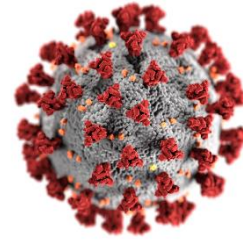


An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road that curves through a dense forest. The road is dark with white lane markings. The surrounding trees are in various shades of green and brown, suggesting an autumn setting. The road disappears into the distance, creating a sense of depth and journey.

# Leading Amid COVID-19 Client Survey Findings

## 2020



## About the survey

The goal of this survey is to help CMA's community of clients learn from and support each other during these stressful times. Both solidarity and support matter, and we want to help spread your messages.

**182** participants completed the survey in mid-April, reporting how they and their organization have been affected by the pandemic and ensuing economic consequences. Leaders were surveyed to understand their challenges, lessons learned, and plans for the future. Aggregated findings are reported below.



### Survey Dashboard

Sample Size

**182**

participants

Industries

**24**

represented

Manufacturing, 23%  
Construction, 16%  
Financial, 14%  
Healthcare, 10%  
Other 37%

Level

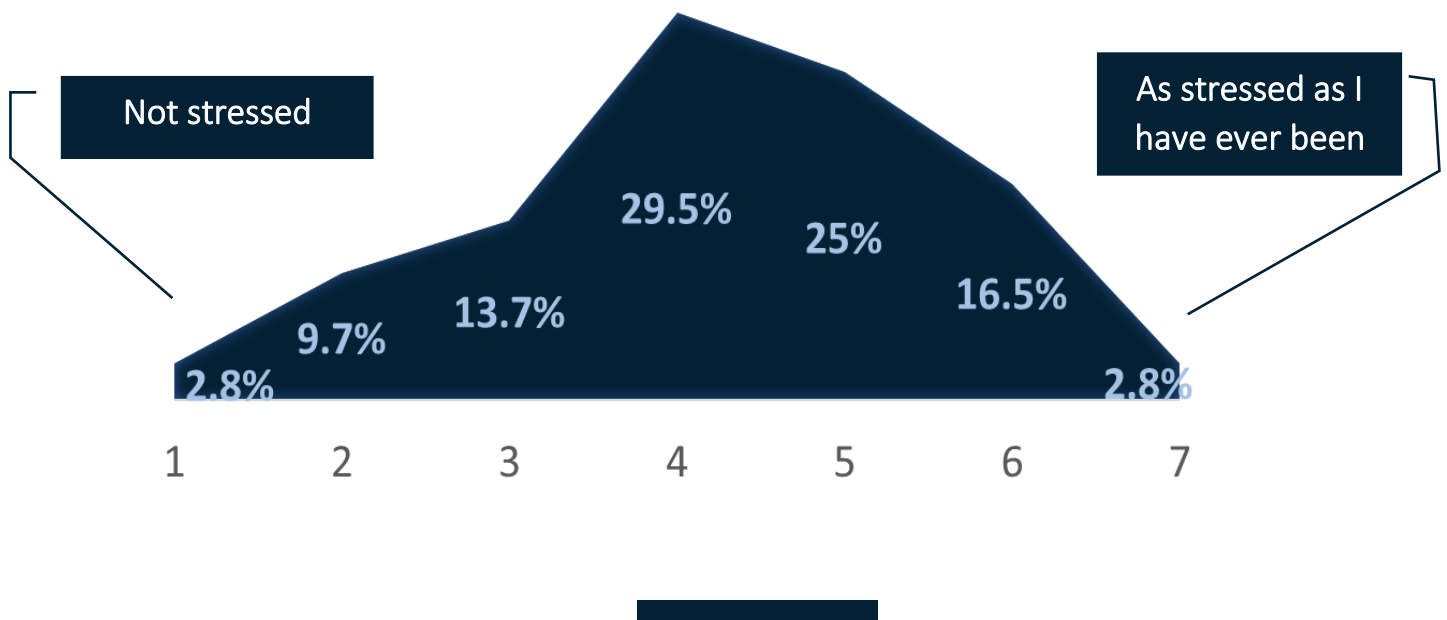
**62%**

Executives

Senior Manager, 23%  
Middle Manager, 11%  
Employee, 4%

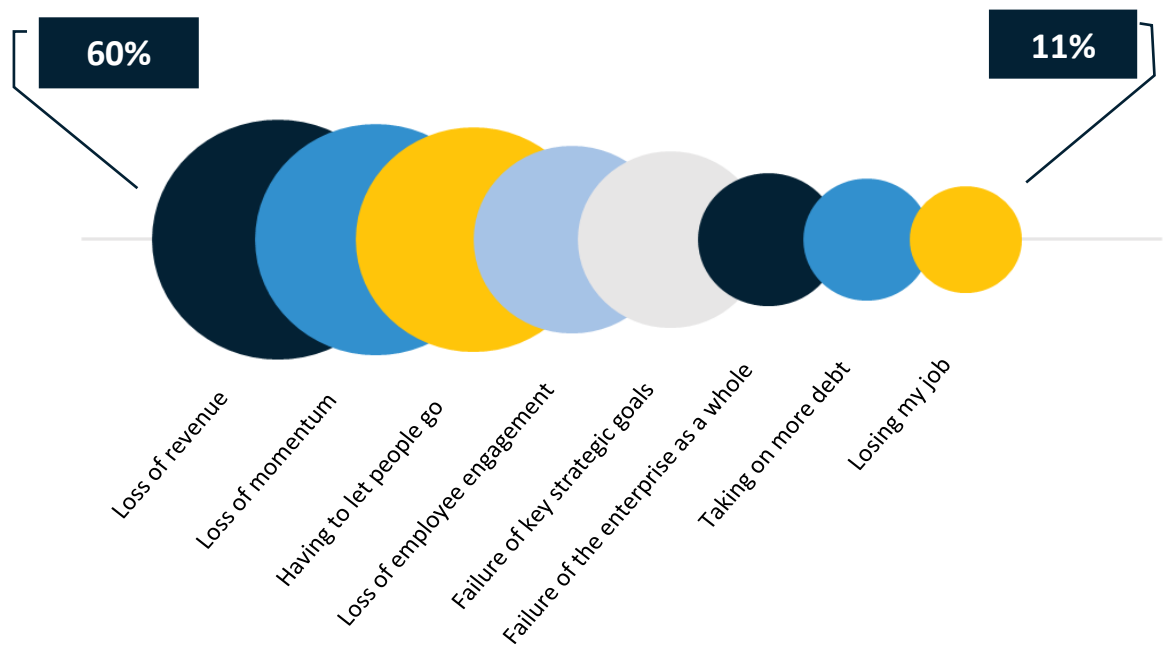
## STRESS

Leaders report this experience has been especially **stressful and demanding**. Nearly **20%** find it to be one of the most stressful experiences they have had to date, and nearly **75%** have felt moderately to highly stressed amid COVID. If you feel more stress than usual, remember you are not alone.



