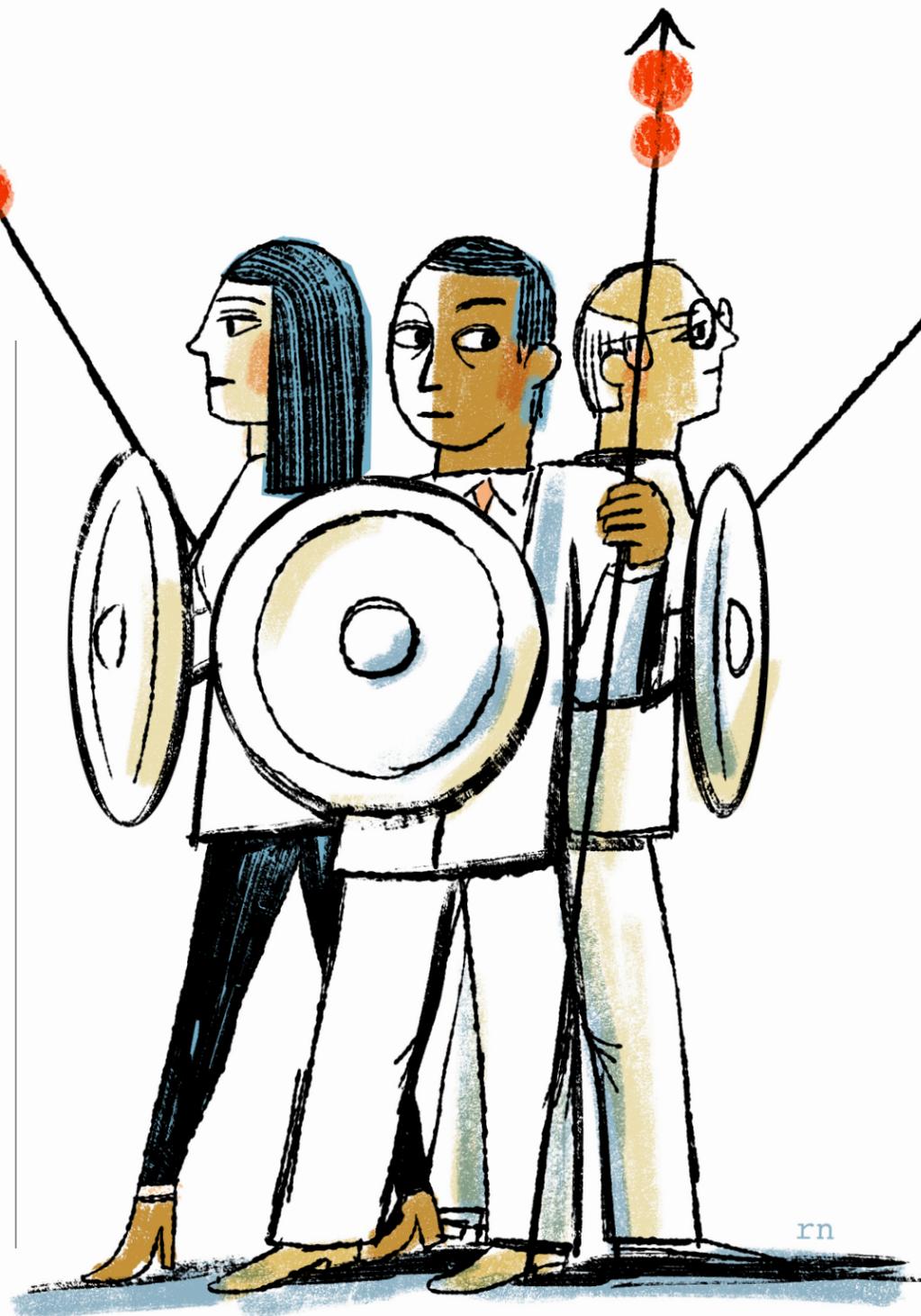


WE ARE ALL BECOMING MORE FAMILIAR with this disease than we care to be—and may become yet more so. Still uncertainty remains. It began even with the terminology. Coronavirus is a descriptor, a general term. Under the microscope, the virus has crown-like spikes, hence corona. The common cold and variances of it are coronaviruses. Covid-19 (as in Corona Virus Disease 2019) is the effect that this particular coronavirus has on the human being—that's the disease the world's grappling with. That's the distinction between the two terms.

