



The New World of B2B Sales

React, Adapt, Rise

June 2020



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NOW  **NEXT**

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As the health and humanitarian impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic evolve, so do the business and economic challenges. Organizations looking to balance their immediate needs with longer-term opportunities will see the trade-offs play out across three waves of impact: **the Now, the Next and the Never Normal.**

The Now includes an emphasis on supporting people, customers and suppliers. The Next will feature refocusing the business to withstand new threats and seize new opportunities. And the Never Normal will require navigating rapid shifts in cultural norms, values and behaviors.

This is the moment to reinvent business models and reintegrate the value organizations provide into a new societal landscape. The time to shape a mindset of bold business transformation powered by new approaches to technology and responsible leadership is underway.





“Unprecedented economic pressure is mounting. To survive and thrive, businesses need to remain flexible and resilient while looking to the future. The time is now to radically redefine how they operate to emerge stronger. Proactively outpacing change is essential. B2B sales methods must pivot in response—and create measurable results fast.”

Steven Soechtig
Managing Director,
Customer Sales & Service Strategy

Purchasing power is shifting fast, the demand for digital channels is rising. As a result, the risk of commoditization is higher than ever. **Future market leaders must nimbly pivot to retain customers, protect revenues and realign go-to-market investments.**

The good news?

Out of adversity springs opportunity. Challenges create new dynamics that ignite growth.

Companies that adapt quickly and rise from this crisis as market leaders will confidently answer these questions:

NOW

- How do I stay ahead of constantly changing customer needs?
- How do I enable a virtual selling process that drives sales?
- How do I keep a remote salesforce engaged and productive?

NEXT

- How do I make my offering stand out from the competition in a digital world?
- How do I seamlessly blend virtual and traditional sales channels?
- How do I best gather and stay close to all customer demand signals?
- How do I pivot a B2B sales culture that focuses on value?
- Which new strategies can I leverage to decrease cost and increase productivity?
- Which virtual tools should I continue to use in the future?

For organizations preparing for the next, they should consider these **five powerful B2B sales dynamics**

In this perspective, we explore how COVID-19 and its economic consequences will impact the future of B2B selling. The old rule book is a thing of the past. It's time to embrace the unpredictable. Enterprises should take new and different strategic steps now to capture the market share while keeping pace with constantly changing customer demand.

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01

Rediscover Your Customer Stay Close to Stay Relevant

Historical customer insights are irrelevant. What matters is the now.

B2B buyer priorities are changing completely. COVID-19 is forcing tectonic shifts in demand throughout the global economy. In some cases, the crisis is sparking growth. In others, demand is dwindling due to the lockdown and the economic aftershocks that followed.

In response, leaders are pioneering innovative ways of tapping into and understanding customers' needs while reimagining a hopeful post-crisis future. How? By proactively reaching out with empathetic, custom messaging and making concerted efforts to transform customer needs into value-driven solutions.

The leaders of tomorrow are modifying their organizations' sales priorities using a powerful blend of person-to-person communication, predictive analytics and AI engines. That's because they know, in these changing times, meaningful customer connections and insights are critical to surviving and thriving today and in the days ahead.





How to Respond

Rediscover your customers, meet their new needs and continuously delight them

Create Real-Time Customer View

- **Throw Out Your Old Rule Book**
Pre-COVID-19 customer trends and predictive models no longer hold true in the new environment; get to know your customer again; help them identify their evolving needs in this ever-changing market
- **Create New Situational Awareness**
Provide your sales teams with critical, always up-to-date local market- and customer-specific insights
- **Lead from the Front**
Sales managers have visibility and are engaged to monitor the seller activity; provide them proactive coaching and share the latest leading practices