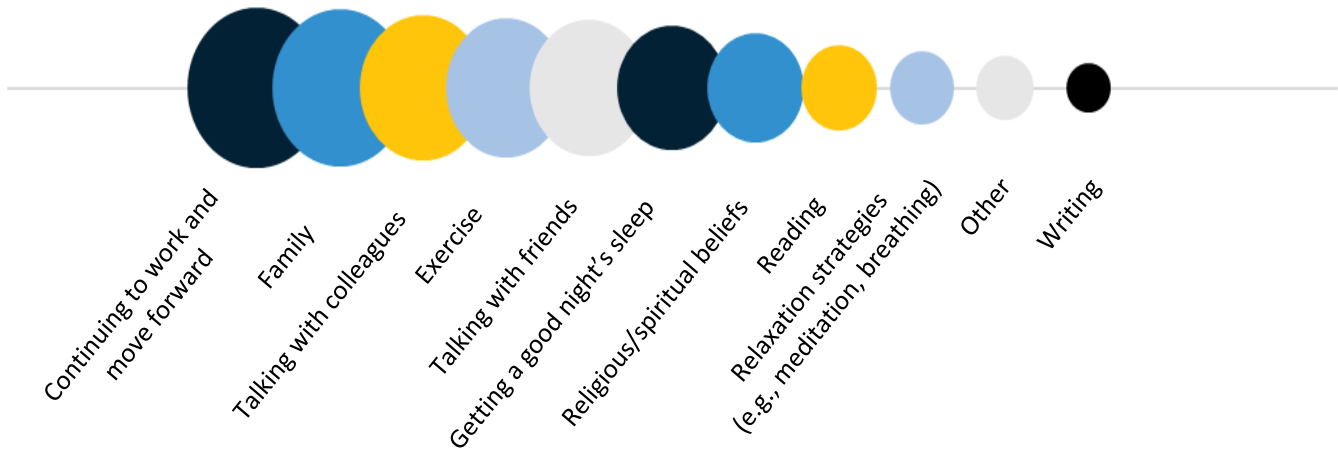
## COMMON WORRIES

**50-60%** of respondents worry about loss of revenue, momentum, and the possibility of layoffs.



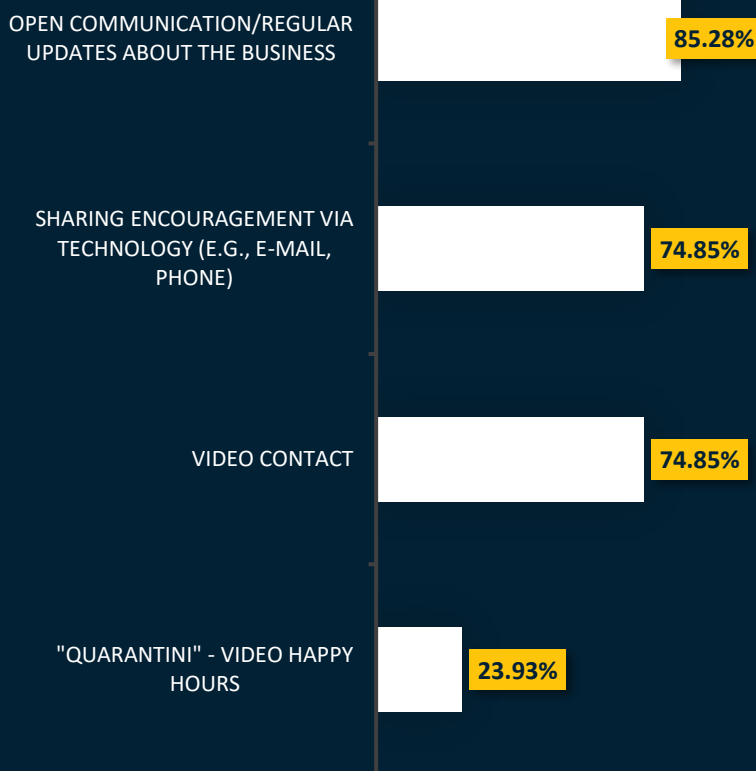
## COPING

While leaders may not have control over the crisis, they do have control over their **response to the crisis**. Leaders reported they have been taking comfort in the following coping strategies:



## TEAM SUPPORT

What are leaders doing to support their teams and others in their organization?



Keep perspective;  
attitude is  
everything.”

