

2020 Lessons Learned
Planting season review

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Framework for review

Four Domains of Review

1. Organization and leadership
2. Staff management
3. Medical services
4. Field implementation (the nitty gritty of everyday life in pandemic)

Questions for the industry to ponder

- What do you see as key priorities (**considerations**) to protect the industry moving forward?
- How do you prioritize these concerns amid pre-existing demands and challenges?
- Are there specific actions you suggest with respect to any of the individual considerations?

Organization and Leadership

- WFLA – organization and leadership not designed to deal with pandemic, yet was forced into lead role in 2020
- Key assistance came from outside the association.
- Functional silos formed around specific issues such as budgeting COVID adaptation and communicating with government.
- Consider establishing standing committees that can help the industry formulate strategies for responding to future pandemics or other upset conditions.
- People may wish to evaluate leadership, but should consider entire context when doing so.
- The industry was negotiating with Gov't agencies and licensees that were in crisis mode themselves.
- The success of the year needs to consider the worst case scenario identified in March, the actual outcomes, AND the gains made in public image and reputation for capacity among Govt agencies.
- If evaluating leadership and organization, use a reliable model, such as those that examine healthy organizations or resiliency.
- Consider the contributions made by all the individuals and from parties inside and outside of the association, and consider the importance of a central body through which the COVID adaptation strategies could be developed, debated, and advanced to the target audience.
- Consider the COVID was the “iceberg” but the industry ship had other “hull patches) and ongoing perils of the sea (pre-existing challenges) that also had to be dealt with in 2020 (ergonomics, harassment, emergency preparedness) – work is constantly being done to manage these imperatives and support industry adaptations – which helped build resiliency to manage 2020.
- Consider how to evaluate and appreciate industry leadership with an objective and organized approach that takes outcomes and conditions into account.



Organization and Leadership

- Examine your own preparedness and capacity in 2020.
- Many companies learned important lessons about their staff, discovered hidden talents and abilities among staff.
- Value of “do-it-all” personnel paid off.
- Companies with organized plan of succession with leaders already in training, were better prepared to adapt.
- Consider internal evaluations of organization and leadership using same criteria as applied to industry (see previous consideration)
- Contractor characteristics and size affected their experience of risk and ability to adapt.
- Larger companies had more resources available, but also had more at stake. Some medium companies heavily vested in one activity (i.e. planting) that lacked key resources such as shops, faced big challenges to adapt, and had to take significant risks as they invested in their management plan.
- Consider mapping the sector to understand range of needs among all contractors in order to better inform future decision making. Different seasonal windows, classification units, sizes, operating areas, and other features are important to consider when developing plans for the industry.



Organization and Leadership



- Community relationships were critical in gaining access to work areas. In some cases, there was opposition to planting occurring, and this opposition often was grounded in a faulty understanding of the sector, or outdated negative stereotypes.
- Companies that have invested in positive community relationships benefited from past work.
- Image of the industry is subject to negotiation – it is fluid, and it can be reshaped and corrected with the proper engagement strategy.
- Consider developing a strategy for image and representation
- Government and agency access was critical for adaptation. For example, it took several months to get PHO guidelines passed, and ultimately the task turned on one key contact.
- Knowing who does what and under what authority is central to both understanding demands placed on the industry (i.e. security guard details) and negotiating assistance for key issues such as seasonal delays or interpreting guidelines and regulations.
- Consider institutional mapping of the various agencies that potentially impact silviculture on both a regular and emergency basis.
- Who are we, where are we, and how many are we? It became critical to map the deployment of the industry in order to inform strategies for service delivery, and to successfully negotiated with key government agencies.
- Having a full listing of companies became immediate useful in locating two missing planters in July who had not been in touch with their parents in over a month, and helped avert missing persons report.
- Consider industry mapping and profile of where companies are located to help inform service delivery, responding to exigent circumstances, issuing alerts on issues related to geographic areas, and gathering input from contractors on local issues.