Drive Proactive Outreach

- **Right Customer, Right Message, Right Time**
Always target the right customer with the right message; keep communication timely, relevant, reflective and tailored to each customer's unique situation and needs
- **Stay in Sync**
Maintain consistency across marketing, service and channel partners using an effective blend of digital, virtual and in-person interactions
- **Return to Big-O Origination**
Refocus on the new logo acquisition and align sellers with advanced origination skills to the most important prospect and customer relationships
- **Respond with Urgency**
Enable virtual assistants to improve responsiveness to customer inquiries, sale and service needs

Listen, Learn and Adjust as You Go

- **Activate Listening Posts**
Proactively solicit and analyze feedback from customers and your go-to-market teams
- **Measure for New Results**
Infuse your customer campaigns with insightful KPIs; learn from client responses and drive continuous outreach in the new environment
- **Respond with Agility**
Rapidly execute changes based on the client response by segment, industry and channel
- **Choose Leads Wisely**
Take advantage of the time to only focus on critical improvements to boost sellers' productivity, client conversion and value delivered

Refocus the Salesforce

Define the New Journey

Government-mandated shelter-in-place and social distancing guidelines across the globe have forced organizations to move field sales inside for the foreseeable future.

This sudden tectonic shift has left many in the industry asking, “Now, what?” How can sales survive and even thrive in these new and dramatically different times?

Smart organizations are scrambling to boost the effectiveness of their virtual sales teams, and fast. How? By completely redefining their sales journeys inside out. In the process, they’re uncovering new moments of truth and streamlining their sales approaches to deliver exponentially more convenience and visibility to all customer interactions. Take GE Healthcare, for example. The company freshly redesigned a new COVID-19 patient monitoring software that could be quickly distributed to hospitals.¹

In fact, according to Accenture research, 46% of SMBs have invested in increased infrastructure in ways that render it more virtual, online or contactless.²

Bold new ways of using virtual tools within the B2B selling realm have allowed companies to maintain business continuity. Exponentially more interactions with customers and partners have gone virtual. This swift, industry-wide switch to digital-first has also fueled a sharp increase in tech-savviness of B2B selling teams. It’s a welcome pivot that’s ripe with the potential to drive productivity and engagement.

The global pandemic has upended sales operations at many organizations. But, thanks to new technologies, many are recovering quickly and finding some silver linings. Sales teams are getting used to virtually connecting with customers more, and they hope this new habit stays for good once stay-at-home restrictions are lifted.

Across the US, UK and EU, the B2B site traffic saw a 32% year-over-year (YoY) increase in the week closing March 29, while sales fell 17% YoY.³

“B2B sales teams are at an inflection point. What used to fill the funnel won’t fill the funnel anymore. Refocusing on defining new digital sales journeys is a must for what is to come.”

Jennifer Lidsky
Managing Director
Customer Sales & Service Strategy



How to Respond

Prioritize the strongest opportunities, tear up the playbook and strive for success

Double Down on High-Value Opportunities

- **Narrow the Sales Funnel**
Manage the early-stage offering pipeline and move away from numerous unqualified opportunities. Why? In an economic downturn, quantity must quickly shift to quality
- **Ensure New Wins Stay Won**
Assume any deal won—but not closed and delivered—is at risk
- **Put Your Sales Talent Where the Money Is**
Evaluate your top sales talent to serve the highest-value potential customer segments and opportunities

Redefine the Sales Playbook

- **Focus on Selling Moments that Matter**
Carve out an early competitive edge by elevating the core “moments of truth” in your sales interactions; pay careful attention to not only the communication tools you use, but most importantly, to people and their emotions
- **Harness the Power of New Lead Sources**
Look beyond all the usual places when sourcing leads, as they are no longer relevant; instead, tap into promising social media exchanges, referrals from existing customers and service interactions
- **Forge Virtual Relationships, Not Just a Digital Presence**
Pinpoint opportunities in the sales process to blend digital and virtual (telepresence) interactions to cultivate personal connections with your customers

Execute to Win Every Deal

- **Help Your Sellers Sell (In the Now)**
Update win strategies and sales materials to position your products and services to reflect new needs and priorities of customers
- **Price to Win**
Consistently monitor competitor and market pricing and price offerings accordingly to win every deal
- **Up Your Sales Coaching Game**
Continuously train your sales teams on the new digital and virtual deal execution methods and tools; turn your sales managers into expert deal coaches to amplify what’s working across the sales teams

03

Reimagine the Offer Embrace New Narratives, Approaches and Terms

The economic environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic has set into motion a nearly unprecedented decline in company revenues and market capitalization.