## REFLECTION

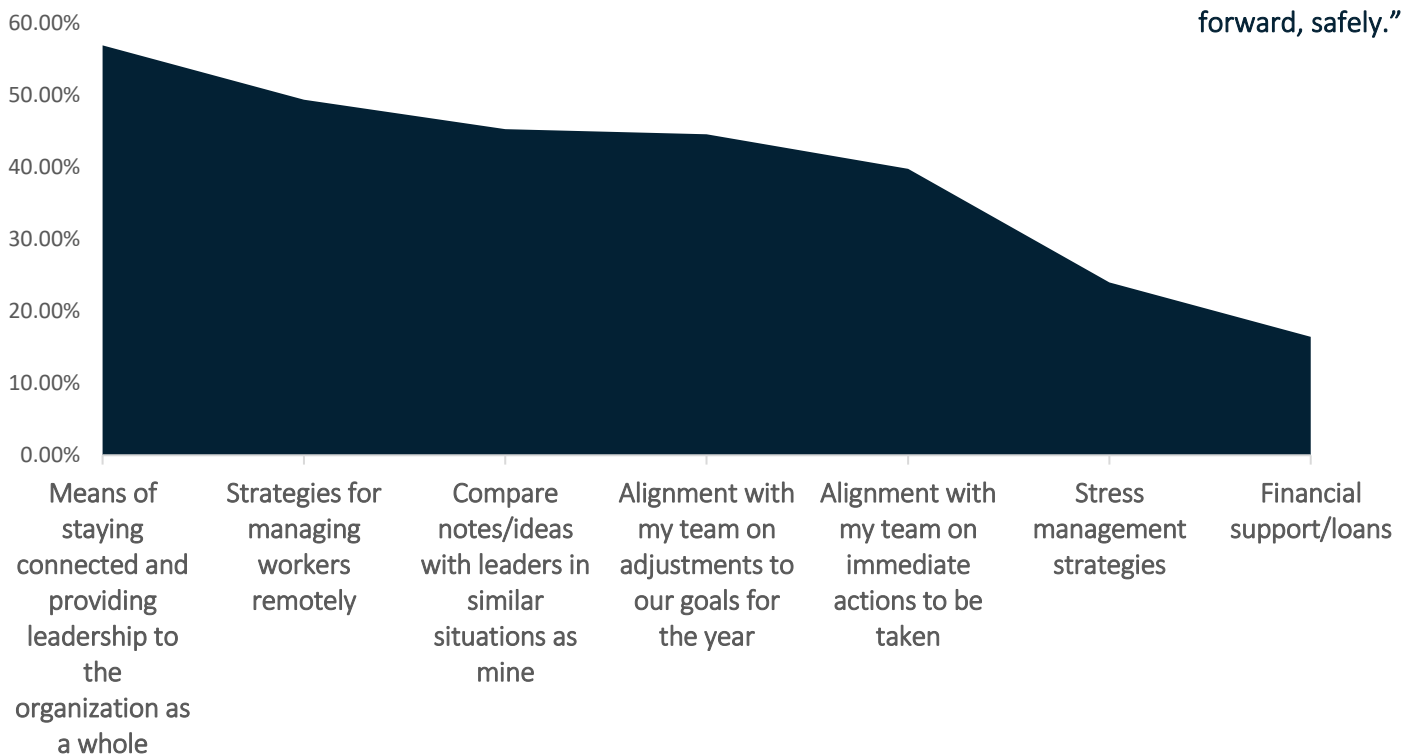
1. Experiencing stress is perfectly normal in these unprecedented times.
2. Your self-care is critical not only to your success, but it also sets an important example for your team to follow.
3. Give yourself and others the benefit of the doubt right now. Everyone is stressed and likely doing the best they can.

## NEEDS

Aside from the end of the crisis, leaders reported their top COVID-related needs. Needs were varied. **57%** are seeking ways to stay connected and to provide leadership during this team. **49%** are seeking strategies for managing remote workers. **45%** would find it valuable to compare notes and ideas with leaders in similar situations as their own. **40-45%** are seeking greater alignment with their team.



“The reason that you're in the position you're in, is because you are the best at what you do. Right now, your best will be challenged. BUT there's no better person to be leading than you. Lead the business forward, safely.”





## LESSONS LEARNED

Five key lessons leaders reported and continue to practice while navigating this difficult time.

### 1. Care for Self and Others

- Accept the unpredictability, practice patience, and be flexible
- Prioritize taking care of others without neglecting yourself; practice coping skills and self-regulation
- Compassionate leadership is appreciated right now; show care and concern for your people

### 2. Importance of Personal Connection

- Emphasize personal connection and authenticity now more than ever
- Remember a strong work culture and leadership team is critical
- Tap into a heightened sense of appreciation for direct reports and their daily responsibilities

### 3. Leadership Presence

- Projecting confidence and optimism are key to success
- Be visible and present through multiple channels; even a little goes a long way
- Clearly define roles and expectations to more smoothly navigate the virtual landscape

