strategy to not just survive but thrive. How do you outmaneuver uncertainty to build a better future?

We recommend these three steps to get started:

01. Act like a startup (again)

Have a strategy, find your niche, but be ready to pivot

02. Rebuild a winning team

Find the talent opportunity in this crisis

03. Put safety at the core

Ensure a safe environment for everyone

It is *NOT* business as usual...

A big reset is happening right now. Business recovery in the Era of COVID-19 will require new business models and revenue streams, new staff relations, new relationships with business partners, suppliers, landlords and customers.

And when things finally get back to normal, our "new normal" will look very different from what we've known it to be. How should businesses pave a way forward?

Each employer must pave their own way forward but there's one thing we do know: it will take a little innovation, some patience, and a whole lot of grit. The important thing to remember is to know what you can control, make a plan, and rise into a refreshed economy, prepared.

In this guide, we outline three key steps that can help businesses anticipate and prepare for Colorado's new business environment.

Let's dig in.

It needs to happen

To thrive in the Era of COVID-19, businesses need to start with **these three things**:

<p>01. Act like a startup</p> <hr/>	<p>02. Rebuild a winning team</p> <hr/>	<p>03. Put safety at the core</p> <hr/>
<p>Have a strategy, find your niche, but be ready to pivot. Get creative about how you keep business operations running while honoring your brand and engaging the customer base.</p> <p>Just as you had the courage to start your business, have the same grit to see it through this pandemic. Have a plan...but also be ready to adjust as needed.</p>	<p>Find the talent opportunity in this crisis. Bringing the right people back to work at your business is an integral part of the solution to a successful reopening. Engage employees so they will have the confidence to think innovatively and out of their comfort zone.</p> <p>And watch new leaders emerge based on their actions and beliefs, not their title or compensation.</p>	<p>Ensure a safe environment for everyone. A safe approach includes a comprehensive cleaning plan and the right training in place to mobilize it. It also means having a pulse on employees' concerns and a course of action to address them with empathy and confidence.</p> <p>If you take care of your staff, they will take care of your customers.</p>

If you want to reopen and stay open, you need a comprehensive roadmap for the recovery marathon that's ahead. Whether it's building off the State's master plan or building your unique plan independently, start now and start somewhere. Not sure where to start? Keep reading.

01. Act like a startup

Have a strategy, find your niche, but be ready to pivot.

Think about what your business needs to not just survive but thrive. Consider your business outlook for the short-term and long-term future. Think about your business priorities and needs for the first 30 days of reopening and then for the next 90 days, 6 months and 12-months ahead.

As you plan ahead, we recommend thinking through **three areas of your business operations: products & services, customer acquisition, and revenue & expenses.**

1. Products & Services

Reflect on how your business, customers, partners, and competition have adapted in the last several months.

What products/services will you stop, continue, and improve? Find products or services you can dial up to add efficiency or opportunities to differentiate your business. Pairing down or distorting categories is a great way to take stock of what you're selling and how it fits today's consumer needs. There may be opportunities to work with new vendors who can contribute to new inventory needs. Or think broader and explore new ways to create revenue.

Tips and Advice:

- Focus on **top sellers**
- Highlight your **highest margin** offerings
- Know what will sell **immediately/consistently**
- **Test** new products and services
- Choose a product mix that'll **differentiate** your brand
- Work with vendors to ensure **supply for your priority products/services**

Questions to think through:

- *What mix of products should I sell?*
- *Do I need to offer something new?*
- *What are my top/fastest sellers? Highest margin?*
- *What vendors do I need to work with to ensure supply?*
- *How can I differentiate my offering?*

2. Customer Acquisition

Now is the time to leverage all the tools and channels available to your business.

Just because your brick and mortar reopens doesn't mean people will come. Consumer behavior will look a lot different as our economy recovers. High unemployment rates will also contribute to less discretionary spending. For this reason and many others, businesses will need to get creative with their customer acquisition strategy and leverage all available channels (now is the time to master online tactics).

Tips and Advice:

- **Re-engage all existing customers** across all channels
- **Spread the word**, ask them to bring their friends, relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors.
- **Keep investing in digital and virtual channels**
- Identify partnerships to reach **new customers**
- Focus on what makes your **brand unique and different**

Questions to think through:

- *How can I acquire NEW customers? Or re-engage existing ones?*
- *How can I leverage digital channels?*
- *How can I perfect my brand? How do I improve foot traffic?*
- *What partnerships can I develop to expand my customer base?*

3. Revenue & Expenses

Prepare for short-term and long-term business success. Be ready for various scenarios and unknown variables.

How will you respond if consumer demand declines? What if the government mandates re-closure of your business? If you are concerned about financial longevity and were approved for a PPP loan, refer to our [Guide to Strategic Use of PPP Funds](#) for more guidance on spending your PPP funds strategically over the long-term instead of making maximum loan forgiveness.

