

Creating the Next Normal

Edition 02 – May 6–12, 2020
Spirit of Reopening

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At Faculty of Change, we are striving just like you to respond to our new climate of rapid change.

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This week, a spirit of reopening grips society—but so does the spectre of a second wave. Excitement at returning to normal oscillates with an uneasy dread about the road ahead.

It's a new kind of critical period, and your ability to maintain awareness, make strategic decisions and act adaptively is more vital than ever.

Initiatives that used to take years now get done in days.

Those who rapidly sense, decide and act on change will seize the advantage.

Maintaining this stance without overwhelming your daily business requires a lightweight approach.

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What has changed?

02

What is changing?

03

What will change next?

This publication will help you quickly understand possible futures and work with the uncertainty of the Next Normal.

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Each edition highlights a few themes of change important to the moment. It's a work in progress, just like today's world.

Take 10 minutes a day. Think about what has changed, is changing and will change next. Pick examples in each category.

Use them as principles to test the viability of your tactics and strategies. Or as thought starters to imagine how to transform.

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Our foresight strategists and anthropologists constantly scan the globe for weak signals of change: **the first hints of new realities and behaviours**. With time and momentum these become trends, movements, or, sometimes, the next normal.

Since initial reports on Chinese social media in early January, we've collected thousands of signals related to COVID-19, and spoken to dozens of experts and leaders to put its impact in context.

This primary research is distilled into themes: **key new uncertainties and certainties** selected for their high strategic relevance.

We highlight the most critical themes of change in each edition. If you need access to more comprehensive or sector-specific themes, please be in touch.

01

What has changed?

There's No Place but Home

PROTECTING A PRIVATE REFUGE—AND A PLACE FOR PUBLIC LIFE

FROM: Home is my special place

TO: Home is the *only* place

Home's importance has never been greater. As we isolate from the dangers of the public, it's boundaries mark the limits of our control over our environment and safety. At the same time, the division of space within the home has dissolved. Now daycares, boardrooms, concert halls and isolation spaces, our homes have become multiple places, and often public ones. In response, some design new spaces, with firmer boundaries, to accommodate both work and pleasure. Others work to display a place they can be proud of: a universal public backdrop. When social circles slowly expand, yet public space remains constrained, needs to protect, enhance and remake home will intensify, along with the traffic of new kinds of visitors.

Expect demand for home improvement and home products and services to increase as people look to improve these new aspects. New beauty, entertainment and social activities will join more traditional in-home offerings, if those entering the home can prove they'll preserve the safety of the space. Those still sheltering in place due to vulnerability or location, while others enjoy more diverse surroundings, will experience strong desires to enhance and escape.

▶ Celebrities and entrepreneurs share their strategies for appearing live from home. [\[link\]](#)

▶ From converting your closet to voice tech at work, this is the end of the office as we know it. [\[link\]](#)

▶ What it's like to move during the coronavirus pandemic according to someone who did. [\[link\]](#)

What new home protection or home improvement products and services might this new relationship with the home lead to?

How might delivering a home product or service need to change to maintain the health of clients and staff?

What new solutions could you offer to help people manage small or crowded home spaces for multiple functions?

Car Culture Rebooted

DRIVING TAKES A U-TURN ON THE ROAD TO OBSOLESCENCE

FROM: Point A to Point B

TO: #vanlife

Mere months ago the world was enamoured by the rise of self-driving cars and the end of gas-powered ones. Ridesharing, inner-city living and the Walk Score put the focus on mobility without the investment. The right to drive as a teenage rite of passage was over, with 50% fewer seeking licenses. Now the car, with its promise of individual power, freedom and control, is back. From drive-through testing to contactless delivery, driving has become the best way to safely navigate a threatening world. As at the dawn of the Interstate, cars act as portable homes outside the home, as vessels of adventure and exploration. With fuel prices lower and air travel uncertain, travel by road becomes its own destination.

Expect new purchasers and licensees, and second thoughts about getting rid of second cars. Those called back to work in an office may find a small slice of safety in avoiding mass transit. Road-tripping, car camping, and vacations spent exploring your own city will have a renaissance, as will novel in-car and RV products offering convenience, comfort or self-contained travel. With ownership averaging ten years, these decisions will have long-term ramifications.