### 4. Preparedness

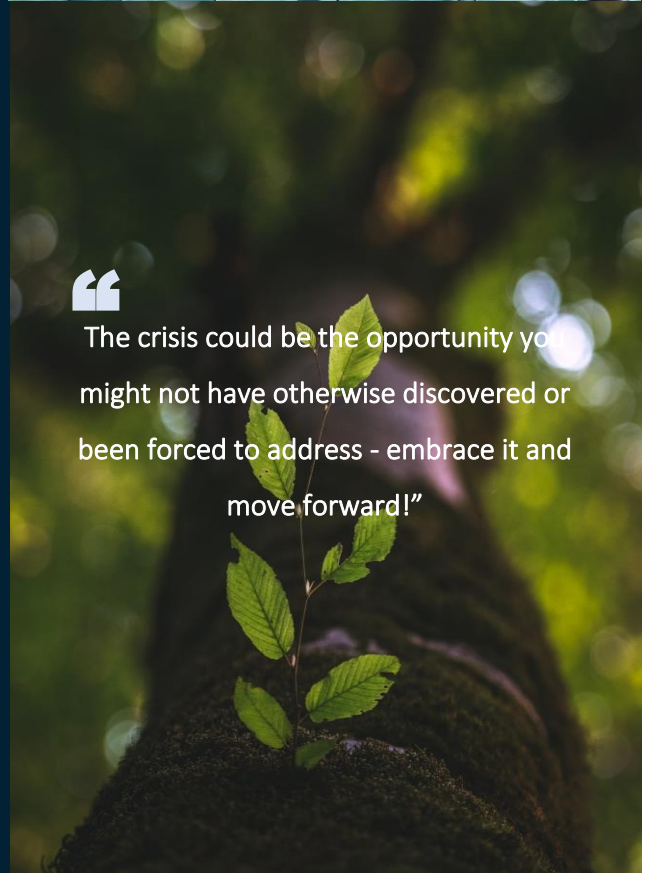
- Engage in contingency planning; plan for A, B, and C
- Plan for worst case scenario; it brings a sense of control and continuity
- Be proactive and intentional not reactive

### 5. Communication

- Communicate regularly with clients and the community
- Elevate internal communication – the amount, cadence, and clarity are so important right now
- Listen to your employees; you may be surprised about their ideas for navigating this time



You can control ship and sail, not wind and wave. Stay flexible.”



The crisis could be the opportunity you might not have otherwise discovered or been forced to address - embrace it and move forward!”



Be thoughtful about your people decisions. Overreacting to the business impacts of the crisis can make the entire crisis worse.”

## LOOKING FORWARD

**87%** of leaders are currently planning how to get back up to speed and bring employees back together once business resumes as usual.

The most commonly reported activities include:

### NEAR-TERM PLANNING



1. Creating COVID-19 **Committees and Task Forces**
2. Creating plans to **protect employees** and continue to flatten the curve:
  - Planning for a staggered, phased return to work with a focus on prioritizing ramp up areas
  - Considering social distancing and screening protocols in alignment with CDC guidelines
  - Evaluating big gatherings, both internal meetings and industry events, for clear value beyond the risk
3. Creating action plans in the event of **COVID-19 cases** in the workplace
4. Engaging in additional **strategic planning** measures such as forecasting and scenario planning
5. Planning how to **celebrate** when the world returns closer to normal
6. Applying for an SBA or PPP **loan**
7. Building competency and seeking expertise around **supporting employees through anxiety and stress**

