How to keep a grip in times of crisis:
the 6 steps

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The effects of CoronaVirus have already shut down many sectors of public life and the economy. For some of you entrepreneurs this has resulted in a huge impact on your company. For others the implications are still difficult to estimate, but what is certain is that something is coming your way.

Nobody can estimate how long this will take and what the overall economical effect will be - both for your stakeholders and for the continuity of your company. However, how you choose to relate to these challenges is key.

Meaning, how you treat your customers, suppliers and employees. And you do this, naturally, based upon strategic choices and on the basis of your values.

Step 1: **CEO Eisenhower matrix**
Step 2: **Make the decision to create a 'Situation Room'**
Step 3: **Decide who the Crisis Team is**
Step 4: **Determine top priorities**
Step 5: **Crisis Meeting Rhythm and Communication**
Step 6: **Create your Situation room**

This article provides a step-by-step guide on how, in our opinion, best to put this into practice and how we've done it ourselves! **Don't waste time, act now!**

Step 1: CEO Eisenhower matrix

"Put on your own oxygen mask before you help others." That brings peace of mind. Making lists helps, but they can become too long. What are you going to spend your limited time on? We use the "Eisenhower matrix", named after the American army commander in chief, during the Second World Situation, who went on to become president. He made a very clear distinction between urgent and important.

In our opinion, the Eisenhower Matrix is the "bottom up" and "quick and dirty" variation of the Scaling Up methodology, making time for the really important. Most likely, you will have come across him in certain books concerning time management. With this Eisenhower matrix one-pager you gain an overview within fifteen minutes. We also use this to set priorities.

	Urgent	Less urgent
Important	**Quadrant 1:** Major fires that must be extinguished now • Request WTV • Call biggest clients • Employee safety plan and communication	**Quadrant 2** Ensure that there is no need to extinguish a fire next week • Close the financing gap • New meetings with suppliers • ...
Less important	**Quadrant 3:** Small fires, other people's urgent priorities • Meeting new supplier • Email from demanding customer • ...	**Quadrant 4:** 'Work evasive behavior' Very difficult under pressure, stay away! • Corona news • ERP implementation (was in Quadrant 2, but situation has changed)

Tips

- You choose the boundary between Urgent and Less Urgent, for example plan your week 1 week ahead, or plan 1 day ahead, when in real crisis mode
- What is really important? Your safety plus that of loved ones and employees, continuity of your company, etc. Reasoning from both personal and business **Core Values**.
- Distinguish between **"next actions"** that can be done at once without preparation (mark with a square, to easily check off) and **"projects"** (everything that requires more steps, mark with a circle).
- Choose your top priorities and, in addition, fight to make time for 1 or 2 issues from Quadrant 2.
- For top priority "projects" create an initial planning, on another page, taking note of "next actions".

Use this overview to decide which problems to tackle today or leave until next week. Also work out which problems can be delegated, or where you can acquire help. And, most importantly, decide what you're not going to do today or even next week! **Your Not To Do List!**

Step 2: **Make the decision to create a 'Situation Room'**

We are now setting up Situation Rooms within our own companies and with clients. We (the authors of this article), are familiar with this concept thanks to past experience within management consultancy, whereby it was used in for example merger talks between two companies. It also fits perfectly with our Scaling Up working method. Situation Rooms are as old as the first wars, won by good and timely decisions based on overview.

What is a Situation Room?
A physical space in which the crisis team can work together effectively. In The Situation Room and its Purpose we provide insight into the most important conditions required, a combination of expert advice alongside our own practical tips and lessons learned. We are now also tailoring and optimizing this in light of the Corona crisis.

Really, a physical space, even now with Corona? How can we make this work with the social distancing rules? And what about people who are at high risk? **We say, continue to create this space, but just for one person.**

We believe a physical space is crucial. Step by step you can fill the walls with all the relevant information. Providing a far greater overview than that seen on a computer screen. In addition, it gives the rest of the organization peace of mind, when they can see you are in control. If the decision has already been taken to all work remotely, make the physical space at the CEO's home and / or at the project leader's (Young Potential see below).

Now with the CoronaVirus you will also need to expand and mirror the space online. It's likely that most, or even all, of the crisis team will be forced to work from home. In this case, extending the physical Situation Rooms virtually is essential. Do this via Google Drive with google sheets, Trello and Slack. Also share photos of the walls in the Situation Room.

