



A New Blueprint for an Uncertain World

Most well-run companies—yours probably among them—spend considerable time and effort building and updating five-year plans. You know the exercise: deciding what your business will look like five years out, and drawing a blueprint for how to get there.

How is that five-year playbook you drew up in 2019 looking today? Chances are that your projections for facilities, IT, staffing, and the supply chain all turned to mincemeat. In fact, it's hard to think of any part of business that's running the way it was back then.

But now that you've taken and survived the initial shocks of the last two years, wallowing in busted plans doesn't help you move forward. The question is no longer, "How can we adapt quickly until things get back to normal?" The better questions are "How can we move forward into a future where no one even knows what 'work' will look like?" and "How is it possible to plan for a future that's so uncertain?"

The reality is that you need a whole new blueprint—not one that attempts to dictate a fixed future but one that prepares your business to thrive in this era of uncertainty.



The Four Pillars of a Successful Blueprint

Even in a business environment where the right strategy can seem to change depending on that day's headlines, it's possible to create an effective blueprint. Five-year planning may be obsolete—even a two-year horizon seems ambitious—but sticking to core principles will never fail you.

"I never believed in five years," says Ken Lamar, who ran the data and statistics function of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and now is the principal partner for Lamar Associates LLC. "I thought you could plan 24 months out and then have aspirational goals after that. What you planned this year, it's going to change by next year anyway. I think you have to show a lot of flexibility."¹

We see four pillars that will help you prepare a blueprint for whatever the world throws your way:

Stay connected

Take location out of the equation

Stay productive

Give the right gear to the right people

Stay secure

Maintain peace of mind

Stay flexible

Avoid business interruption



Stay Connected

The whole purpose of gathering people in offices is so they can connect and interact; replicating that became Job One for many companies in early 2020. The funny thing is, the business world realized that an awful lot of people had already been working remotely in one form or another. The hard part is making sure that everyone feels heard and emotionally connected to their teams.

Lynne Labrador has spent much of her 40-year career in financial services managing remote teams around the world. “To me,” says Labrador, now a global product head at Equifax, “the pandemic was sort of a ‘gotcha’ moment.” Many companies were cautious about people having to be on-site to do their jobs, but “I believe if you want people to act like grownups, treat them like grownups. If people have kids or a long commute, and they would rather work from home a couple days, let them do that.”²

“The jury is out on which leaders in which companies are going to take the silver lining out of the pandemic. Once and for all, recognize the fact that people don’t have to be in a specific ZIP code to get their job done.”

Lynne Labrador

“Some employees want to go in the office,” says Labrador. “They like that. Some employees want some hybrid [work]. Some of them just want to work from home.”

“My son just changed jobs, and he had started going back in the office,” Lamar says. “He said, ‘I do want to go back a couple of days a week. I want to have some personal interaction with my colleagues. However, I don’t want to work five days a week.’ So I think there is some desire for the social kind of time together, but it’s about flexibility.”

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Stay Productive

Just as it always was in the office, having the right gear and systems in place is vital for a placeless workforce. Legacy systems often don't lend themselves to cloud adaptation. What often holds up dispersed work isn't so much the available technology as it is the will or necessity to deploy it.

"It was funny how for decades, if you're a call center employee, you had to be at the call center," Labrador says. "When the pandemic [hit], all of a sudden that didn't happen to be the case." Software allowed call center workers to work from home while keeping customers' personal information confidential and secure. It was companies' reluctance to deploy it that blocked change.

If the old style of blueprint embodied a top-down structure offering little room to maneuver, the new blueprint must embrace change and put people at the center. Give your staff the tools they need or let them use the tools they already like, whether that's a laptop, a tablet, or a workstation.

Lamar notes that the business world is fortunate that the pandemic didn't come a decade ago, when online services weren't as sophisticated, high-speed bandwidth wasn't as common, and desktop systems weren't so powerful. Remote work was possible then; it was just much harder to pull off on a mass scale.

"It's a complicated world. Integration is tough, and I'm not sure people know exactly what they're buying all the time."

Ken Lamar

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keep teams productive.



Stay Secure

“People are more worried about what someone will do once they get [into a network]. Stop worrying so much about what’s going to happen once they get in: Do everything you can to prevent them from getting in. This is the starting point.”

Dr. Rois Ni Thuama

Wherever and however people work, they have to stay secure. That means giving people the tools to protect themselves and to detect and recover from attacks.

“Look to see what the intelligence communities...are saying are the biggest problems,” advises Dr. Rois Ni Thuama, head of cyber governance with the security firm Red Sift. “They’re the only problems that you need to worry about. Do not get distracted.... Then you look to the solutions that are recommended, including but not limited to multifactor authentication and endpoint detection. You need encryption, you need DMARC [email authentication], you need good, strong passwords. Find the biggest problems, [and] address only those....”³

That means having endpoints with built-in protection against the biggest threats and ensuring you have a mechanism to keep the endpoints up to date wherever they may be.

It means anticipating threats. One recent IDC white paper stated, “The threat environment just keeps scaling.”⁴ By 2023, that same report predicts, “most C-suite leaders will implement business-critical KPIs tied to data availability, recovery, and stewardship as rising levels of cyberattacks expose the scale of data at risk.”

Whatever your security blueprint is, ensure it acknowledges the very real threats that are already occurring and are likely to become more intense.

HP Wolf Security helps keep endpoints safe, —————→
wherever they are.



HP WOLF SECURITY



Stay Flexible

Nothing is more important than making sure that business can keep going whatever challenges arise. Over the past two years, enterprise IT's mission has emerged not just as a vendor to internal clients but as a full strategic partner in keeping the business running.

And it is possible to plan for—or at least contemplate—the worst. “I did a lot of business continuity planning when I was at the Fed,” says Lamar. “We planned out all these things. I remember [drawing up plans for] the ‘bird flu’ [pandemic of 2006]. If you didn’t have the infrastructure we have, you wouldn’t be able to do this. It would’ve been a much different story, I believe.”

“I think a five-year plan is dangerous. What’s missing in those plans is the feedback loop and the agility to pivot as new things are learned. What’s key is, how quick are you to fail fast and pivot based on new information?”

Lynne Labrador

Lamar says the pandemic and the urgency it introduced to IT departments are helping shift in favor of outside services where possible. “I think the rate of change and the expectations about your ability to adapt...are going to require [IT] people to find innovative ways” [to work], he said. “I either purchase [software], because I can get delivery quicker, or I have my internal developers [do it]. And I think that the internal development cycle is just too long and too tedious and too expensive.”

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






The New Blueprint


No rational business plan was ever static, but the challenges that businesses face in these immensely uncertain times are particularly daunting. Businesses need to find a new type of path forward—one that emphasizes flexibility and empowerment rather than top-down diktats.

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Equip workers to thrive with HP Elite PCs and Ecosystems 

Help ensure endpoints and data stay secure with
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Ask how HP can help.

Sources

¹ Ken Lamar, in discussion with the authors, 2021.

² Lynne Labrador, in discussion with the authors, 2021.

³ Dr. Rois Ni Thuama, in discussion with the authors, 2021.

⁴ IDC FutureScape: Worldwide IT Industry 2022 Predictions, October 2021,
<https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=US48312921>



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