### LONG-TERM PLANNING

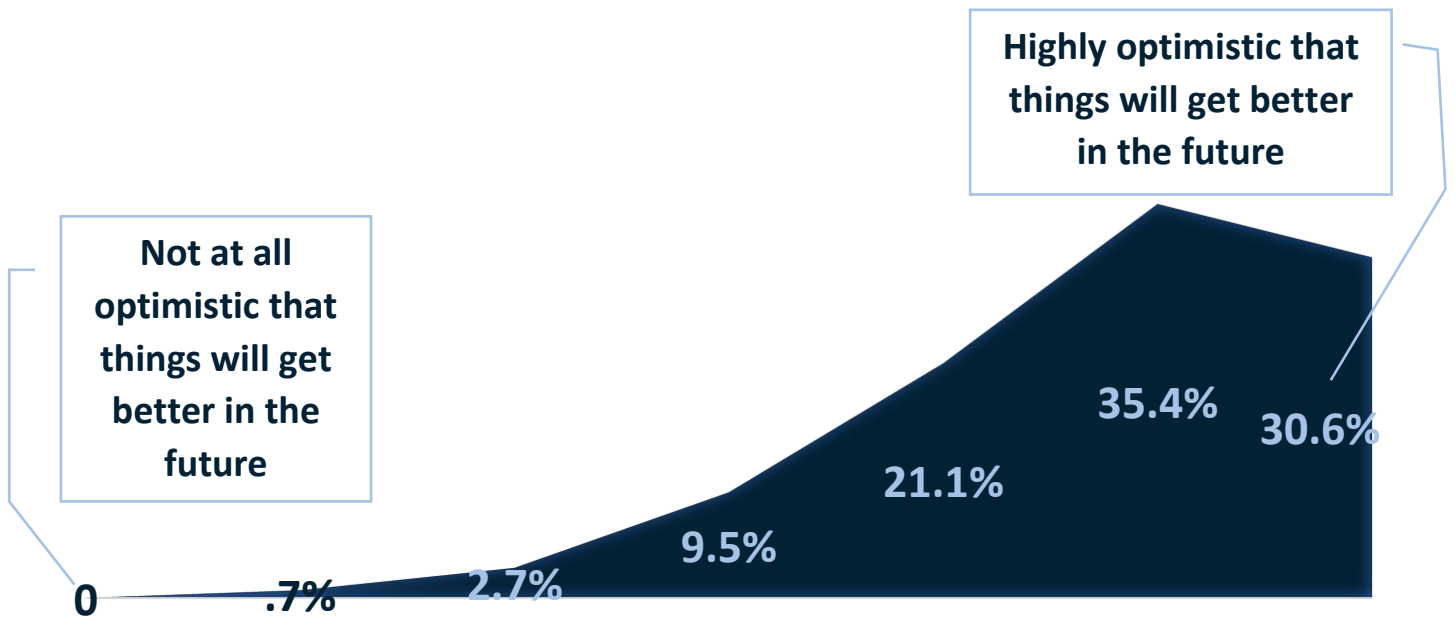


In the future, it seems companies are **far more committed to allowing work from home**. **Overwhelmingly**, the most reported lesson learned is a friendlier view of work from home practices post-COVID. Ideas range from implementing “work from home Fridays” to allowing staff to work from home any time they want.

Others report they are re-considering sick leave policies, increasing their reliance on technology, and refining disaster plans for the future.

## LOOKING FORWARD

**96%** of leaders are moderately to highly optimistic about the future.



## IN YOUR OWN WORDS

**What message would you like to send other leaders at this time?**

“

Communication during a difficult time can ease fears and reinforce togetherness; lack of communication causes people to panic.”

“

Human beings are incredibly adaptive if you make them feel safe and supported. We can do this.”

“

We're all in this together and learning as we go. It's OK to ask for help and reach out to others.”

“

Trust your employees working from home. Keep them calm and motivated by having regular virtual meetings to hear their concerns and successes.”

“

This is a low point, but not the END POINT.”





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

To explore more CMA perspectives on leading amid COVID:



Read CMA's company **blog**: <https://www.cmaconsult.com/category/blog/>

*Topics include leading virtual teams, stress and coping, managing your brain when the world seems unmanageable, leading in a VUCA world, and more*



Watch CMA's webinar on **Managing Self Through a Crisis**: [Webinar 1, watch on demand](#)

*Strong and effective leaders take good care of themselves. This allows them to thrive in good times and bad, to stay resilient. The best research in social science holds that managing the self through crisis begins with understanding the input you're given, shaping your "self talk," and then proactively managing your responses to given situations. In a crisis, we can't always control our situations, but we can control how we perceive and process them. To that end, this webinar will walk you through strategies for managing oneself through a crisis.*

CMA continues to wish everyone health and safety during this difficult time. Your team of organizational psychologists are here to help if you need further support.

[www.cmaconsult.com](http://www.cmaconsult.com)

7751 Carondelet Avenue, Suite #200, Saint Louis, MO 63105

314.721.1860

St. Louis / Kansas City / Denver

