

The New #Coronavirus: Are We Prepared to Face the Next #Pandemic?

With the worrying proliferation of the new #Coronavirus across #China plus cases being confirmed in other parts of Asia, North America and Europe, are we looking at the next #pandemic?



One thing that many National Risk registers have in common is the potential impact and probability of a severe pandemic occurring makes it their Number One threat. The UK National Risk Register says of the pandemic threat: *“This continues to represent the most significant civil emergency risk to the United Kingdom”* and the consequences in terms of fatalities is projected to be catastrophic.

While researching for my book *“Business Continuity and the Pandemic Threat”* I spent time in Hong Kong studying the effects of the 2002-03 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which had a devastating effect on the territory. Described as an *“Economic Tsunami”*, #SARS resulted in an estimated cost of US\$ 50 billion to the global economy. Furthermore, around 3,000,000 jobs were lost in the global tourism sector alone – more than 10 times the number of tourism jobs lost following the 9/11 Twin Towers’ terrorist attack in 2001.

Like its new Coronavirus relation, SARS still has no known #cure or #vaccine even 17 years after it first appeared. However, unlike SARS, what makes the new virus especially disturbing is that people can become infectious even before they present any symptoms. Consequently, they could pass undetected through the thermal imaging monitors stationed at airports, sea ports and border crossings only for their symptoms to appear later.

One common theme about Hong Kong’s experience with SARS that became apparent to me was that many residents understandably became extremely scared. This is very much in keeping with Barry’s observation about the 1918 Spanish Influenza outbreak. He remarked that *“In 1918, fear moved ahead of the virus like the bow wave before the ship. Fear drove the people and neither the Government nor the Press could control it.”* – Barry, 2005.

SARS was finally beaten by a combination of isolation of the sick and quarantine of those known to have been exposed. Across Hong Kong, Beijing and Toronto, tens of thousands were quarantined. China appears to be following a similar approach with the new Coronavirus.

From a business perspective, a pandemic presents a multi-faceted threat that, for example, can include not only sick employees but both upstream and downstream supply chains failures. Reports of airlines already cancelling flights into infected destinations will invariably have an impact on those just-in-time supply chains dependent upon passenger aircraft to facilitate the rapid transit of goods. Moreover, we have already seen China take action by suspending public transport in infected areas which, with the modern day commuter often depending upon Mass Transit systems, may prevent many from reaching their place of work.

The reasons for absentism are varied but are likely to include:

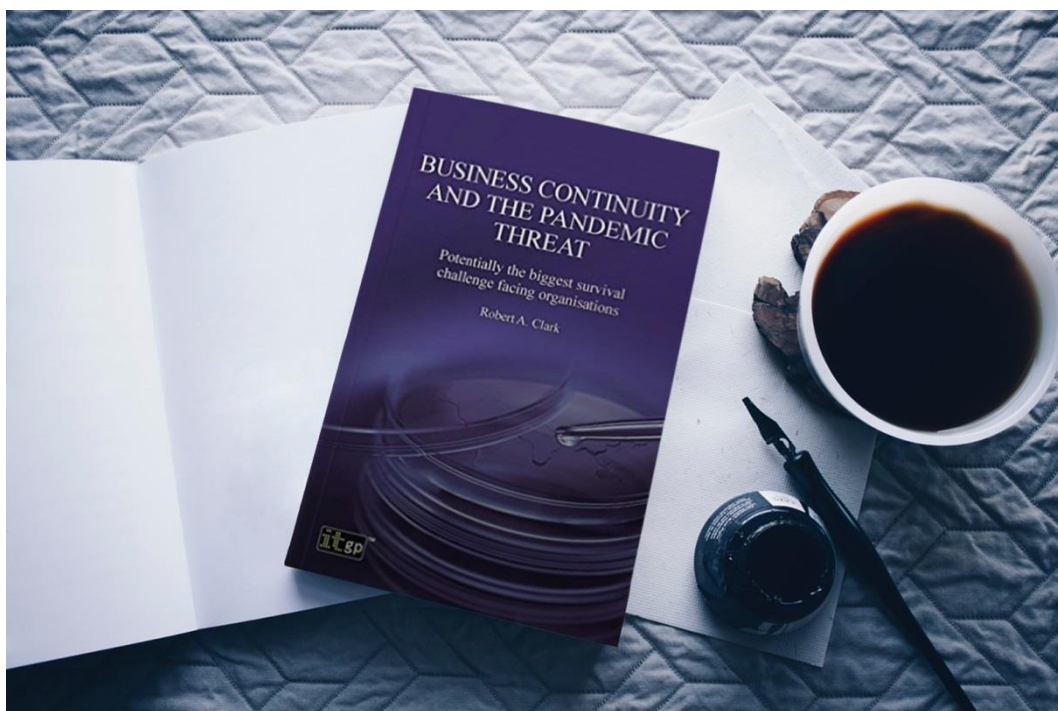
- Sickness and fatalities of employees, especially with no vaccines available, will threaten every employee from the most junior employees through to top management. Companies will need succession plans in place for all key employees?
- Looking after sick family members or children whose schools have closed,
- Public transport suspension making it impossible for some employees to get to work

- Bereavement in the family
- Trauma including those simply afraid to go work for fear of infection

But could your organisation survive if as many as 50% of the workforce was absent?

While we cannot stop a pandemic from occurring, we can take steps to mitigate the impact while helping to better protect employees and visitors to the workplace. *“Business Continuity and the Pandemic Threat”* identifies actions that can be taken by communities, organisations and individuals to improve their chances of survival.

Available in both paperback and Kindle format from Amazon, get your copy TODAY.



What they have said about “Business Continuity and the Pandemic Threat”

“I thoroughly enjoyed reading Clark’s book which is written in a style that makes it easy for anyone to understand without requiring a background in medicine or business. I have been involved in disaster management planning for the past ten years and yet I still found this book both enlightening and extremely informative” – Dr Tanya Mellilo MD, MSc (Dist) PhD

“Having known Rob Clark for several years, the breadth of knowledge, analysis of the subject and well-balanced presentation of this volume comes as no surprise. This informative book is written in an easy going and conversational manner, but the message it brings to the table is critical to understanding the meaning of any forthcoming pandemic threat and considerations of how to mitigate the effects, where possible, to you and your organisation” - Owen Gregory MSc BA (Hons)

“I appreciate that this book was written with a business audience in mind but everyone should read it, it could save lives” – Dr Fergus O’Connor MD FRCS (Lon) FRCS (Edin) Retired