Staff Management



- The people in this industry are incredible – the commitment of workers to self-isolation prior to deployment in April and May was CRITICAL to success of the season. There were isolated complaints, but the vast majority of workers proved themselves responsible, reliable, and dedicated to taking steps to protect themselves and others.
- Actions of workers strongly rebuked negative characterizations of the industry advanced by media trolls and critics.
- Workers demonstrated a deep commitment to their job by merely showing up amid a pandemic, and for many of them that involved cross-country travel and significant risk and investment.
- Workers helped raise over \$90,000 for local foodbanks and a women’s shelter, and many workers from Quebec donated entire days of pay to these causes.
- The Tree Planting Film Festival in 2019 undoubtedly helped raise the profile of the industry, and shows what can be done in recreating the way workers view themselves and are viewed by others.
- Image of the industry is critical in ensuring that the planting sector is a group that Govt WANTS to do business with and WANTS to create plans for as we move forward into fluid post-COVID budgeting. The volume of the industry is directly tied to Govt action and policy, and also subject to public opinion. The faith of all parties in our ability to be strong, capable, responsible, and merited players will affect the future of this industry.
- Consider celebrating and portrayals of workers both to better inform the public and other agencies of who tree planters are (as professionals and as people) – and to show respect to the workforce.

Staff Management



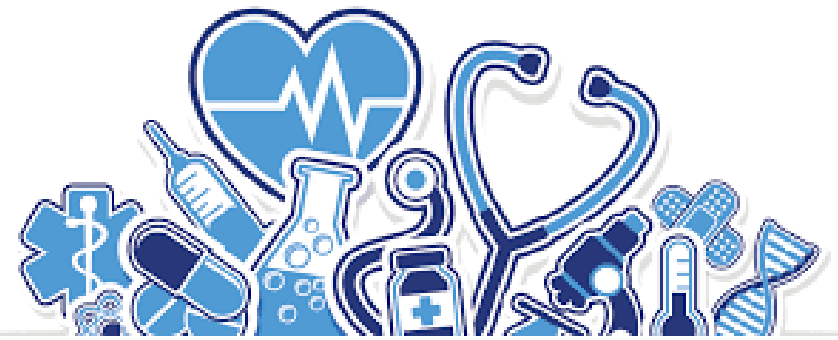
- Worker communication central to implementing plans. COVID management plans are worthless without implementation, and worker buy-in was absolutely critical to success.
- Workers needed to be informed of what they should expect, and even what to bring in terms of equipment for a pandemic season.
- Workers provided important feedback on guidelines, and offered valuable ideas about things that could be done to better managed the pandemic.
- It is easier to recruit cooperation than to try to coerce and enforce compliance. Providing workers a say in the conditions and changes they deal with helps get them on board with the rules of the workplace.
- Online communication included Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, emails, and various commentary sites.
- At times, hundreds of messages and posts were sent each week. Communication followed a very clear strategy to speak in worker terms, deal with trolls, and directly address worker interests and concerns. Prompt and consistent replies were necessary to maintain conversations.
- The industry relies HEAVILY on young mobile workers without labour representation, yet still lacks a strategy to communicate with them.
- French language translations were CRITICAL year, and thanks is needed to the workers that facilitated this.
- Consider developing a social media and worker outreach strategy

Staff Management



- Staff management policies were tested deeply with respect to recruitment, management, and dismissal.
- There were varied experiences and practices with companies that had to let people go. Some took extensive measures to ensure workers returned home and not linger in isolated communities.
- Practices varied in rehiring workers that broke isolation. Some had to isolate prior to joining new crews, some had reference checks, others were welcomed easily and quickly.
- More information is required around the conditions that can be attached to employment to ensure that workers are treated fairly, and that the industry is aware of what it must and should do during pandemic conditions. This includes understanding demands around health logbooks, testing, and dismissal. There are also lingering concerns around questions that can be asked and answered during hiring, such as sharing of information about workers during reference checks.
- **Consider obtaining legal advice on key staff management policies.**
- Going into the season, there was a focus on sexual harassment which raised questions about how this issue may unfold under conditions of pandemic isolation. Over 200 frontline staff and supervisors completed anti-harassment workshops prior to the season.
- **Consider conducting a survey of workers beyond mere labour market issues – there is a potential need and definitive opportunity to learn about key issues that affect the workforce, and their experiences during 2020, their commitment to future seasons, and what factors or conditions affected them negatively or positively during 2020.**