Step 3: **Decide who's in your crisis team**

Over the past week (s), we've been engulfed with news about the coronavirus. Everyone within our organization became obsessed, following updates closely. We sat glued to our screens, constantly monitoring news sites, twitter and whatsapp groups. Understandable, however, Corona news is not in our **Circle of Influence.**

We believe it works well to divide the company into **Offence and Defence teams**. The Offence team is the Corona Crisis Team, dealing with all urgent crisis actions and projects (more about this later). **The Defence team** are all other people, otherwise known as the "business as usual" team. We understand that this is difficult, but it is crucial that most people (no matter how good or bad the situation becomes), keep their eye on the ball, ensuring that normal business continues. If everyone gets involved in Corona, you know one thing for sure: no one cares about the customer anymore.

It is crucial for the Defence team to know that there is an **Offence team** dealing with the crisis. We like demarcation in the Scaling Up method. And this is also the case with a clearly defined Crisis team. Clarity ensures less stress and higher output, especially for the **Defence team**.

The next step is to determine, with your Leadership Team (MT), who will be on the crisis team. Our first suggestion, not to include the entire MT because we recognize the value of assigning some key players to take charge of the Defence Team, ensuring good customer service continues. (The Main Thing is to Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing). Who then? Our suggestion is as follows:

Who	Role
Head of Company (CEO, founder)	Takes decisions internally and externally in times of crisis.
Young Potential	Depending on the size of the organization 1 or more. It is important that at least 1 person can fully focus on the problem. Preferably tech savvy and good with data. Keeps the Situation Room up to date, mirrors sharing online and supports the CEO in communication.
CFO / financial	Necessary for cash forecasts and cost optimization.
Human Resources	Has an overview of all employees, their history, and can create an HR risk map.

Scaling Up works with the FACe tool to create role clarity, accountability and definition of success. Which is why we have created a Functional Accountability in Crisis Teams tool (FACT) for this specific team. This tool clarifies who is responsible for what in the team, areas that require attention and individual output. Detailed instructions on how to fill this in can be found in the enclosed Functional Accountability in Crisis Teams.

Step 4: **Determine top-priorities**

Use the **Eisenhower Matrix** with the team. You will notice that not everyone automatically comes up with the same top priorities. You may have overlooked something yourself. Some team members may want to work on 10 or 20 "priorities", simultaneously. Creating a **"Not to do list"** alongside the Eisenhower Matrix works very well for us.

If you use the Scaling Up method, implementing Annual and Quarterly plans with Rocks (priorities), then also include them. Which ones can shift to the "Not to do list"? Which are more important than ever?

How many top priorities make it on the list? Make difficult choices, be clear which 3-5 are really top. What do you do with the rest? Which ones can be relegated to the "Not to do list", at least for now? Which ones can you delegate, which belong to the **Defence team**, classified as "regular business"?

Step 5: **Crisis Meeting Rhythm & Communicatie**

Meeting Rhythms is one of the Execution disciplines within the Scaling Up method. The crisis team also has its own Meeting Rhythm. A crisis requires more consultation: you commence with a 'day-start' in the morning, then an afternoon check in and finish with a message to the crisis team at the end of the afternoon. But before you execute the rhythm, allow each team member half a day to get up and running, utilising the methodology in Step 4: Make a first hit a top priority.

Daily Huddles:

Day start Crisis team	Afternoon check in (crisis team)	End of day message (CEO)
One word open	Share individual progress	Summary of what's been achieved
Everyone's top priority for the day (Eisenhower)	Information that everyone should know	Urgent matters (evening work?)
Information that everyone should know	Stuck? Share your sticking points	Team motivation
Help requests	Log decisions	Points that need to be communicated across the company

Weekly Meeting

Our suggestion would be to end the week with the weekly meeting, so as not to delay getting started on a Monday morning. This way the crisis team can take some time out over the weekend, knowing a plan is in place for the coming week.

Weekly Crisis team Meeting

Present all parts of the Situation Room 1 by 1 (see Step 6)
(The emphasis being on exchanging new information and completed actions;
no discussions; 6 x 5 min.)

Repeat Step 4: Eisenhouwer Matrix
(prioritize this matrix with new weekly insights; 10 min.)

Ask everyone to present their weekly plan
(each 3 min x 4 team members = 12 min)

Review the action and decision list (WhoWhatWhen)
(8 min)

One word close

Times of crisis require a slightly more direct management style. Important for both the daily and the weekly meetings is **'Disagree and commit'**, a concept in which the CEO gives everyone enough room to express his opinion in exchange for a commitment to the final decision (which you make on the basis of a majority, with a veto from the CEO).

Communication with the rest of the company
In times of crisis communication is key! If you delay communication, your employees will speculate and fill in the gaps themselves. So communicate as soon as possible. if you don't know the answer, then share that too (this is also a response and better than silence).