To stay relevant, B2B sales organizations must anticipate these massive shifts by understanding changing customer buyer patterns and unmet needs. They must also actively test, learn and accordingly reposition their interactions, offers, messaging and deal terms to fit these new needs.

For example, a study revealed that 93% of leading sales organizations agree that their sellers effectively communicate value messages that are relevant to buyers' needs, versus 43% of other organizations.⁴

Bottom line: While creating new opportunities, B2B sales organizations must not neglect their current customers. Retaining customers via creative commercial strategies—and at the same time attracting new customers—is critical to recapturing growth in the post-COVID-19 future.





How to Respond

Meet customers' new needs by reinventing and diversifying dynamic offers

Mine for Undetected Customer Needs

- **Uncover New Signals to Demand**
Continually scan the horizon for changes in supply and demand across relevant geographies, regions and local markets
- **Tap into Dark Customer Data**
Take advantage of emerging customer data sources and predictive AI tools to achieve the optimal customer targeting and uncover new propensity-to-buy shifts in real time. For example, sales teams for leading food service distribution companies are using anonymized geo-spatial data, social media sentiment, and government announcements to identify geographic hot-spots to target as the economy reopens.
- **Innovate with Agility**
Build creative cross-functional teams to pioneer new service offerings and enhancements; embrace an agile innovate-test-learn-refine approach

Reinvent and Diversify Dynamic Offers

- **Refresh and Provide the Unprovided**
Repurpose existing products and services to meet and exceed unfulfilled or new customer needs
- **Tailor Offers for Digital Interactions**
Bundle and repackage deals to create hybrid business and work-from-home products and services that are more reflective of the times
- **Team Up to Boost Value**
Establish new and shared revenue streams with channel partners (for example, package complimentary products and value-added services)
- **Monetize Services to Win**
Build and tailor new services to complement existing products and broaden services around core offers
- **Expand into Adjacent Areas**
Piggyback on your core competencies to innovate new, future-ready products that seamlessly dovetail with existing offerings

Create Customized Commercial Terms

- **Ready, Set, Negotiate**
Establish commercial command centers made up of sellers, negotiators and finance specialists to govern critical deal terms and triage customer concession requests
- **Manage Your Exposure**
Understand your customers' unique financial conditions; this will allow you to tailor optimal commercial terms, extend credit and mitigate the repayment risk
- **Intervene Early to Retain**
Target commercial interventions to retain your most critical customers
- **Anticipate New Commercial Realities**
Prepare for the unexpected by using commercial scenario planning; develop options to address customers' short-term cash-flow limitations

04

Reset Your Sales Approach Align, Measure and Incentivize for Outcomes

In virtually all industries, COVID-19 has sparked a sharp and sudden drop in demand. As a result, angst among sales teams and leadership members is rising. In some cases, your customers' needs have dramatically shifted as they clamber to serve new revenue streams of their own.

Accordingly, from today and moving forward, sales organizations must hone in on helping customers solve problems in both immediate and intermediate terms. In the long run, exceeding customers' needs now will demonstrate loyalty to sellers that are genuinely committed to helping them in uncertain times. In fact, a 2019 study discovered that organizations that dynamically align their sales processes to customers' changing paths have 17.9% higher win rates and 11.8% more quota attainment rates.⁵

However, the crisis has exposed sales workforces that are resistant to change, as well as those that rely heavily on new acquisitions. As sales organizations invest in gaining a greater understanding of existing customer needs and opportunities, they must also rally their workforces around newer and better concepts of value. For example, inspired by a recent surge in new uses of existing products, an industrial manufacturer created an innovation taskforce to identify, design and solve for unmet customer needs.

