



CRISIS CULTURE INSIGHT - PART ONE

How do we look out for colleagues
and customers during the crisis?

Thursday 9th April 2020

Tribe's Virtual Forum:
Listening, learning and sharing
for a stronger culture





Introduction

This interim insight document describes the health, safety and wellbeing challenges that organisations are facing due to the Covid-19 crisis. It has been put together, by Tribe, using a combination of survey data, webinar and focus group sessions and will be regularly updated as we learn more through the length of the crisis. It primarily focuses on the behavioural and cultural challenges related to health, safety and wellbeing and the crisis now, as well as anticipating those that organisations may face in the future.

The aim of this document is to provide collective insight from mostly larger organisations, drawn across a range of industries at both a global and national level.

To collect the insight, two key questions have been asked:

- What are the key challenges faced by organisations with regards to health, safety and wellbeing during the crisis?
- How are those challenges being dealt with?

Additionally, organisations have been sharing what they would like to learn from others with regards to the crisis and these answers have formed part of the developing themes.

Overview

Data has been collected from over 125 organisations so far, on the challenges they see related to the coronavirus crisis and how they're dealing with them. Many of them (95%+) believe they have a good understanding of what those challenges are, with varying degrees of confidence in how they're handling them.

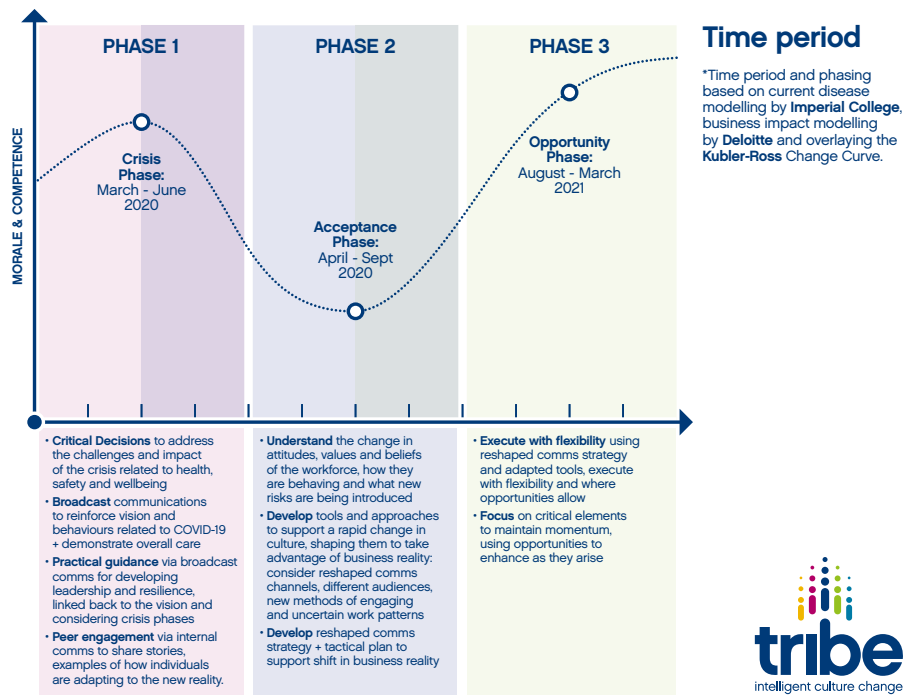
So far, most organisations believe they are still at a Phase 1 Crisis stage, with very little strategic implementation of solutions as organisational activity is still rapidly shifting. Where organisations are particularly confident in their approach, it's because they're able to build on previous investment related to culture programmes, communication platforms and other activities designed to build organisational and individual resilience.

Crisis Culture Framework

Key challenges

- Workforce mental health and resilience
- Operating the business safely with less staff
- Rapid changes in behaviour
- Fear to go to work
- Under reporting
- Managing customer risks
- Communications overload
- Business or asset shut down, maintenance and start-up challenges
- Remote or absent leadership
- Social Distancing
- Denial of new reality + failure to adapt
- Moving backwards in maturity terms: Increase in unsafe behaviour and associated increase in risk, decrease in communication about safety, increase in anger and distrust.