Tips and Advice:

- Predict business outlook for Poor/Moderate/Outstanding
- Forecast low revenue numbers for the first 3+ months
- Consider how state requirements will impact your bottom line
- Evaluate the following items monthly: revenue, minimum staff required to support operations, payroll required to fund employees, and minimum fixed/variable expenses to stay open
- Determine how many months your cash flow will last

Questions to think through:

- *What are my 30, 60, and 90-day sales projections?*
- *What's the minimum # of staff I need to operate?*
- *How much payroll is required to fund employees?*
- *What will my PPP dollars fund?*
- *What are my minimum levels of fixed and variable expense?*
- *How can reduce, defer and extend terms on larger expenses?*

02. Rebuild a winning team

Find the talent opportunity in this crisis.

Now that you've gotten clarity on business priorities, it's time to get tactical by focusing on your people strategy. Remember, just because you're allowed to reopen for business, does not mean now is the time to bring all of your employees back. Pause and consider all your options.

As you figure out who to bring back, we recommend thinking through **these three areas of your people operations: your core team, onsite vs. remote work, return to work conversations.**

1. Identify Your Core Team

Your core team/who to bring back should be aligned with your business strategy. Know that your financial situation may drive key staffing decisions.

Start by identifying employee skill sets that are most essential for business moving forward. Think about general competencies like problem-solving, adaptability, leadership and collaboration that will be critical, on top of operational/technical skills.

Know that your new business environment may require new skill sets now and in the future. **Don't be pressured to bring everyone back.** It's okay to keep some employees on furlough. It's also okay to leverage high unemployment to hire new talent to fill any skills gaps in your team. Spend the money on the best people. Think of it as an investment in the future.

Tips:

- **Identify your talent needs** and who can execute on your top priorities
- Bring back the **minimum # of employees** to accomplish business priorities
- **Consolidate roles** to eliminate redundancies
- **Cross-train** employees to give the business more flexibility
- **Hire new talent** if you have competencies that your business needs but current employees don't have
- Consider bringing back your employees in **phases**

2. Decide Onsite vs. Remote Work

Next, determine if employees should a) work 100% onsite, b) work 100% remotely from home, or c) work onsite and remotely.

Review all employee's responsibilities and identify any activities that require them to be physically on-site. If an employee's job doesn't involve primarily in-person/onsite work, we recommend you ask them to work from home to minimize their risk of exposure and enable you to reduce the total number of people onsite. Partial remote work is also an option for those who need to be onsite periodically.

Questions to think through:

- Does this employee interact with customers face-to-face regularly?
- Can the employee's work be done by phone, email, and/or online meeting?
- Which projects or tasks would not be completed if the employee was not physically on-site?
- Can I cross-train employees to allow for partial remote work?
- Is there sufficient workflow for the employee to work remotely instead of onsite

Onsite Work	Remote Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service / vendor meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility with technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved focus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced commute time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and camaraderie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Safer at home"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare and/or eldercare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager oversight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential cost savings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to onsite tool/tech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible schedules, time zones, or access to skill sets

3. Start Return to Work Conversations

Before you pick up the phone to call people back to work, spend some time planning how you will bring them back.

Why? The way you bring your people back is your first step to rebuilding your workplace culture and re-connecting with your team. Here are simple tips and reminders to get you started.

Step 1: Re-engage Employees	Step 2: Listen & Empathize
<p>Start off the conversation with a tone of enthusiasm and gratitude. Remember, some of your employees may not be looking forward to your call or may still feel frustrated at being furloughed. Tell your employee how much you appreciate them and how excited you are about the possibility of working with them again. Explain that the loosening of government regulations means your business may be reopening soon and you would like to discuss their work situation with them.</p> <p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell employees your business may be reopening on [date]• Tell them you'd like to discuss their work situation• Build enthusiasm by reminding them of the long-term benefits of employment (i.e. healthcare, self-purpose, stability, restart their career, serving the community)• Reconnect/remotivate your employees with their sense of purpose (remind them of your mission, vision, values)	<p>Be prepared to really listen. Hear out and empathize with employee concerns and be prepared to address them. Things such as workplace safety, scheduling changes and frustrations at the possibility of not earning as much without UI. Note: If an employee is reluctant to return because they're collecting richer UI benefits, explain that unemployment payments are generous right now, but UI benefits aren't long-term. Additional benefits from the CARES Act ends in July.</p> <p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to "talk story" e.g. ask them how they've been doing (and share something about yourself)• Discuss your commitment to keeping the workplace safe for employees and customers• Really listen and don't interrupt• Playback and summarize their thoughts to check for understanding/demonstrate empathy