The focus moving forward must be on building an adaptive, future-ready workforce and culture.





How to Respond

Redeploy sales talent and investments to stay ahead of changing customers' needs

Concentrate on High-Value Markets and Segments

- **Rethink Your Position and Value**
Customers' needs have changed. In response, organizations must adapt how they position the value of their products and services in this new climate
- **Decide Where to Play (or Re-Place Your Bets)**
Shift go-to-market investments away from lagging segments and regions; stand strong in stable markets; be nimble in those experiencing temporary spikes; double down on areas likely to emerge early and/or sustain long-term demand growth
- **Be Agile or Be Obsolete**
Amass a tech-savvy, highly adaptable salesforce to rapidly reposition high-demand offers in a volatile market; stay ahead of the curve by embracing AI-enabled capabilities to anticipate market changes

Reallocate Your Go-To-Market Talent and Coverage

- **Be Direct—When It Matters**
Shake up your existing channel mix to shift targeted customers to a direct model
- **Pick Your Partners of the Future**
Reassess your existing partner relationships to better identify and invest in future partners
- **Cover the Right Bases**
Streamline the go-to-market coverage in areas suffering from dwindling customer demand and support through partnerships to provide burst-capacity for short-term activities
- **Outmaneuver the Competition**
Use AI-powered market insights to rapidly move into areas of competitive advantage, drive growth and recapture the market share

Measure and Incentivize Differently

- **Align and Adjust as You Go**
Align incentives and modify discounting policies to encourage your sales teams to focus on the highest-value customer segments and newest product bundles
- **Embrace New KPIs for the Now and the Next**
Tailor results measurement to the new digital reality; for example, the field sales team's effectiveness must be assessed against changing daily performance objectives such as lead generation, origination and customer outreach activities
- **Know When to Move the Goal Posts and By How Much**
Revisit sales quotas and make thoughtful adjustments in response to the downturn; sales goals should 1) be aspirational and motivational, 2) motivate growth, 3) be targeted to retain the top performers, and 4) balance seller payouts with the company's overall top- and bottom-line performance

05

Re-Enable Your Sales Teams Make It Real Time, Guided and Easy

The COVID-19 downturn is expected to amplify the value proposition of innovative selling approaches. And, this shift will be powered by emerging data insights and technology. Due to the pace and breadth of the changes we're all feeling the impact of, this technology transformation cannot take months. Time is of the essence. Companies can leap ahead of the curve fast by building upon existing tech platforms. How? By infusing them with real-time data that is currently available about changes in customer business brought about by the COVID-19 downturn.

Sales representatives and managers often rely on instinct to execute sales strategies. Many often view tech tools that capture customer and account context—and increase visibility into the selling process—as roadblocks in their daily jobs. Indeed, research reveals that more than 80% of CSOs are not confident about the adoption of the various sales technologies that they have deployed.⁶

This is why now is the time to unlock the powerful potential of tech-driven marketing, sales and service platforms. These insight-driven automated innovations dramatically improve usability and deliver hyper-relevant insights to empower the sales teams to act swiftly on crucial opportunities. At the same time, they also enable extended account teams and leadership to collaborate better together—and, ultimately, win.

A garment producer is already finding success using this future-proof innovative approach. Pairing predictive technology and tech-savvy talent, the global manufacturing company is driving a significant revenue growth and improving the customer experience in these new times. It's also boosting productivity and efficiency through a blend of advanced analytics and talent-matching algorithms.