Medical Services



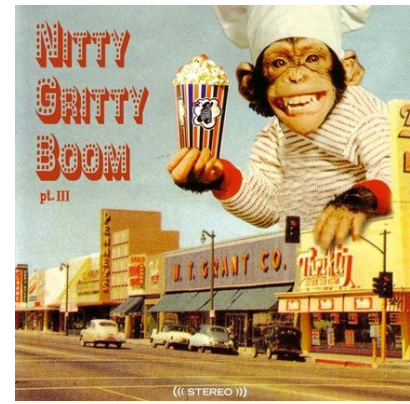
- Public health system access was varied. Some companies waited for many days for appointments, and encountered less-than-satisfactory (and sometimes unpleasant) treatment. Others had fast response and excellent assistance.
- Companies with close connections and long-time standing in their operating areas seemed to fare better in accessing services.
- Total Physio Medical was rolled out to provide increased online access to doctors and instant prescription access for common ailments.
- Iridia Medical entered the industry and provided key support for gaining access to medical services and navigating complex decision trees for managing sick workers and potential symptoms of COVID.
- Prompt services and decisions informed by a medical services provider were central to keeping workers on the job, and maintaining capacity without expensive and lengthy periods of unnecessary isolation.
- Online doctor appointments now widely available through various systems such as Babylon Health (through Telus).
- Use of these systems requires technical savvy in some cases.
- Consider how we evaluate the efficacy of various medical service systems and their future value for 2021 operations, when COVID management is expected to continue. Gather input from industry members about their experience with these systems, and find ways to improve service delivery and help industry members successfully adapt and navigate the systems.

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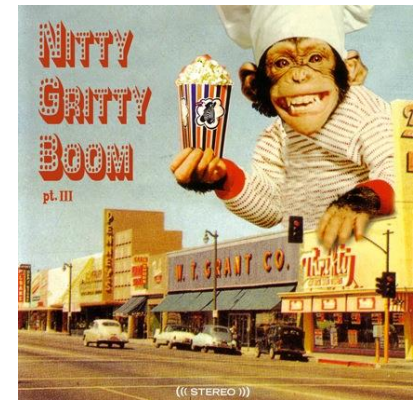
- Pandemic conditions are expected to continue in 2021.
- A new set of guidelines was issued at the end of July to guide remote work operations moving forward.
- Existing guidelines include continuing requirements related to many key COVID-19 management practices.
- Consider how current guidelines will shape future operations. Conduct thorough review to distinguish requirements from recommendations, and identify key issues that may create obstacles for future operations.

Field Implementation (the nitty gritty)



- Disease prevention steps paid off in preventing other ailments that are commonly encountered (i.e. viral gastroenteritis). Many contractors indicated they realized value of such steps extends beyond COVID, and they wish to continue them in the future (i.e. enhanced hygiene).
- Other types of practices also yielded benefits, such as laundry in camp, and other measures to reduce the need to travel to town. Workers missed less work, and in some cases were more focused on their jobs.
- Consider what practices should become standard, or which identified previously missed opportunities for improvement.

Field Implementation (the nitty gritty)



- Reorganizing work – such as creation of work pod and shifts – this had both benefits and costs to workers and to contractors.
- Mental health – was a key emphasis in the industry prior to the pandemic – there is a need to review what practices were implemented and what steps helped workers adapt to isolation.
- Supply chain security and adaptation was learned-on-the-fly. Some specialty items were simply not available. Cooks and camp staff had a key role in helping companies adapt, and their input is important.
- Contractor and service-provider reliance was tested, as helicopter pilots and boat operators also had to adapt to COVID management plans, and in some cases were not willing to operate according to past models.
- Consider a million lessons that were learned in 2020 and conduct a fulsome and detailed review of the different practices and strategies that helped companies remain functional during the pandemic and improve conditions for their staff.

Key Considerations

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