

#LeadershipForABetterWorld

Corporate Ingenuity in Trying Times: How Top Leaders Are Making a Difference During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Whether creatively redeploying production to manufacture critical necessities, working with customers to understand urgent needs, offering charity or using technology for good in these trying times, companies are making a difference through ingenuity.

The COVID-19 global pandemic is also creating seminal moments for leaders who are guiding their businesses through uncharted territory and managing unorthodox ways of operating. At Egon Zehnder, we call this [leadership for a better world](#); that is, when leaders quickly innovate for the broader benefit of society and help us find a sense of calm amid chaos.

Who's Leading for a Better World

As the world grapples with new realities, the ways in which business leaders are stepping up to take action suggests we're seeing a promising new paradigm. How they adapted their business missions in the context of greater global needs will be an important takeaway from current events and perhaps an influencer on where they stand once we come through this crisis.

Now, many companies in a range of industries are rising to help increase the supply of in-demand items like sanitizer, masks, disinfectants and ventilators. Examples of those shifting their operations to produce life-saving materials include:

- Large corporations in China, including **Alibaba**, **Baidu**, **Bank of China**, **JD.com**, **Tencent** and **Xiaomi**, set up makeshift assembly lines to produce additional masks and disinfectants. **LVMH** shifted production in its perfume factories to produce hand sanitizer, which it then delivered to French health authorities and hospitals free of charge. Independent brewer **BrewDog** is using its distillery to produce sanitizer for those in need, as are French beauty companies **L'Oréal** and **Coty**.

- **Inditex**, owner of **Zara**, will manufacture hospital gowns in its clothing factories, and also pledges to donate masks to patients and health officials in Spain. **Miroglio Group**, an Italian textiles firm, is making face masks that meet medical requirements, producing up to 75,000 a day if needed. Chinese apparel manufacturers **Erdos** and **Cabbeen** are volunteering to convert clothing production for masks and protective suits.
- **Meggitt** is leading a consortium of organizations (including **GKN**, **Thales** and **Renishaw**) to adapt aerospace oxygen converter factories for ventilator production, while Italian car makers, **Ferrari** and **Fiat Chrysler** are supporting the nation's biggest ventilator manufacturer to boost production.

In addition to contributing supplies, organizations from banks to grocery store chains are shifting business practices to meet the needs of customers and consumers during this time:

- U.S. banks (**Ally Bank**, **Citi**, **Goldman Sachs**) are waiving fees and interest on loans and overdrafts. **Barclaycard** is stopping late payment and cash advance fees for the next 90 days. UK banks (**Nationwide** and **Barclays**) offer early opening hours for people aged 70 and over and those with underlying health conditions.
- Supermarkets (**Waitrose**, **Sainsbury's**, **Tesco**, **Iceland**, **Lidl**) are opening early, allocating the first two hours of business – post deep-clean and with fully stocked supplies – to priority shopping for elderly, vulnerable individuals and their caregivers.

Charitable efforts from companies like **Chase**, which donated \$50 million to non-profits to address immediate public health needs, **Pret-a-Manger**, which is offering free coffees and 50 percent off food for National Health Service (NHS) workers, showcase how the private sector is driving leadership for a better world.

Tech companies have also committed to global causes in creative and interesting ways:

- **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **YouTube** and **TikTok** have pledged to remove coronavirus conspiracy theories.
- Pharmaceutical companies (including **Novartis**, **Bayer**, **Teva** and **Mylan**) have pledged nearly 220 million chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine tablets for the global COVID-19 response.
- **ByteDance** is offering free use of its online workspace app for three years for NGOs, hospitals and medical institutions in China.
- **Baidu** created a map layer showing real-time locations of confirmed cases of the virus to better inform travellers in China.

- **LinkedIn** is offering 16 of its online learning courses for free, including sessions on staying productive, building relationships when you're not face to face, using virtual meeting tools and balancing family and work dynamics.
- **Pfizer's** Chief Medical Officer is sharing facts and personal tips on short social media videos to deal with COVID-19 (#KnowtheFacts) on twitter.
- **Amazon** announced unlimited paid sick leave over the next month for those who test positive for COVID-19.
- **JD.com** and **Alibaba** launched a talent-sharing platform for those in affected sectors to find work in flexible job openings in e-commerce and supermarkets.

Share your Examples

Certainly, this is not an exhaustive list, and, as the situation unfolds across the world, we'll see more examples of ingenuity and leadership. We want to continue to shine a light on leadership for a better world and invite you to join us. Please comment or reach out to us with the stories you've seen. Let's keep the positive conversation going.

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About Egon Zehnder

Egon Zehnder is the world's preeminent leadership consulting firm, sharing one goal: to help people and organizations transform. Our services include: Leadership development, individual, team and organizational effectiveness, CEO search and succession, executive search and assessment, Board advisory, and cultural transformation.

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