How to Respond

All hands and tech on deck: Rally your teams around the new—from data to platforms to processes and beyond

Create True Customer Visibility

- **One Truth, Not Many**
Designate your marketing, sales and service platforms as a combined single source of truth for your campaigns, leads, customers and partners
- **Get the Full Picture**
Use new data sources (first- and third-party and dark data, among others) to capture an insightful 360-degree view of your customers. And, be sure this key data is fed directly into your one source of truth
- **Now, Use It**
Commit to a roadmap that makes the most of big data, cloud computing and AI/ML tools in ways that improve your marketing, sales and service platforms

Guide the Salesforce

- **Stay on Target**
Embed AI capabilities in your sales platform to focus your sales teams on higher probability, higher value opportunities in markets that are demonstrating early crisis recovery
- **Arm Sellers with Relevant Market Insights**
Equip sales teams with a dynamic dashboard clearly broken down by market and territory levels and curated to existing customers and prospects
- **Know What to Know ... to Win**
Provide a quick double-click view into existing customers and prospects, exploring the status of their business, financial data, relationships and entire interaction history

Crack the Anti-Technology Code

- **Less is More**
Furnish sellers with smarter tools that arm them with meaningful insights and help them seize opportunities at the right moment
- **Keep It Simple**
Simplify the complete digital experience from ease of navigation to sales team field setup
- **Make It Easy**
Enable seamless data capture and increase quality through automated integration of internal and external data sources
- **Coach and Govern**
Develop reinvented playbook-led coaching to help sellers tap into the functionality that accelerates sales results; structure leadership oversight to drive outcomes from enhanced visibility, collaboration and reporting cadence

We are here to help you

These trying times will most likely have a lasting ripple effect on consumer behaviors, supply chains and routes to market. Sales operations will most likely be heavily impacted.

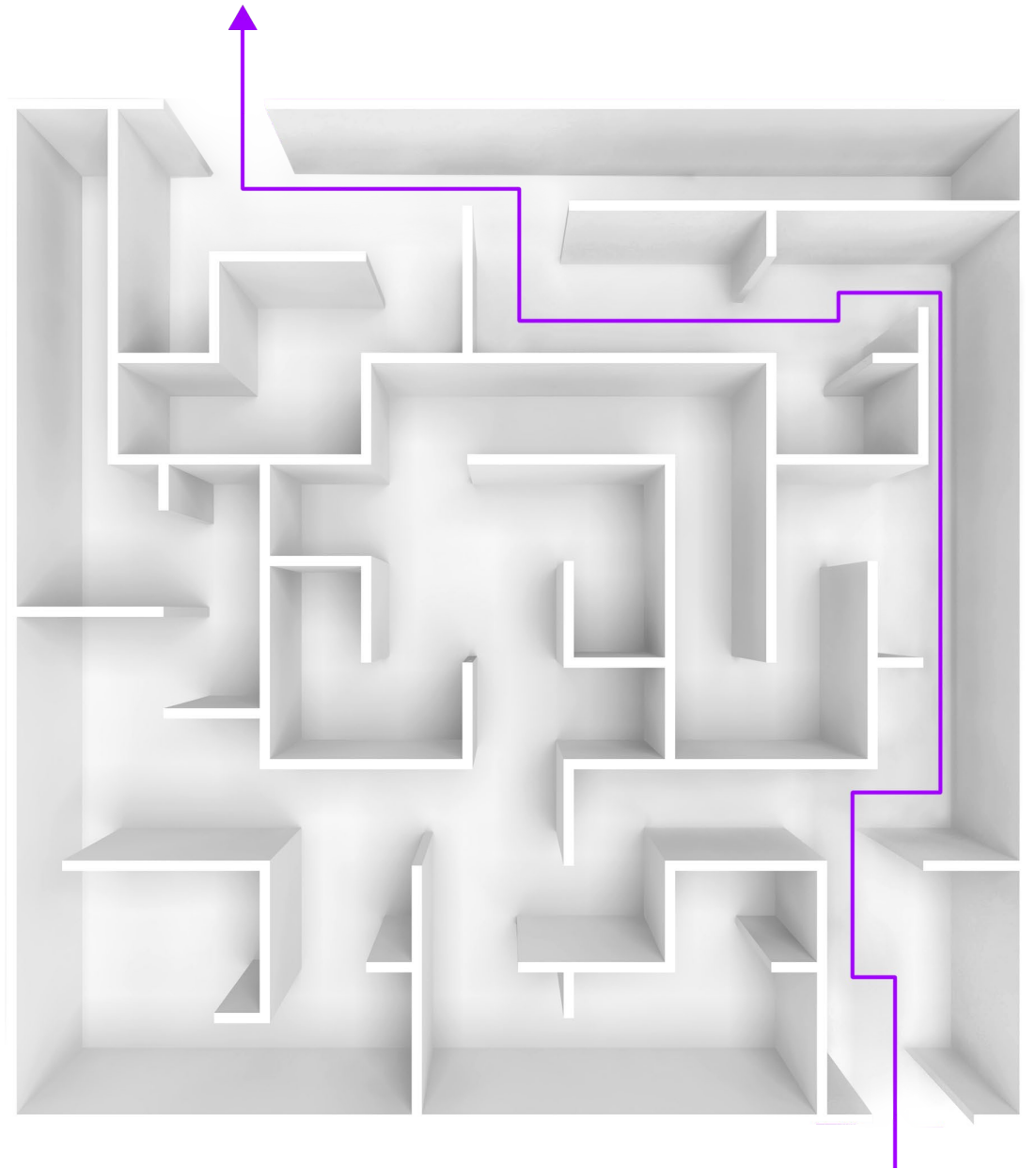
However, out of uncertainty springs innovation and ingenuity. Unprecedented times bring about unprecedented opportunities. Amid disruption, resilience and reinvention create hope and a lasting change.