It works well for the CEO to send a **weekly message** detailing the crisis. In our opinion, these points are worth considering:

- **What have you achieved**
- **Weekly insights**
- **What are next week's goals**
- **What are your sticking points**

Step 6: **Setting up the Situation Room**

The Situation Room should be as visual as possible. Dedicate a piece of wall per subject. Show overviews, for example, Risk mapping in one part, and illustrate using graphs, tables and action lists.

We have used the Business Model Canvas, as a reference and listed the following components that should be taken into account. The first exercise is based on the one-pager Check list Situation Room parts to determine what elements you find important to focus on as a crisis team.

Cash prognosis
- Bottom up cash forecast (coming weeks and quarterly, where faster, saving)
- Cash budget top down (year, where to save, how to close a financing gap)
- Power of One Planning (plan for profitability: costs down, or maintain sales, etc)

Team
- Safety
- Moral and communication
- Productivity
- Employee list with information relevant to Corona (e.g. home, symptoms, sick, etc.)

Key activities, core process
- Risk mapping and mitigation
- Manage your KPIs
- Different for every company

Key Partners & Supply Chain
- Risk mapping and mitigation (e.g. insourcing, stocks)
- Communication

Revenue & Customers
- Risk mapping and mitigation
- Customer insights (check any assumptions regarding your customers, call or, email them)
- Customer health & revenue outlook
- Proposition and Marketing (Do they require other services and products now?)

Other resources
Differs enormously per company and business model e.g. office, production facilities, stocks.

Create additional categories if necessary

Tailor this for your own business. A marketing agency has a completely different set up than a retailer or production company.

For each Situation Room segment we have a support checklist

Register for the **ScaleUp Company webinar** and online help and communication channels

ScaleUp Company's purpose is to help entrepreneurs and their teams realize their potential by helping them build companies that need the future. We are there for our customers especially in difficult times. Which is why we have created the following help and communication channels for you.

Communication channels

- We've created an email, scaledowncorona@scaleupcompany.com , so customers can reach out to us. We will then facilitate a response accordingly.
- You can also find information on our Scale Down Corona Page
- Plus, we have created a **Slack channel** (register via email) where you can find the latest information and exchange thoughts with contemporaries.

Online hands on help

- From now on, we will hold a daily open call-webinar.
- We also have in-house personnel available to help set up a Situation Room, one on one.

Sign up

Register for the webinar or for 1 on 1 guidance...

Mail us at scaledowncorona@scaleupcompany.com

About the authors

Eddie van Breukelen

Eddie is a passionate entrepreneur, his two main activities are Beterschappen (nutrition and lifestyle for kidney patients) and De Kleine Strateeg (advice and coaching, including ScaleUp Pro at ScaleUp Company). In 2006, as co-founder of ISIS, - Innovative Solutions In Space - Eddie transformed the company into a 50 strong team. He worked from 2014-2016, with McKinsey & Company as a consultant for large corporations.

Mirik Castro

Mirik is a ScaleUp Pro and partner at ScaleUp Company. He's been using his entrepreneurial skills since 2005 , (Holland turnaround, KMA Textiles, Johns Phone) and started a Biogas company for farmers in East Africa in 2009. Together with his brother he lived in Tanzania for 6 years and expanded the company, with 140 employees. Mirik began his career in 2000 at the Boston Consulting Group and moved to Stork NV in 2002. Mirik is an active member of the Entrepreneurs Organization where he also trains many accelerators in the Scaling Up method.

Annex

ScaleDown Corona Impact **Checklist**

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Direction from the leadership team

☐ Has the leadership team implemented a tactical session, identifying the main risks and scenarios for employee health, customer and supplier wellbeing?

☐ Has the leadership team implemented a tactical session, identifying the main risks and scenarios for the business, the current and upcoming projects and customers?

☐ Has the leadership team implemented a tactical session, identifying the main risks and scenarios regarding financial development within the organization in the near future? And are the other stakeholders connected to this?

☐ Has the leadership team had a daily short and weekly long huddle in anticipation of possible developments? Perhaps with other members of a crisis team.

☐ Has a communication strategy been agreed with all team leaders, regarding stakeholders?

Make the most of internal collaboration

☐ Does everyone have a playbook with clear objectives, tasks and vision for the foreseeable future?

☐ Which KPIs should we send to employees in the foreseeable future?

☐ Are there agreements in place for employees regarding personal and social hygiene?

☐ Do you have a general consensus for physical meetings and cooperating with this? How do you maintain a positive vibe from a distance? (High Five's , AirHugs, Corona Boxes and Elbow Bumps)

☐ Do you have agreements in place regarding virtual working when it comes to huddles at company and team level, meetings and division of tasks? For both overview and task management.

☐ Is it clear which systems will be applied? Are the system roles well-distributed? Is everyone onboard ? Choose to avoid system proliferation.

