



## The Adaptation Game

*With Dr. Daniela Held, Managing Director of Marketing & Sales, PSS GmbH, Mainz, Germany*

How prepared were you for the disruption to business in 2020?

Though the pandemic has definitely been disruptive, we were fortunate to have an emergency plan in place that involved working in shifts from early in 2020. When the time was right, we acted on that plan. The benefit for us: we never had a total shutdown, just slightly reduced working capacity.

We also benefited from our existing experience with remote customer support, which we have employed for several years already. As a result, we were already equipped and familiar with the tools that were needed to adapt. All we needed to do was apply these tools to internal communications, such as meetings with colleagues. On this topic, the sharing of lab results with colleagues while maintaining social distancing took some getting used to...

The lab work and production also continued largely unaffected. Our stock was sufficient to serve all of our customers throughout, but I must confess that we were happy when supply chain management began to return to normality – something that only happened towards the end of August. I'm happy to say that our usual operations are now back in full swing – with the appropriate safety measures, of course.

Have any aspects of the pandemic been particularly challenging?

Our Training Academy was a challenge; we had to postpone all of our classroom-style training. Instead, we offered complimentary educational webinars so that our clients – who would normally be in the lab – could make good use of their time at home.

We have moved much of our education to a virtual format, including our three-day GPC/SEC Theory and Practice

course. Engaging attendees is the main concern. Fortunately, we seem to have accomplished this! All attendees stayed until the course's end, and even participated in the optional sessions late Friday afternoon, resulting in very positive feedback. Younger participants also mentioned the environmental sustainability of such approaches. In future, we will conduct training both in the classroom and virtually.

Fulfilling on-site services requirements also hasn't been easy, particularly installations and qualifications. But we have developed ways to conduct these operations and have successfully provided these services in different countries.

Though it was difficult to abandon our usual ways of working – perfected over many years – we felt a duty to our customers, many of whom work in the pharmaceutical industry. It forced us to look at new and improved ways of doing things utilizing the modern tools available. We have remained a reliable partner for our customers, and we also now find ourselves in a better position to support them in the future.

How have the interactions with your clients been?

They have been fantastic. In fact, I'd like to say thanks to all of our partners and clients around the world for sharing their daily experiences in emails and video meetings. It was comforting to share experiences in this way, and we learned things about each other we might never have learned otherwise! At the end of the day, we're all in the same boat, so it's nice to feel that we have become closer despite social distancing being in place!

It sounds like you've done incredibly well...

It's a great feeling to say we were able to

support our clients around the world – even with these harsh conditions. And I'm extremely proud of how my colleagues and coworkers were able to manage this crisis. Everybody (and I really mean everybody) has worked harder than ever, offering creative and proactive solutions, and was fully supportive. I really appreciate that, knowing that everyone has their own private concerns with schools closed and vulnerable or sick relatives.

It's amazing how well we have adapted and I'm optimistic that we can continue going forward even stronger. It is a difficult situation to navigate, requiring a massive amount of patience from everyone involved. I guess the one good thing about disruption is that it triggers new developments; in our case, it has certainly accelerated the finding of new solutions.

What advice would you give to yourself at the start of 2020 knowing what's ahead?

On a personal note, I would have told myself to meet friends and family more often – no excuses like “too much to do” or “I will do it next week.” I have many friends in other countries and I miss them dearly. But I'm sure I'll see them one day (relatively) soon. Until then, we need to make do as best we can!

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