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## TOP LINE

**Complexities abound as countries, states, cities, and businesses look to re-open parks, restaurants, and shops at varying rates and under specific conditions. Political and economic pressures create unique tensions as they collide with health imperatives. Debates over the most effective method of supporting the economy reverberate across medical, social, and digital spaces: from continued lockdowns to herd immunity and widespread testing to contact tracing. Implications for businesses have the potential to be costly, regardless of the path chosen. Opening up at the wrong rate - too quickly or too slowly - presents the potential for backlash in the form of worker protests, strikes, or walk-outs. Consumer behavior remains an open-ended question as quarantines extend, raising the potential for unpredictable changes in physical and economic habits. Additionally, debates around cherry-picked data raise questions over fact and fiction adding further complexity to the process of opening up. Amid an absence of consistent U.S. federal guidelines, business leaders have the opportunity to work within and across industries to establish effective workforce guidelines even as they continue to face a moving target in terms of when to reopen. As businesses take steps to reopen, leaders should be prepared to fine tune guidelines based on geographic and industry specific risks, pursuing business continuity through workforce safety. Amid so much uncertainty, business productivity is inexorably linked to leaders' ability to assure essential or returning employees that companies are not putting them at undue risk.**

*Question to Consider: How can businesses develop strategies that account for second and third order affects as global quarantines impact trade relationships and drive shifts in consumer demand and habits?*

## COVID-19: THE HIGHLIGHTS

Early [lessons](#) in reopening an economy have emerged from a number of places; Wuhan, China, for example provides the reminder that extended quarantines have the potential to change consumer habits. Despite being an early success story, [Singapore's](#) COVID-19 caseload has more than doubled in a matter of days, with migrant workers proving particularly vulnerable. Hong Kong and Taiwan also suffered from secondary [spikes](#) in infections. The resurgence of COVID-19 in Singapore and elsewhere in Southeast Asia suggests it will be difficult for the U.S., Europe, and elsewhere to resume normal activities even after the curve has flattened. Germany's lack of hospital [capacity](#) – which is greater per capita than the U.S. – led Chancellor Angela Merkel to publicly remark on the need for vigilance, even as lockdowns [ease](#) slightly. In [Bangladesh](#), over 100,000 people violated quarantine restrictions to attend a funeral, while another protest was linked to demands for worker backpay, demonstrating the difficulty of crowd control and lack of rule-of-law in densely populated democracies outside the U.S. and Europe. Similar tensions are emerging in South and Central America. [Mexico](#) is bracing for COVID-19 infection rates to grow until May, even as criminal groups position themselves to exploit the pandemic. In Lima, [Peru](#), riot police blockaded a major highway as crowds attempted to flee Lima for their rural hometowns citing food shortages as Peru's lockdown entered its sixth week. As quarantines continue and job losses grow, the socio-economic implications of COVID-19 are becoming increasingly visible worldwide raising questions around leadership and stability amid crisis.

## BEYOND THE NOISE

**Leadership in crisis:** Varying [definitions](#) of “essential” businesses and activities, along with skyrocketing unemployment rates and political pressure, have sparked [protests](#) and calls for clearer federal guidelines. Broad [federal](#) guidelines have also led to a reactionary and make-it-up-as-you-go approach to [reopening](#) businesses. Absent clear government standards, business leaders are in a position to take the lead in promoting business continuity by setting responsive guidelines and reassuring workforce and consumer bases alike.

- **Secure Reopening:** Establish a business continuity plan which includes various benchmarks and guidelines which account for a resurgence of COVID-19 (or other pandemic) in varying degrees. Promote workforce health through clear procedures and consistent messaging to improve employee and consumer confidence.

**Rising surveillance:** [Facebook](#) partnered with Carnegie Mellon University to publish a county-by-county map of COVID-19 symptoms collected via voluntary online survey. Additionally, New York City deployed a service residents can use to [report](#) people for violating social distancing measures. At least 30 countries have introduced [measures](#) to identify infected individuals or maintain quarantines. These measures vary in breadth, but largely rely on

smartphone data, including Apps that track user location. While many contact tracing measures promise personal privacy, businesses must consider the ease with which such data can be aggregated, effectively automating mass surveillance.

- **Secure Privacy:** Consider the potential ramifications of automated mass surveillance on protection of company data and proprietary information. Evaluate who has control and access to data within the workforce. Plan for robust debate on federal, state, and local levels as to what levels of invasiveness are appropriate and acceptable.

**Role of testing:** In the U.S., health experts are calling for two to three times greater diagnostic [testing](#) for COVID-19 prior to even a partial economic reopening. A pervasive lack of staff and testing [supplies](#) in hospitals and labs and questionable reliability of early [antibody](#) tests make such a ramp up unlikely in the near term. Additionally, emerging [data](#) out of [California](#) indicates that COVID-19 infection rates are possibly over 50 times as high as known cases. If true, the death rate for COVID-19 would be closer to that of the seasonal flu. Yet, without testing, the actual spread of COVID-19 remains unclear. This makes more invasive surveillance measures increasingly likely, even as it becomes more difficult for businesses to establish realistic plans to reopen and raises the economic cost.

- **Secure Tests:** Establish a long-term workforce testing plan to account for future waves of COVID-19. Consider options for supporting production of testing supplies and equipment. Secure use of a trusted private lab for testing to improve turnaround speed.

#### **TRUSTED RESOURCES: for numbers & guidance**

[Johns Hopkins University](#) – Coronavirus Resource Center

[World Health Organization](#) – COVID-19 Pandemic

[Center for Disease Control](#) – Coronavirus (COVID-19)

***Please contact Secure Source International at [info@securesource.com](mailto:info@securesource.com) to schedule a leadership roundtable with our intelligence and security experts to dive into these topics and discuss security and safety related best-practices.***