Opportunities



Organisations are generally reacting quickly and with purpose as the crisis shifts. The four major themes that have arisen from the research are the following:



Trust

How do people feel about the business response? Do they have trust in the organisation?



Mindset

What is people's mindset and as a result what kinds of behaviours are people demonstrating?



Resilience

How mentally prepared are people to get through the crisis?



Engagement

How effectively are we communicating with people?

It's these four areas organisations should be thinking about as they address the cultural and behavioural challenges arising from the crisis, and continue to plan what the solutions might look like.

Context

In different forms Tribe has been helping organisations improve behaviour and culture for the last 30 years. A major part of this has been making a difference to health, safety and wellbeing within a range of industries and organisations globally. We have a unique approach that combines the science of culture change with the art of engaging audiences in a variety of creative, cutting-edge ways.

Our unique experience has allowed us to focus on people within organisations, the culture they influence and the resulting behavioural outcomes. We focus on this because we know that if an organisation is able to develop an effective culture, this will help influence and embed the right behaviours. Even with comprehensive processes, standards and systems, it is hard to influence the right behaviours in an organisation without a mature culture. This is as true for health, safety and wellbeing as it is for any area of business.

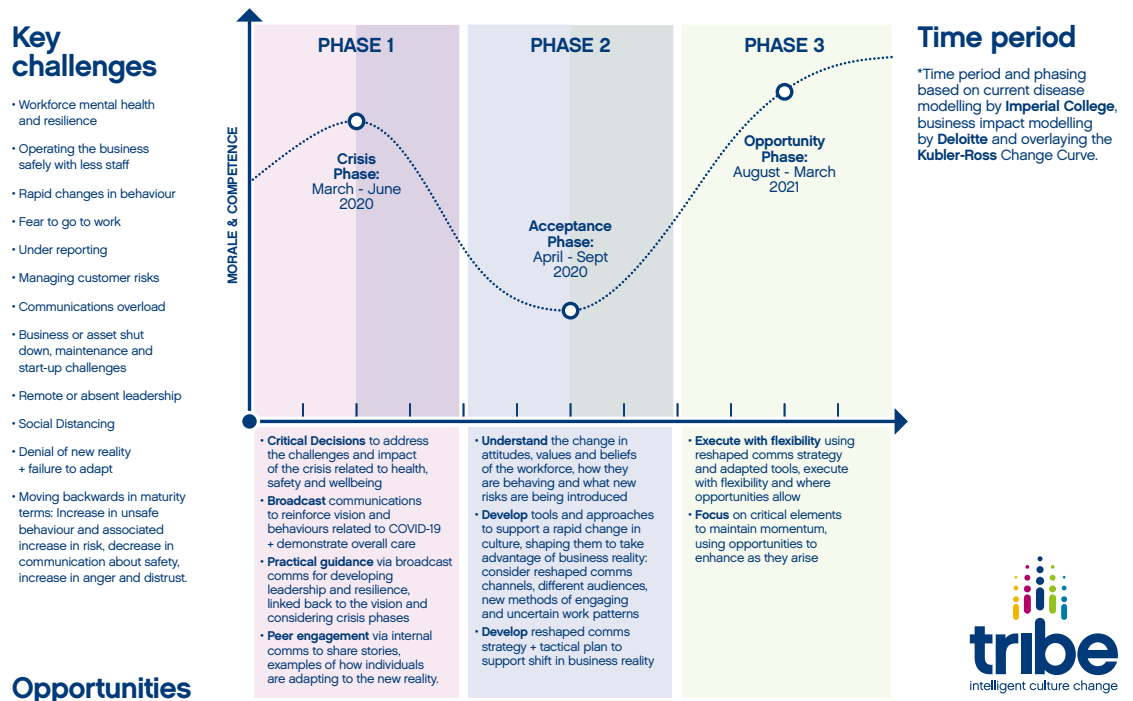
Our research has shown that in the early phases of the crisis HSE professionals have been called upon to drive and support the effort to make sure that critical standards, processes and systems are being revised to respond to the new working reality. This might be in response to a rapid business change because of supply or demand changes, social distancing or other virus-related regulations, or simply because there are less people to do the job.