☐ What will our policy on care leave be and what do we expect from employees?

☐ Does everyone have a personal plan on how to deal with issues such as childcare, caring for others, vacation / sabbatical, working from home etc?

- ☐ Is it necessary to apply for reduction in working hours? Do we know the rules? Who should make the application?

- ☐ Is it necessary to anticipate contract renewals or terminations? Do we have all contract information available and know how to act?

- ☐ Which projects, innovations and improvements that (contributed to our company strategy and) have been on the shelf for a while can we now take on?

Grip on the customer and business

- ☐ What do we have to communicate to customers and via which channels? When and how often?

- ☐ Do we know our customer status and what their considerations are regarding our services / products? Is anyone responsible for collecting these customer insights?

- ☐ Which figures will we be sending regarding customers and future trajectories?

- ☐ How do we deal with our sales processes? What can we do for our customers at the moment? What can we do to keep moving?

- ☐ Is the sales team trained / briefed on how to actively build the sales pipeline for better times, so that you can quickly get back to work when business reinstates?

- ☐ Have you considered how projects, orders and customer activities can continue within the existing possibilities (to be realized in the short term)? Is proposition adjustment and marketing linked?

- ☐ What will our policy be on changes in activities, cancellations and shifts?

Grip on the supply chain

- ☐ Do we have an overview of activity concerning suppliers, partners and others within our chain? Where are the risks and what should we keep an eye on?

- ☐ What are our contractual risks?

- ☐ Do we have sufficient stock and alternative delivery options?

- ☐ Which chain of KPIs shall we manage? And whose responsibility will that be?

Maintain a grip on cash

- ☐ Have we formed a team (comprising specialists such as an accountant, tax specialist, lawyer) who can assist in the near future, offering advice and assistance regarding cash issues?

- ☐ Are we clear on what we can save regarding costs in the short term?

- ☐ Are we clear on what we can save regarding costs in the medium and long term?

- ☐ How can we optimize our cash conversion cycle right now? Factor in advance payments?

- ☐ What are our short-term financing options? The government has established a guarantee for SME loans, to be utilised in these kinds of situations.

- ☐ Do we have a strict debtor policy and what steps can / should we take now?

- ☐ Can agreements be made with creditors?

- ☐ Do we know which tax facilities the government has made available and how to use them (such as deferrals etc.)?

Grip on growth

- ☐ Are there any actions that can be implemented to boost sales in a few months time?

- ☐ Within our strategy, what are the greatest opportunities of this economic dip?

- ☐ What growth barriers can we solve now or in the long term, due to this situation?

And Finally....

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Bart van Nol, CEO ScaleUp Company

Eisenhower matrix one-pager

	URGENT	LESS URGENT
IMPORTANT	**Quadrant 1** Large fires that must now be extinguished	**Quadrant 2** Ensure there is no need to extinguish a fire next week
LESS IMPORTANT	**Quadrant 3** Small fires, other people's urgent priorities	**Quadrant 4** 'Work evasive behaviour, very difficult under pressure, stay away'

FACT - Functional Accountability in Crisis Teams

Step by step plan:

1. Make individuals responsible for each role.
2. Decide the purpose and output for these roles?
3. Discuss this with each other, what does making the role successful mean?
4. Discuss the division of roles, how challenging is the task, then let everyone commit.

TEAM ROLE	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	PURPOSE OF THE ROLE	ROLE OUTPUT
Crisis Leader			
Project Secretary			
War Room Master			
Internal communications			
External communications			
>People and internal cooperation			
>Grip on customer & business			
>Grip on supply chain			
> Grip op cash			
> Grip op growth			
Sector specific			
•			
•			

Risk Map: Impact-vs-Probability Matrix One Page

	PROBABLE	LESS PROBABLE
MORE IMPACT	**Unacceptable** Risk > Urgent	**Moderate** Risk > Less Urgent
LESS IMPACT	**Moderate** Risk > Reasonably Urgent	**Acceptable** Risk > Not Urgent

War Room checklist

War Room Components	Yes / No in the War Room	Who is responsible
Cash prognosis		
Bottom up cash forecast (coming weeks up until the quarter, where faster, saving)		
Cash budget (yearly, where to save, how to close a financing gap)		
Cash Conversion Cycle (focus on business choices that release cash, e.g. prepay, factoring, renegotiate milestone payments, etc.)		
Power of One Planning (plan for profitability: costs down, or maintaining sales, etc)		
Team		
Safety		
Moral & Communications		
Productivity Employee list with information relevant to Corona (e.g. home, symptoms, sick, etc.)		
Key activities, core process		
Risk mapping and mitigation		
Manage your KPIs		
Process Mapping		

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