Navigating the crisis requires an entirely new playbook. Embracing a balanced approach is essential to managing the near term while preparing for the future.

Accenture is helping clients outmaneuver uncertainty in both short- and long-term. We're committed to helping organizations emerge stronger, and grow and flourish in the days ahead.

You can count on us to help your company stabilize revenue, keep pace with evolving demand and forge new, disruptive and sustainable growth pathways.

Through it all, we are here to help.



How Accenture can help you create a strong future **NOW**



Create customer visibility and outreach in a rapidly changing environment

- Embrace a real-time, AI-driven response capability that plugs you into continuous local insights
- Identify and prioritize at-risk customers for proactive early intervention, support and retention
- Develop scenario planning for all customer classes to position for sudden shifts



Reimagine offers to meet evolving needs of customers

- Nimblely tailor your offers to fast-changing, new customer needs; target the right segments, bundle products and services, and update commercial contracting terms
- Create a renewed demand tracking and scouting capability
- Be ready to rapidly adapt new offers on the fly so you can rise from the downturn as a market leader



Protect and recapture revenue in the new normal

- Create powerful new ways to keep current customers and rescue at-risk deals
- Steer your sales team to must-win opportunities and transform service interactions into new sales
- Create pathways to effective inside sales and accelerate digital sales channels



Rebalance sales talent, assets and investments

- Redistribute and enhance go-to-market investment ROI by revising commercial treatments and boosting negotiation capabilities
- Assess pricing and discount policies while adjusting for demand generation spend as well as for shifting sales skills and coverage