All of these rapid changes in working practice are helping influence the biggest shift in culture the world has ever seen. Alongside the personal psychological impact of the virus itself, individual attitudes, values and beliefs are already very different since the start of the crisis. This change will continue through the different phases of the crisis, ultimately leading to different behaviours at every stage.

The challenge from a health, safety and wellbeing perspective is to make sure that the culture either remains strong, or continues to develop so that those behaviours are the right ones throughout the crisis period. The risk is that because the crisis is creating significant distraction for the organisation and those who work for it, there is an increase in potential for negative health, safety and wellbeing outcomes.

Crisis Culture Framework

Given the fact that the crisis is creating a massive shift in culture and behaviour, one lens we can look at this through is using the Kubler Ross change curve and playing it out over the length of the crisis. We are doing this to help frame the shift in attitudes, values and beliefs across the length of the crisis and we're calling it the Crisis Culture Framework.



The change curve has been used in many ways over the years. For individuals unfamiliar with the curve it's a way of thinking about the shifts in attitudes, values and beliefs that people go through as things are changing and how that might affect their motivation and decision making. The length of the crisis is currently unknown but research gives early indications about the impact on the Western world based on what is being seen so far across the globe.

The curve has been used to suggest three different phases in very simplified terms to help organisations think about what the different challenges might be across the length of the crisis. The timing has been chosen on the basis of the research gathered so far, although it will be affected by how many international territories an organisation operates in.

Framework Phases

Phase 1: Crisis

From the early research a lot of organisations are in this Phase. It's about an immediate reaction to the risks individuals see around them and the resultant behaviours. These reactions range from denial through to fear, creating all sorts of different decisions at an individual and organisational level. At an individual level the research suggests a huge amount of motivation from people to do things to support organisations and each other through the crisis.

Phase 2: Acceptance:

The main challenge here is one of engagement as organisations progress into a sort of 'new normal'. How people feel and how motivated they are to make the right decisions will be significantly influenced by the way organisations have reacted to the crisis so far.

Phase 3: Opportunity:

This is where an organisation can refresh its strategy around health, safety and wellbeing to enable people to make the right decisions over the longer term.

Challenges and Good Practice

As outlined in the introduction to this document, interim research has been undertaken organisations of different sizes and across different industries about the challenges they are facing as part of the crisis, and how they're managing those.

At this time, early stage research is still being undertaken and this section will be updated as it develops. However, there are already four key themes emerging from the research and these are the following:



Trust

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Mindset

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Resilience

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Engagement

How effectively are we communicating with people?



Trust

Trust has been a critical feature of a lot of the early research. The degree of trust an employee has in an organisation often depends on the strength of the culture and, by implication, the strength of the leadership. A crisis often reinforces the existing culture and the challenge and opportunity around trust is really about how it's impacting individual behaviours, and how it can be developed to reinforce the right ones. Daily leadership behaviours and activities all have a significant impact on trust in an organisation. Daily communication, flexibility around work patterns and managers demonstrating trust in their own teams are critical to building overall organisational trust.