▶ Danish football club plans drive-in football for up to 12,000 cars. [\[link\]](#)

▶ German club holds drive-in rave as drive-in performances gain momentum in Europe. [\[link\]](#)

▶ Justice Department takes church's side in drive-in services vs. stay-at-home conflict. [\[link\]](#)

How might you enable drivers and riders with not only safety mechanisms, but also hygiene ones?

What service experiences could be pivoted to offer a 'drive-in' model? Might they safely extend to bikes, scooters or rideshares?

How might the car and its services (e.g., insurance, connectivity, tune-ups) need to evolve to keep people not only safe, but also healthy?

02

What is changing?

Corona Time

OUR DAYS AND OUR FUTURE GO NON-LINEAR

FROM: **The path forward**

TO: **One circle at a time**

Our sense of time is driven by social interactions. As social distancing replaces shared experiences with individual ones, that sense is diverging. Meetings are determined by the naptimes of children, and if you're not eating lunch with a group, why noon? Without shared guideposts every day feels the same, and time looks more like a circle of getting by, than an arrow of progressive achievement. A volatile succession of new normals will further up-end common narratives of what should or can happen in a day—or a life. When the paradigm of job, house, kids and retirement feels unattainable in a whole new way, advice based on it will sound woefully out of touch.

Expect time (and the experiences within it) to divide further into synchronous and asynchronous. Pre-recorded or non-real-time interactions will replace fixed business hours. Appointment-driven premium interactions will multiply, from fitness, grocery pickup and luxury shopping to other sectors. Similarly, expert advice will focus on the rituals and skills people need to get themselves or their business through the day, month or year, as growing a capacity for resilience becomes more critical than setting goals in an unknowable future.

▶ **Power grid data reveals the new cadences of the lockdown lifestyle. [\[link\]](#)**

▶ **Shopstreaming connects customers, friends, products and experts in real time—and on demand. [\[link\]](#)**

▶ **Gen-Z freefall: “Things have already gone terribly wrong and our lives are just preparing for the worst.” [\[link\]](#)**

Which of your client interactions would change drastically if ‘normal business hours’ went away? How could you reimagine them as on-demand or non-real-time offerings?

How would the shift away from regular hours impact your operations, your staff training or even your real estate footprint?

For industries or professionals in the business of advice, how do you shift your product or expertise in order to provide guidance in an asynchronous world?

How might personal and business insurance products, or terms of liability, need to change to protect visitors, staff and owners from future outbreaks?

The Empty Aesthetic

NEW BARREN SPACES AND THE LUXURY OF INTIMACY

FROM: Millennial pink

TO: Starchy whites

After years of minimalism, it felt like 2020 was going to be a year filled with the kind of textural flourishes one could sink into. From suede-wrapped walls to rare wood inlays, visual and interior design were beginning to adopt surfaces and looks that were fuller than the white space and sans serif fonts that have predominated for years. But customers' new anxieties around hygiene, combined with a need for physical distance, suggest a movement to surfaces and spaces that wear their cleanliness, and emptiness, out in the open—while also offering new kinds of intimacy. Office furnishing manufacturers are already experiencing a shortage of the cubicles and other dividers most businesses had done away with.

Expect antiseptic colours, transparent dividers and smooth surfaces. With the public aesthetic being so bare, a countertrend of lush private spaces is likely. Beyond physical design, the performance of hygiene and associated activities will also be key in driving consumer confidence to visit a space.

▶ Cholera and flu inspired architectural modernism; COVID promises smaller venues, emptier spaces, and the end of the open office. [\[link\]](#)

▶ Attention shifts from stainless steel and plastic to old-school brass and copper virus killers. [\[link\]](#)

▶ Diners in Asia provide crowd-sourced intelligence on post-corona restaurant design. [\[link\]](#)

How can your current aesthetic communicate hygiene and cleanliness, and instill customer confidence?

How might communal and public experiences be reimaged to preserve the safety of staff and citizens?

What types of antibacterial or antiviral properties, finishes, technologies or even aesthetics could be added to your spaces and places?

03

What will change next?

Selective Urbanism

REMOTE WORKING INSPIRES REMOTE LIVING

FROM: **La vie boheme**

TO: **New digital nomads**

For those with the privilege of sheltering in place, life can feel untethered from its surroundings. Some find themselves living in a place that suddenly seems arbitrary, with what they want and need from their surroundings shifted overnight. If city life was already becoming unaffordable, now it has also become inhospitable, just as working from home seems to present the freedom to live almost anywhere. In the past the world's brightest were drawn to cities, and the infrastructure for building a certain kind of life that only existed there. Today it is possible to be the world's best artist in Montana or a technologist in North Bay, where the sky is not only bigger, but also perhaps safer. Being unable to make it in the big city was previously seen as a failure. Now it may become a signal of virtue.

