

# Case study: ready or not



The Case Application, “ Ready or Not...” looks at the level of preparedness displayed by businesses in planning for the possibility of an influenza pandemic. It appears that the governments and public health officials were more adequately prepared for the possibility of an influenza pandemic than businesses were. In fact, most of them lacked the necessary preparation and had no committees in place to implement strategies for the possible outbreak. In essence it seems as though these businesses failed to consider the implications such a pandemic could have on them. With the exception of the Deutsche Bank which had measures in place for a possible outbreak, businesses in the United States seemed to lack preparation. Businesses in Southeast Asia were prepared for the avian flu and this could be attributed to the experience they had during the SARS (sudden acute respiratory syndrome). A survey conducted in Hong Kong by the American Chamber of Commerce revealed that almost every company had someone responsible for implementing avian flu policies. The global bank HSBC was one of the most prepared and it had measures in place for employees to work from home and the division of work. The reader is left to consider what will happen to those companies that have made no preparation for the possible outbreak.

1. What role do you think goals might play in a company’s planning for any potential bird flu? List some goals that you think might be important. Goals have an important role to play in a company’s planning for potential bird flu because despite the outbreak, the company must achieve its objectives in order to satisfy the needs of its clients as well as maximize profits. Goals will influence the strategies the company puts in place so that everything can be done in an orderly manner and serve as a guide to ensure that all that needs to be achieved is achieved. Some goals that would be

important include: putting measures in place that employees can keep constant contact with the company if they cannot go to work (e. g. video conferencing), ensuring that employees receive vaccines (if employees are ill that affects business), trying to ensure that all employees remain healthy, companies may also need to extend working hours following the outbreak as businesses would have been affected by the flu. 2. What types of plans might companies need for this situation? (For instance, short term, long term or both?) Explain why you think these plans would be important. Companies will need to put in place short term as well as long term plans because such a pandemic has serious implications for businesses. Therefore, plans must be implemented to ensure that all the goals are met. Some short term plans include encouraging employees to use hand sanitizers and antibacterial soaps and ensuring that these are present within the work place and limiting the amount of persons in the work place if possible; measures such as the use of teleconferencing and videoconferencing could be used to maintain contact between employers, employees and clients. A long term goal would be extending work hours and requesting that persons work on their day offs for instance. These plans would be of importance as they are required to ensure that the business does not suffer more losses than it has to. In addition, if employees are sick then that affects business so, putting measures in place to promote the health of workers will also be beneficial to business. 3. How does this scenario reflect planning in a dynamic environment? What would managers need to do to make their planning effective in such an environment? This scenario reflects planning in a dynamic environment in that plans must be implemented urgently which can affect the company even in the long term. To make their planning effective

in this instance, managers would need to be constantly up to date with current happenings so they can know what decisions are best to make. Also, they should be responsive to the needs of employees and listen to the issues affecting them in this instance so they can know the best measures to take. Plans may need to be changed from time to time to facilitate the needs of individuals as well as to prevent the further spread of the disease or the loss of profits.

4. What could other businesses learn from Deutsche Bank's and HSBC's experiences? Other business can learn the benefits of being prepared from Deutsche Bank's and HSBC's experience. The strategies implemented by both companies could serve as a guide for other company's making plans for the avian flu as well as other pandemics. The fact that Deutsche Bank's and HSBC have made the necessary preparations means that if there is a possible outbreak they will have measures in place to handle the consequences of it. This is a good example for other businesses as it will allow businesses to run smoothly and prevent incidences of panic when it matters most.

5. Pick a company (any size, any kind, or any location) and describe how an influenza pandemic might affect it. Now, develop plans for this company to deal with such an outbreak. Wal-Mart is a large company with branches worldwide and although an influenza pandemic could pose a threat to business, the effect would not be as great as if it were a small business. An influenza pandemic could result in a loss of sales and a shortage of staff. This could result in some stores being closed or some persons would have to work longer hours and even take on duties that were not originally assigned to them. As such, in order to minimize the effects of the pandemic, Wal-Mart would have to implement short term and long term plans. Short term plans could include:

1. Ensuring that all staff members are

aware of the pandemic and supplying them with the necessary information regarding symptoms and so on. 2. The company should see to it that all members of staff receive medical checks and those persons having flu like symptoms remain at home. 3. Staff members living in areas not affected by the pandemic, could be relocated to reduce a possible shortage of staff. Travel to areas affected by the pandemic should be avoided as this could pose a threat to the health of individuals and affect the company as a whole. 4. Those individuals who are not necessarily needed in the stores on a daily basis should be advised to remain at home and measures should be put in place so employees and employers can remain in contact. Long term plans could include: 1. Business plans should be revised and new ones constructed as the company is unaware of how long the pandemic will last and who will be affected by it. Factors such as the possibility of the company having minimal access to suppliers following the pandemic, must be taken into account. 2. The company should have measures put in place to limit the loss of profits in the event that the pandemic lasts for an extended period of time. 3. Working overtime hours after the pandemic could be encouraged as business may have suffered badly as a result of it. Although Wal-Mart is a large company, losing large profits within one area, will affect the company as a whole. 4. In the event that the supply chain is affected, Wal-Mart will need to think of possible substitute suppliers until normal operations resume. The importance of planning for a pandemic should not be disregarded. Failure to plan, poses serious implications for the success of businesses, and affects staff members and customers. Even if the pandemic does not occur, these plans will be good for business as companies would have had strategies in place to deal with similar situations that may arise. Businesses

such as Deutsche Bank and HSBC have provided a good example for other businesses to follow. It is better for a business to plan ahead of time than to be faced with a pandemic and have no plans in place.