Challenges

Factors that we've seen negatively impacting trust so far include:

Challenge	Impact
Rapidly shifting requirements	Rapidly shifting requirements around the virus at national or international level is sometimes leading to a potential inconsistency with organisational guidance
Inconsistency in policy and approach with other organisations	Inconsistency in policy and approach with organisations in similar industries or geographic locations is leading to employees questioning the motivation behind decision making. Many are asking whether decisions being made to put profits before the health, safety and wellbeing of people
Social media undermining organisational communications	Rapid sharing of alternative 'facts' on social media can undermine official communications. Many employees are connected nationally and internationally to other organisations or trade associations
Inconsistency in leadership guidance	Where the virus means organisations are rapidly shifting, it's challenging to make sure leaders are delivering consistent messages. A perceived mismatch is leading to a workforce misunderstanding in some organisations about key priorities
A perceived priority on commercial gain over the health, safety and wellbeing of colleagues and customers	A high level of competing messages about the virus has led to individuals in some organisations being confused about how they should continue to behave. There is a challenge in understanding what the risks are and represent and what that means for their role and the decisions they should be making
Remote or absent leadership	Due to social distancing guidance, more senior leaders are home based and in some organisations perceived to be 'protecting themselves' whilst the workforce are operational and seen to be more exposed
Lack of face-to-face communication	Due to social distancing guidance workforce are isolated from each other at all levels. Research has shown that this distance will erode trust over time. Over a short period of time this impact will be minimal but over longer periods it will become more significant if not managed

As a result of some or all of the factors above, obvious challenges are resulting with regards to influencing the kinds of behaviours necessary to keep everyone health, safe and well, especially from an operational perspective. Over time, a key challenge many organisations see is a potential regression of cultural maturity if trust is eroded.



Trust

Good Practice

Organisations are trying to reinforce trust in a number of different ways

Good practice	Detail
Engaging with leaders	This engagement is about their influence over health, safety and wellbeing and how to balance those messages with the commercial needs of the organisation
Developing decision making frameworks	These are to help leaders manage the tough choices, and building those into a risk management framework at different levels
Emphasising pride in the company	Many organisations are emphasising pride in the company, what it does and the service it provides to build trust around the need to carry on
Driving consistency and continuous communication	Organisations are creating a consistent and continuous communications 'machine' with regards to health, safety and wellbeing that employees can reply upon
Creating a central source of authority around communications	In many cases, organisations are creating centralised sources of information authority, generally as part of an intranet site that contains key guidance about health, safety and wellbeing
Rapid responses to a change in guidance	Organisations are using the crisis teams to feed learning and information into changing health, safety and wellbeing guidance
Directly addressing perceptions	As individuals develop perceptions about how an organisation should be approaching the crisis, approaches are being developed to take a clear stance using risk management principles about key issues, e.g. use of face masks whilst working
Embrace social media	As individuals are using social media to spread information some organisations are embracing that to help directly address perceptions in the places their workforces are already talking
Adopt video communication platforms	Many organisations are adopting video communications platforms to try and overcome face-to-face communications challenges where they can. Adoption of protocol with use of these platforms is helping overcome some of the misunderstanding with remote communications



Risk Mindset

'Risk Mindset' has been a really interesting feature of a lot of the early research. The degree to which individual attitudes, values and beliefs have been affected by the crisis has varied considerably and is dependent on quite a number of personal and organisational factors. For some individuals, they aren't as concerned about the impact of the virus personally or professionally and are carrying on behaving 'as normal' despite the changes around them. For others, they are showing signs of a rapid increase in fear around the virus which is leading them to be very reticent to continue to work as normal, even if guidance suggests otherwise.

Challenges

Challenges which we've seen so far as a result of a shifting risk mindset include:

Challenge	Impact
Reduced reporting of accidents and near misses	For many organisations there has been a reduction in the reporting of accidents and incidents through the crisis so far. For some organisations they believe this is due to an enhanced attitude towards risk and therefore a genuine reduction in accidents. For other organisations this is because individuals are being distracted by other things and represents an increase in risk. A corresponding decrease in proactive reporting could point towards the latter reason in some cases
Fear to go to work	This fear is presenting itself in individuals who are worried for themselves or family members. The situation appears to be simpler for those in vulnerable categories but where someone believe they could affect others by getting ill the decisions people make are more complex, even if the guidance is clear
Business or asset start-up or shut down	For many organisations, shutting down activity carries some risk but from a people perspective is less complex than starting up operations again. Where organisations are executing or planning start-up operations individual risk mindset is playing a significant part, whether that is with colleagues or customers
Carrying on as 'normal'	Some people carry quite a high-risk appetite and as a result organisations are seeing that these individuals refuse to see the virus as a significant risk. For these individuals a balanced approach has been ignored in favour of almost trying to ignore the existence of the virus and making decisions that put themselves and others at risk
Confusion about how to behave	A high level of competing messages about the virus has led to individuals in some organisations being confused about how they should continue to behave. There is a challenge in understanding what the risks are and represent and what that means for their role and the decisions they should be making



Risk Mindset

Good Practice

Good practice	Detail
Clear guidance about what the risks are	Where organisations are actively tackling perceptions they're working hard to combat mixed messages with clear authority about what the risks are, and how the organisation is reacting to protect people
Use of behavioural frameworks	To help focus individuals on the key behaviours which will protect themselves and others, organisations are using behavioural frameworks linked to specific crisis-related decisions to create clarity
Strong pre-work and dynamic risk assessment processes	Where organisations have a global focus they are used to planning for work in areas where the threat of disease is ever-present (malaria, etc). They are applying strong pre-work and dynamic risk assessment processes and contingency planning across a wide span of operations
Reinforcing right to refuse	Where organisations recognise the extent of fear in certain populations they are reinforcing stop work / speak-up guidance and contingency planning as a result
Conversion to remote training	Where organisations recognise that the changes due to the crisis require a different mindset alongside communication and risk assessment skills they are converting to remote training to do this for key groups
Digitisation of toolbox talks and huddle card sessions	Recognising that it's difficult to get groups together organisations are converting critical information like toolbox talks to personal, digital versions that are video or animation led



Resilience and Mental health

Out of all the themes being discussed in relation to health, safety and wellbeing and the crisis, one of the most significant is mental health and resilience. In some respects, it's an obvious one to consider as the impact has been so immediate and personal for many of us. Extensive research has been undertaken around the negative impact on mental health in previous crises, so it makes sense to make this a focus.

With the continued focus on mental health and wellbeing in the press and society in general, some organisations are even concerned that other areas of risk are not being considered in the appropriate level of detail. One area that is high on the agenda of many organisations is what they can do to support the strengthening of resilience through the crisis in a structured and informed way.

Challenges

Factors that we've seen impacting mental health and resilience within organisations so far include:

Challenge	Impact
Rapidly changing circumstances	Rapidly changing organisational and / or personal circumstances can lead to or enhance anxiety in some individuals
Social distancing rules	Measures to limit travelling and encouraging (or mandating) people to work from home can lead to negative mental health outcomes for some individuals, including anxiety, anger and mistrust
Furloughs or temporary lay offs	Furloughs and temporary lay-offs can be characterised as an extreme form of social distancing where employees can feel even more disconnected. The risk is higher in terms of negative mental health outcomes for some individuals, including anxiety, anger and mistrust
Differing personal circumstances	Every individual has different circumstances and a personal reaction to challenges. These cannot be managed at an organisational level
Organisational approaches to wellbeing, mental health and resilience	These often appear to be less developed than those around health and safety, often focussed on reactive, problem solving approaches rather than coordinated proactive approaches
Leadership communication	An unwillingness from many leaders to proactively tackle or discuss mental health or wellbeing beyond superficial guidance as it's seen as too complicated to manage, especially during a crisis
Anxiety about Covid-19	Real fears about the virus and its impact on employees, their family and friends creating anxiety and a reduction in confidence and morale, and in some cases an unwillingness to work



Resilience and Mental health

Good practice

For many organisations the approach to mental health and wellbeing can be characterised as reactive, local and ad-hoc. Many organisations are empowering their local populations decide on the approaches that they see as working for them with some central organisation around general guidance via comms and support provision such as support lines