We've now spoken to more than 150 clients about their situation. That has given us a broad view of the corporate response across affected geographies from Asia, through the Middle East and Europe to the Americas, a window into how those responses have played out and the challenges continually unfolding. Here's what we've been advising our clients:

First, develop a single view that's grounded in professional, well-sourced information. In government we called this "a commonly recognized information picture." That view has to be based on the responsible medical experts: the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, Public Health England and similar bodies. You do not get it from the newspapers, from social media, from friends, or even your local medic. You operate on the basis of informed medical and public health



advice. The current vocal challenge to that advice in Europe and the US is not reason to depart from it as your foundation for the actions you take.

A leadership team needs to develop the discipline to clarify that generic narrative into a specific frame for their business context and then operate within it. It's dangerous for leaders to start pretending they're epidemiologists. Have a single view and stick to it. I've been on calls with leadership teams where there's agreement on that view and then someone says, "But I read that the disease ..." Don't go there. Don't work on that basis. The uncertainty is difficult enough to deal with. Don't add to it.

You will be focused first on the safety—the human consequences—of your course of action and then on the resilience of your business. That may cause you to anticipate some of the "Non Pharmaceutical Interventions" that government makes. Brunswick has.

Having established your position, think through how you're going to communicate it to employees, customers, and investors. What about your suppliers and regulators? How might you engage with local public health officials and local authorities? Exaggeration and understatement are equally unhelpful. These engagements need to be tailored, yet aligned within your broader narrative.

Leaders also need to plan for reasonable worst-case scenarios. Covid-19 has already spread in a way that we hoped wouldn't happen, and in a way that standard business continuity planning doesn't

Brunswick Senior Advisor PADDY MCGUINNESS, former UK Deputy National Security Adviser, on how businesses can chart a course amid the fear and uncertainty.

cover. Now, many in the workforce have to work from home. Among other considerations, that produces additional cyber and data vulnerability. What if schools close and your employees have children at home they have to look after? What will your IT capabilities be if 20 to 40 percent of your team is incapacitated at any one time during the peak period? Are your HR teams prepared to deal with the most unfortunate case, where employees or their close relatives pass away?

In extreme times, it can be tempting to take extreme positions. A lesson of crises is never to enter into something without knowing how you're going to get out of it, how to reverse it. If companies are going to start shutting down their operations, how are they going to open again? On what justification? Taking fixed positions amid great uncertainty can prove restrictive—or counterproductive—when circumstances change.

Resilience is the ability to respond and recover to the state prior to the event, having learned the lessons of the event. Respond and recover—that's the long-term goal here. Covid-19 will pass. We know from other pandemics that recovery does come. How can you position yourself to take advantage of that recovery, to get back with speed and strength? Because some companies will.

Now more than ever senior leaders need to talk about how things will be the other side of the crisis and to describe signs of recovery. This is easiest for enterprises with transnational reach. They recount what is happening in Asia as the disease passes so that European and US stakeholders can see beyond the immediate demands of emergency response.

On a personal level, stick close to the medical experts and the people who know what they're talking about. I may well get Covid-19 here in the United Kingdom. I assume that, like the vast majority of healthy people who get it, I will experience mild to moderate symptoms and recover just fine. If I don't, I want health services to be available. I want the spread to be managed at sustainable levels, so I am doing what Government asks of me and avoiding all but essential contact with others and unnecessary travel. I expect that more will be asked of me, my family and colleagues before we are through this.

I wouldn't let Covid-19 overwhelm you in your daily life, given what we know. That's certainly my intention: carry on with as much normality as possible, support others and use the unexpected circumstances to prepare for the recovery phase which will come. ♦

RESILIENCE

in the face of COVID-19