

Editorial: *Priorities, Resources, and Working under the Current Heavy Pressures Following the Right Protocols. Solidarity and Empathy*

In front of the new challenges at the global level because of the sudden occurrence of the COVID-19 outbreak (caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2) – which is profoundly influencing everyday life, socialization (adapting behavior to the new norms like social interaction with physical isolation, doing much more remotely), business, and communities in a new collaborative sense – we are witnessing the reshaping of the practice of management starting from the way of thinking in considering specific strategic choices founded on particular urgent situations, implied capacities, lessons learned, and the imperative diffusion and creation of knowledge, know-how and know-who. And these first expressed thoughts were just to start from actualizing what we underlined in December 2019.

The coronavirus outbreak appeared as the more prominent threat to the global economy (compared to all other threats to the global economy), being a top risk to growth in the next year, according to the McKinsey's newest survey on economic conditions which was conducted during the first week of March this year. With regard to the changes to globalization strategies it is more likely (compared to December last year) that companies will include both diversifying supply chains across countries and sourcing more from regional supply chains, respondents also remaining more likely to expect customer demand to increase. (FitzGerald, Singer and Smit, 2020) In Romania, the Competition Authority informed very recently (within the framework of the joint statement of the competition authorities from the European Union), the closely monitoring of the companies' behavior, pointing out that it will not hesitate to take action against abusive practices (such as excessive pricing) or cartel. The Romanian Competition Council underlined, for example, that retailers can coordinate both freight to ensure the supply of commodities in all areas and home deliveries for people who cannot leave their homes within the context of the current crisis situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic. On March 26, 2020 participating at the Romanian Government Cabinet Meeting, President of the Romanian Competition Council made reference, among other aspects, to the collaboration with the National Authority for Consumer Protection (ANPC), as Institutional Partner, with regard to the platform "Food Price Monitor" (A. Launched on October 14, 2019, and allowing the comparison of more than 30,000 products from over 1,700 stores; B. On July 1, 2019 it was launched the platform "Price Monitor for Fuels" - information about the tariffs practiced by the large gas station chains; Business Partners: (A) Carrefour, Cora – Romania Hypermarket, Kaufland, Lidl Discount, Mega Image, PENNY Market – REWE, Profi Rom Food, Selgros Cash&Carry; (B) KMG International, Lukoil România, MOL România Petroleum Products, NIS Petrol România, OMV Petrom, Socar Petroleum).

We are now seeing wonderful people on a daily basis: demonstrating professionalism and devotion, sharing a forthright sense; showing kindness, delivering grace and building mutual trust and respect, becoming this way unforgettable; (Bliss, 2020) recommending to be safe and

smart, listen to the experts, and improve cautiously and intelligently the necessary preparedness. (Bradford, 2020) Insights collected on March 19, 2020, for instance, by Luth Research (on the basis of a sample of N300 to N500 balanced to mirror the demographics of the U.S. online population) revealed significant aspects, for example, with regard to the question of what's the single most significant change made in the life of an individual after the current coronavirus crisis there were answers such as follows: "Will keep things cleaner"; "Take nothing for granted, there will always be change"; "Be more social and go out on dates"; "Continue to show concern and care for other people's needs"; "Be kinder to people. Try to have more in savings in case something happens again"; "Prepare for the unexpected"; "Put more money in my emergency fund"; "Being more grateful for what I have". And this within the context in which the leading categories where is seen heavier consumer spending are grocery, health & personal care, and pet supplies.

Addressing recently to Marketing Community, Russ Klein, CEO of American Marketing Association (AMA) underlined among other aspects that: "... The fears and worries over both health and economic well-being are heavy... Demand will come back... But like all climates, the weather will change... Cool heads prevail and it will be our collective leadership that walks the world into its newly created future..." And as shown also recently by Kellogg Insight (the research & ideas magazine of Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University), Harry M. Kraemer, a former Chairman and CEO of the \$12 billion global healthcare company Baxter International – currently being both a clinical Professor of Leadership at Kellogg, and an executive partner with the private equity firm Madison Dearborn – argued that in a crisis, like the current one, leaders need to act with calm, doing both the right thing, and the best they can do, one hand, and telling people what they know, what they don't know, and when they'll get back to them to discuss what they didn't know before, on the other hand. (Kraemer, 2020)