Reactive Good Practice	Detail
Use of mental health first aiders	Where organisations are using mental health first aiders, it is within the limits of their skill and for appropriate situations rather than as a 'catch-all' for everything
Use of video conferencing tools	Use of video conferencing tools for informal, social 'drop-in' sessions such as games, quizzes, 'virtual cuppas or virtual drinks'
Wellbeing and wellness services	Use of wellbeing and wellness services such as virtual yoga, mindfulness, martial arts classes, etc
Help (health) lines	Some organisations are implementing help (health) lines and similar support provision to provide 'last line of defence' type services
General guidance	Many organisations are providing general, non-specific guidance, tips and learning around mental health and resilience as part of an overall communications approach. A lot of this is being shared widely by other organisations through the crisis

Where organisations have been focussed on mental health/resilience as part of their pre-crisis approach, they've been using these platforms to support individuals through the crisis:

Proactive Good Practice	Detail
Organisational vision and values	Organisations are reinforcing the organisational vision and values with regards to mental health and wellbeing
Aligning communications	Some organisations are aligning communications to the organisational vision and values, relating this back to the crisis
Leadership training and communication	Some organisations are training leaders to be approachable, communicating effectively and often with their teams about the challenges they're facing. As part of this encouraging openness and honesty
Customised learning focused on the development of resilience	Where organisations have them, some are delivering customised e-learning linked to the values, helping people with the right mindset (e.g. explaining the change curve) or practical guidance (how to develop resilience in line with the organisational vision)



Engagement and communications

There have been a number of positive aspects that have come out of the crisis and one of the most significant has been the explosion in communications across organisations and between individuals. Specifically, this has been the use of digital communications to replace face-to-face communications where possible. There has been an increase in some communications challenges however, especially where employee populations have been divided or restricted due to social distancing regulations.

Challenges

Key communications challenges we've seen organisations face across the crisis so far:

Challenge	Impact
Social distancing restrictions	<p>Managers working from home and separated from their teams also working from home or working normally out and about, in factories or other facilities</p> <p>Restrictions for those working in factories or other facilities where they're not able to gather for training, toolbox talks or other communication opportunities</p> <p>General isolation for those individuals in lockdown and working from home</p> <p>Furloughed individuals who face a different set of rules around communications</p>
Shifting regulation, guidance and perceptions	<p>Many organisations are having to rapidly react to a shifting landscape with updated communications. With individuals having access to multiple channels including their own social media specifically about the virus the challenge for organisations has been to deliver effective, continuous, consistent communications</p>
Broadcast communications overload and mixed messaging	<p>Due to the speed in which things are changing all organisations are having to drive a significant amount of 'broadcast' communications. For many, it's challenging to do this effectively, avoiding mixed messages and making sure critical messages aren't lost as employees switch off</p>
Rapid shift to digital	<p>Many organisations have had to shift their communications focus to digital overnight. With many tools to do so organisations have, in most cases been able to shift rapidly, especially for those workers at home. However, the introduction of security risks with the use of certain tools has left this digitisation uneven. The often-limited provision for those workers still out and about, in workplaces, factories and facilities has also left this digitisation uneven, creating in some cases more of a divide</p>
Reduced ability to train	<p>Many organisations have shifted part of their training to e-learning or virtual learning over the last few years but a significant bulk of training is still face-to-face. Social distancing regulations have left organisations with a significant challenge to continue to undertake training with a scramble for many to convert to remote or virtual as the crisis continues</p>



Engagement and communications

Good practice

Many organisations have shifted the use of their communications channels rapidly as the situation has shifted. Where organisations believe they have been effective with their approach, specifically with regards to health, safety and wellbeing they have been undertaking some of the following elements. Organisations that already have strong health, safety and wellbeing communications platforms have been building on them extensively.

