

# Delivery Never Sleeps

In these unprecedented circumstances, it is inevitable and right that ministers focus intensively on managing the crisis. Previous briefs in this series have given excellent advice on how to do that. This brief assumes you will do all that but then urges you to give a small amount of (high quality) attention to three other things.

## THE PRIORITIES

You had priorities before the crisis. They were important to you and the people of your country. After the crisis they will be important to you and the people again.

- Pick the **most important two or three of these priorities** and set up a **small team** in the ministry to drive them forward as best they can – progress may need to be slowed but aim to maintain some momentum.
- Ask this team to update you with a **brief note (2 pages max) every two weeks** and to tell you
  - *what is going well*
  - *what is going less well*
  - *what they are doing about the problems*
  - *a question or two for you*
- **Respond promptly** – all this should take you no more than 30 minutes a week – it will be a valuable investment of a small amount of your precious time.

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**Identify 2-3 priorities from before the crisis and set up a small team to drive them forward.**

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**Biweekly reports from your team:**

- **What is going well?**
  - **What is going less well?**
  - **What are their actions?**
  - **Questions for you**
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## THE FUTURE

The crisis may dominate for months, perhaps longer but there will, eventually, be a future beyond it. Can you find the resource to **task a small number of talented people to start planning the future now?**

*In 1940, less than a year after Britain found itself at war, when London was being bombed almost every night, when France had been over-run by the Nazis, and when Hitler was planning an invasion of Britain a small number of senior officials from the Ministry of Education requisitioned a few rooms in a hotel out of London and set about their task – to design a school system for after the war. The war lasted another five years but the design they drew up provided the foundation for legislation in the last year of the war and the system after it.*

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**During WWII, a small number of British officials designed a school system for after the war.**

**Can you do something similar?**

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Can you do something similar? **If you had to build your system again from nothing, how would you build it better?** This moment is an opportunity to consider that question seriously. Time for you per week? Often none; may be a 60 minute block once a month.

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## THE LESSONS

The usual way governments go about learning the lessons from a crisis is to set up a Commission of Inquiry to examine what happened, how it was handled and what are the lessons. Often the reports produced are excellent – but often too these Inquiries are slow and by the time they report the world has moved on and the lessons don't get learnt. **Can you find a way to learn the lessons as you go?**

At the end of each week and again at the end of each month ask yourself and your team:

- *What have we learnt this week/this month?*
- *What mistakes have we made and what can we learn from them?*
- *What have others in other countries done that worked/didn't work and what can we learn from them?*

**Apply these lessons immediately** if that makes sense. In any case, **write them down** in a page or two, weekly and monthly, and you'll find by the end of the crisis you have the first draft of a handbook on how to manage a crisis. **Time for you per week? No more than 45 minutes.**

I make that between 1 and 2 hours a week. If you can be disciplined enough to find that time as the crisis swirls around you, I think you'll find it makes an outstanding investment.

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**Can you learn from this crisis as you go?**

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**Weekly & monthly:**

- *What have we learnt?*
  - *What are our mistakes?*
  - *Learn from others*
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**Write these lessons down, and apply them immediately when possible—all in as little as 45 minutes a week.**

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