There is no doubt that we are living a cultural challenge, as recently highlighted by McKinsey's experts, who pledge for creative pragmatic solutions implemented by companies as a COVID-19 crisis response with the help of an integrated nerve center (this approach of having a flexible structure for guiding the work being developed by McKinsey together with many leading companies) which concentrates both crucial leadership skills and organizational capabilities. (Mysore and Usher, 2020) Working under the current heavy pressures (such as: travel restrictions, border closings, supply-chain disruptions, and work stoppages across the globe) this integrated nerve center is designed to resolve four challenges (inadequate discovery, poor decision making, constrained solution design, delivery failure), being based on five cross-functional teams (*Nerve-center integration team*: Senior C-suite leader, Epidemiological expert, Project coordinator, and Scenario-planning analyst; *Workforce protection*: Head of HR as team leader, HR full-time leader, Security, Legal, Employee communications, and Ombudsperson; *Supply-chain stabilization*: Head of procurement as team leader, Procurement manager, Supply-chain analyst, Regional supply-chain managers, and Logistics manager; *Customer engagement*: Head of sales and marketing as team leader, Financial analyst, Customer communications

managers, Incentives managers, and SKUs managers; *Financials stress testing*: CFO as team leader, Leader of strategy or business development, Leader of treasury, Legal representative, and one or more Financial analysts), an example of such a COVID-19-response agile structure (of a minimal viable nerve center necessary to get start quickly) being shown in the figure below:

The integrated COVID-19 nerve center is based on five cross-functional teams.



Figure no. 1: A minimal viable nerve center agile structure necessary to get start quickly

Source: Mysore, M. and Usher, O. (2020). *Responding to coronavirus: The minimum viable nerve center*, McKinsey & Company, Risk Practice, March

As we can see, in order to avoid the needless complexity (considered a common pitfall in a nerve-center design), McKinsey's experts suggested a minimal viable nerve center. And with regard to that they highlighted the need of putting in place right away four essential elements: nerve-center organization; operating cadence; issue identification; response plan; additional elements (such as: common operating pictures, KPI dashboards, and listening posts).

In a world fighting with this unwelcomed COVID-19 outbreak, and where the frontal approach to uncertainty is only “prospective”, (Purcarea, 2020) we need the right data putted into the current context so as to derive the necessary information... And while navigating this context and knowing, of course, that there is a way where there is a will, our attention was attracted by some words expressed by the President and Chief consultant at Willow Data Strategy: “*No one gets to command unlimited resources, and every department has its own priorities. What analytics professionals must do is to figure out all kinds of limitations beyond the little world of analytics, and prioritize the work in terms of actionability*”. (Yu, 2020) And yes, we really need actionability!

That is why we totally agree with the opinion expressed recently by McKinsey representatives that the current lockdown constraints (within anxiety and uncertainty about the health and safety, about the ability to live as usual, fear about the severe economic downturn) can be gradually released sooner rather than later, if we have both the right protocols in place, and people following these protocols, within the context in which *the imperative of our time* is to be able to control the virus, soften the inevitable economic crisis to sustainable levels, and safeguard our lives and livelihoods. (Smit et al., 2020)

Let us finally go back in time, in 2015, and to remind ourselves of the wise words of the venerable Professor Vasile Stănescu, Honorary Member of the Romanian Academy: “*Life is... a continuous oscillation between arrival and departure, between light and shadow... Years go by, memories stay in the dusty album we browse in the moments of escape from an unfriendly present... I want to hear the silence of things (Emil Cioran) and the music of spheres (Pitagora), because when you stop believing, in fact, you stop existing, you stop living history... Our world has entered a new temporality ... we are projected by events... waking up captives, in a continuous tension... Today's world does not yet exercise common destiny of human beings wherever they are, of solidarity and empathy ... there are major imbalances ... The competition took a dramatic end, the fight being carried out between values and interests... We live in an ambivalence incapable of solving the idea of continuity... Endangered is the factor of cohesion and mobilization of society... the fragility and vulnerability of our planet's projection are in an ambivalence that give us cold chills...*”¹

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