Good Practice	Detail
Rebuild communications strategy	Some organisations are rebuilding their communications strategy around health, safety and wellbeing to take account of different audiences and different channels
Senior leadership messages about health, safety and wellbeing	Many organisations are driving regular broadcast communications from senior leadership about the importance of staying healthy, safe and well, despite the commercial pressures
Link to existing themes	Organisations are linking the communications to existing themes such as behavioural frameworks, 'Golden or Life Saving' rules or similar
Use the vision	Some organisations are using the safety, health and wellbeing vision or organisational values to reinforce critical behaviours during the crisis
Build on social media	Organisations are utilising internal social media channels to share individual stories about how individuals are managing to do the job and keep themselves safe and well
Emphasis 'Right to refuse'	Organisations are emphasising simple or critical messages such as 'refusal to work' rights where individuals feel unsafe
Create authority	Organisations are creating 'authority' around communications such as specific sections on company Covid-19 intranet pages on health, safety and wellbeing. Utilising external experts to keep these pages up-to-date
Convert toolbox talks	Some organisations are converting toolbox talk / huddle card sessions into digital versions for personal access on smartphones or other devices
Convert face-to-face training to remote	Some organisations are converting face-to-face training into remote sessions to enable it to continue through the crisis
Use of video conferencing	Organisations are extensively using video conferencing tools to deliver a variety of comms from official broadcast to 'drop-in' sessions, regular meetings, 1:1 sessions and other 'huddle' opportunities ('vuddles')
Regular phone call updates	Many organisations are using regular phone calls from managers to their teams out in the field for 'check-ins'
Replacing film with animation	Using animation rather than video to convey key messages where it isn't possible to undertake filming

Summary

From the research undertaken in organisations, it's clear at this stage that many of them are still in the Phase 1 Crisis mode, trying to deal with the immediate health, safety and wellbeing challenges as they present themselves.

Organisations who have spent time and investment in building the culture of health, safety and wellbeing appear to be in a slightly stronger place to deal with some of the immediate effects of the crisis (although clearly the varying commercial challenges are having an impact on this). Where there is an existing culture programme in place, these organisations are starting to link some of the key challenges and opportunities around the crisis explicitly to those building blocks. Some examples could be using the vision, values and behaviours as a supporting platform for communications, engaging senior leadership early to help drive trust, and shifting the focus on training and comms to re-engage individual mindset. A key question for these organisations is how do they maintain momentum with the culture programme and stop cultural maturity moving backwards?

It is still early in terms of the crisis and although many organisations (60% of respondents) believe they have a good understanding of the challenges, while the crisis is still shifting, there is no real focus on longer-term solutions. There is a concern from many that risk is increasing, but that the risk is currently being offset by less commercial activity and a higher focus on risk due to the virus. Some organisations have seen a corresponding reduction in their accident rates.

However, many organisations have a related concern that when activity does start to return to previous pre-crisis levels, the risk is going to be very significant. For some, the concern is that individuals will have 'switched off' from health and safety in the interim and the working environment is likely to be very different for many. For other organisations, there is a concern that people won't want to return at all due to fears around the virus and a lack of trust in the organisational approach.

All of the four themes we've outlined are important to varying degrees but beyond the focus on momentum around culture programmes (60% of respondents), the two most important aspects to organisations at the moment are:

- Mental health / wellbeing (66% of respondents)
- The impact of remote leadership on trust, mindset and communications (53% of respondents).

These will develop as time progresses but both of the above are particularly complex as they were significant challenges pre-crisis as well, with many organisations already grappling with how to engage leaders in health, safety and wellbeing and develop a balanced approach towards the development of individual resilience.

Finally, thanks to all of those who have contributed so far.
The report will be updated as the research develops.

We know that every organisation is unique, and the attitudes, values and beliefs of your people will shape how they respond during the crisis.

To help you, we have developed a crisis culture toolkit to support your culture through the different phases of the crisis.

To find out more about our Crisis Culture Pulse Survey & Programme Development tools, contact: briony.ormond@tribecc.com or call her on 07866 586710.