Expect people to choose urban life for different reasons, and for a new landscape of options to emerge (cosmopolitan towns, second cities, etc). Acceleration of middle-class exodus and the collapse of low-wage urban service industries may exacerbate the shift, and cities will have to rethink their value propositions when downtown revitalization will no longer suffice.

➤ **Americans fleeing crowded cities amid pandemic consider shifting priorities, permanent moves. [\[link\]](#)**

➤ **Armageddon for urban service jobs, or recreating the simple joys of city life? [\[link\]](#)**

➤ **Homebuyers leaving cities look for lenders and realtors offering virtual tours, person-less signings. [\[link\]](#)**

What would it look like to run a company with no headquarters?

What would it take to move your business to a remote-first model for good? What aspects of work-life would be lost, and what aspects could be reimagined virtually?

How do you create a sense of place or local spirit in your offerings, while being offered anywhere?

How can you prepare regional or rural locations to play new, expanded roles?

A Missing Ingredient

IMPROVISATION REPLACES SELECTION AS SUPPLY CHAINS TURN TO RAPID FAB

FROM: Seasonal merchandising
TO: Hyper-moment availability

The age of overwhelming choice and seasonal promotion is vanishing. The empty aisles of the pandemic's early weeks have morphed into subtler deprivation. Displays that once sported impressive piles of goods now look half-empty, while shipping and restocking delays have spread from Amazon to others. As supply chains from agriculture to antibiotics struggle to reorient, they're also finding key ingredients in short supply, and industry leaders warn of coming labour and goods shortages further crippling production. Rapid prototyping technologies like CNC milling and 3D printing, small-scale fabricators and good old repurposing are stepping in to fill the gaps—both intensifying IP disputes and encouraging new sharing arrangements.

Expect manufacturing capacity to become a national concern, with governments clearing the way for the Shenzhen model: fleets of generalist manufacturers who rapidly retool to knock-off whatever is in demand. On the consumer side, consistency of branding and availability will pivot to the virtues of making do with what's available, affordable and yet, in a new way, impressive.

➤ National flour brand switches to plain white bags as branded stock runs out. [\[link\]](#)

➤ Minnesota teen 3D-prints and donates over 1,500 face shields. [\[link\]](#)

➤ News outlets providing advice for living outside the supply chain. [\[link\]](#)

How might your brand need to better communicate the availability, affordability and especially durability of your products?

Which parts of your manufacturing or supply chain could be generalized to support multiple client or industry needs?

What new partnerships, either vertical or horizontal, could enable your business to deliver on customer needs despite disruption?

Keep pace with the Next Normal

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To succeed through uncertainty, organizations must cultivate four key disciplines:

Awareness

Continuously sense and understand changes in your world, your competitive landscape, your operations and your customer.

Strategy

Coordinate today's decisions and initiatives with a roadmap for resilient growth tomorrow.

Action

Execute on opportunities rapidly to build, test, learn and adapt.

Momentum

Maintain speed, alignment and morale as you sense, decide and act.

Faculty of Change is here to help

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Our team of futurists, strategists, anthropologists, and designers have a plan to help you answer the most pressing questions:

What role do you play in the Next Normal?

We can help you understand the changes brought about by COVID-19, and how you can be successful across multiple possible futures.

How will you gain/maintain the advantage?

We will illustrate challenges and opportunities that you may not have anticipated, allowing you to pivot your strategy and market position.

What should you do now, and next?

We help clients develop transformation roadmaps, with discrete sets of actions to take around your role, offering, and value proposition, in order to thrive.

In three weeks or less, you can have a clear understanding of the challenges faced by your business, an action plan to serve new market needs, and a team aligned around the transformation you'll need to be and remain resilient.

Start Now



Jared Gordon
Financial Services
jared@facultyofchange.com
416 258 7077



Kareen Proudian
Retail, Luxury & Hospitality
kareen@facultyofchange.com
647 403 1257



Dylan Gordon
Consumer Packaged Goods & B2B
dylan@facultyofchange.com
647 448 2518

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