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The normal business world is in disarray and we all are adapting to changes in our business and our lives - by David O'Sullivan

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David O'Sullivan

The air is getting warmer and the signs of spring are around us. We have sprung ahead with the clocks and we were all looking forward to a new season. Unfortunately things in the world don't seem so upbeat.

The normal business world is in disarray and we all are adapting to changes in our business and our lives. We all are aware of the technology to work remotely, have meetings online etc but ours is a visual and physical industry in many aspects so the change to remote work is a big switch. Our lives are disrupted at present but that does not mean all is doom and gloom. Some recent events such as closing of stores, schools, intuitions and many offices are unprecedented but seem necessary to get the virus under control. Some are even shocking such as shutting down construction sites. At least 21.4 million s/f of new or renovated development was underway in the city of Boston prior to the construction shutdown. "We're in uncharted waters right now," said John Fish, CEO of the largest general contractor in Massachusetts. No one knows how this affects us long term but we are all suffering short term. And now Cambridge has followed suit with halting construction. The chief executive officer of the Associated General Contractors of America, Stephen Sandherr, issued the following statement in reaction to steps being taken to put in place arbitrary halts to construction activity in certain parts of the country: "Halting construction activity will do more harm than good for construction workers, community residents and the economy. Construction firms are already acting to ensure the safety and health of their employees in the face of the coronavirus outbreak. These new measures, which include increased hygiene and halting group gatherings of staff, are in addition to the fact construction workers already wear protective equipment, including gloves that will help protect them and their co-workers. "We understand the need for social distancing to help slow the spread of coronavirus. But needlessly shutting down projects where workers are already protected will not help. Instead it will threaten the livelihood of millions of craft professionals, force many small and family-owned businesses to shut down, and undermine the nation's ability to respond to natural disasters, including the coronavirus". These things are actions we have never seen happen in our society and no one knows how long things will need to continue to be closed.

So how do we know what will become of the spring market? It is impossible to predict at this time. We can take this opportunity to pause and look at our business and see what are the weaknesses and strengths. Update your business plans and review your marketing materials.

Discuss with your employees the goals or areas of improvement. This process cannot only help you weather the present crisis but institute better systems and practices which benefit your company.

If we can get through this crisis the potential for a rebound will be good, people still need housing, offices and improvements to their homes. Many people may realize they don't like where they live now that they spent so much time at home. Also office space and retail operations may see longer term affects from this crisis and companies may need to make changes providing additional work for construction companies and real estate professionals. So everyone has to look beyond the present and prepare for a future when new opportunities present themselves. Stay safe and enjoy time with your family while you have it.

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