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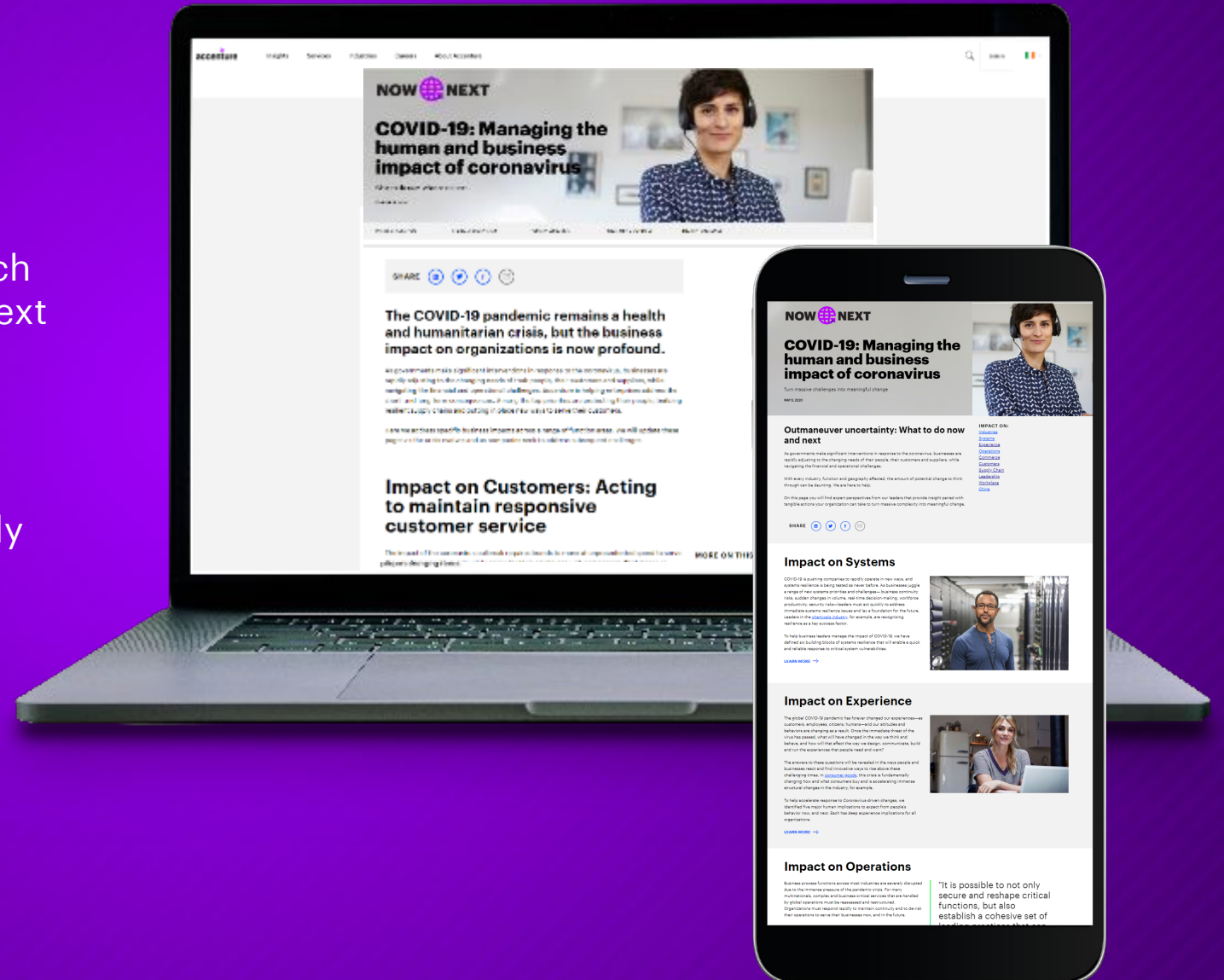
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To help our clients navigate both the human and business impact of COVID-19, we've created a hub of all of our latest thinking on a variety of topics.

Each topic highlights specific actions which can be taken now, and what to consider next as industries move toward a new normal.

From leadership essentials to ensuring productivity for your employees and customer service groups to building supply chain resilience and much more, our hub will be constantly updated. Check back regularly for more insights.

[VISIT OUR HUB HERE](#)



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