Step 3: Set Expectations	Step 4: Ask for Feedback & Commitment
<p>Your employees are aware that the workplace has changed but that doesn't mean they can read your mind. Set clear expectations about what your business and their work will look like in the "new normal". Tell them what you need from them, and how you intend to support them also.</p> <p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share details on compensation, salary and benefits (highlight and explain any changes) • Discuss your business' short-term and long-term goals for the road ahead (and how it's different than before) • Get specific about how you will support them and what you promise to do as their leader • Consider conducting a re-onboarding meeting (via Zoom or Google Hangouts) with your entire team to reinforce new expectations and build camaraderie 	<p>Find out if they are willing and able to return and will be fully committed. Make the ask: Are you in? Ask if they have any new work constraints, and if they are fully committed to going above and beyond. If an employee says they're not available (or not interested in returning to work), you may not want to jeopardize their UI by giving them an offer to return. When an employee refuses an official offer to return to work, they may lose their UI benefits.</p> <p>If you really need them back, have that hard conversation to convince them and work out a solution. You can consider additional benefits to entice them e.g. stipend, per diem to cover food/meals to help make up for lost wages, etc.</p> <p>Tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give employees the opportunity to voice their ideas about how to the business/work culture • Find out scheduling details and employee availability • Conclude by communicating next steps
<p>Discuss these HR things with your team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling plans for the next 30 days (and beyond) • General changes in salaries, benefits and compensation • Any updates to PTO, vacation and sick leave policies for the upcoming weeks/months 	<p>Avoid these HR pitfalls/discriminatory actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing back only young employees perceived to be healthy individuals • Choosing not to bring back other "high-risk" individuals • Choosing not to bring back mothers with young children

03. Put safety at the core

Ensure a safe environment for everyone.

All employees must create a safe working environment that gives employees confidence to return to work and customers confidence to engage. Your business' success in the "new normal" depends on your ability to execute a systematic plan. Here's a checklist to get you started:

1. Create an ongoing <i>CLEANING</i> plan	2. Create <i>RULES</i> to keep your team safe	3. Minimize <i>TOUCHING</i> items/surfaces	4. Rethink your <i>WORKSPACE</i> design and traffic flow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Maintain at least a 30-day inventory of cleaning supplies and <u>EPA-approved</u> disinfectants ✓ Thoroughly disinfect your business before you reopen ✓ Focus on high-touch surfaces ✓ Establish an ongoing cleaning plan/schedule for all areas (eg. between customers, hourly, daily, or weekly) ✓ Review <u>OSHA & CDC</u> guidelines for disinfecting guidance/how-to's and proper use/storage of chemicals ✓ Add hand sanitizer stations, preferably touchless, at entrances/exits/checkout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Require employees to self-certify that they're healthy before each shift and post a notice at your entrance ✓ Enact temperature screening protocols if needed ✓ Require employees and customers to wear a mask ✓ Review hygiene/safety best practices with staff and post helpful signage ✓ Train all employees on new rules and safety procedures ✓ Have an enhanced cleaning plan ready should a positive COVID-19 case be reported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Determine standards for product handling to minimize frequency of touching items ✓ Limit sharing equipment and consider assigning equipment/tools per person, per shift ✓ If sharing items is necessary, post clear directions about how to clean shared-use equipment ✓ Consider "contactless" checkout options ✓ Remove community items ✓ Implement any industry-specific measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reconfigure your physical layout for reduced occupancy based on county/state capacity rules ✓ Ensure 6 ft spacing and add floor markers to help with distancing ✓ Designate only one entrance/exit and delineate one-way lanes with floor/wall signs to control traffic ✓ Adapt break rooms for social distancing and stagger breaks to prevent crowding ✓ Install safeguards like sneeze guards at checkout to prevent transmission of airborne particles ✓ Ensure ADA requirements and fire safety code compliance ✓ Partner with your landlord where possible for added support

This is your chance at a *fresh start!*

As you prepare for the future, seize every opportunity to come back stronger than before. Integrate your brand story into the new customer experience you're creating, build a better team to lead you into the future, and leverage required safety rules and practices as a springboard to create human connection and showcase your creativity.

Your homework: There are other big shifts happening from which we will not go back. As employers, study these trends and changes and work on your business model. How must it change? How can it change to take advantage of the talent opportunity? Keep working at it. Adaptation and invention are the price of admission today.

You got this!

How Does Obsidian HR Help?

Obsidian HR is dedicated to delivering the best HR management. We give local employers access to payroll services, benefits, WC/TDI, HR training and compliance support that make it easier to run a business through the ups and downs.

With Obsidian HR, your business can get guidance on new COVID-19 rules and regulations like:

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES)
- The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
- The Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

Plus, your business can get local support when you need it the most.

If you'd like to speak to one of our experts, please send us an email at inquiry@obsidianhr.com or give us a call at (720) 456-3590.