

# *The Disaster Recovery Priority Ranking Tool:*

## **A Thinking Tool for Prioritizing Post-COVID-19 Recovery Initiatives**

*By Cathy Enz and Gary Thompson*

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**T**he Disaster Recovery Priority Ranking tool is a spreadsheet-based decision-making tool designed to help managers apply a set of evaluation criteria to a variety of recovery-focused strategic initiatives. It is particularly useful for prioritizing initiatives that require cross-departmental or inter-organizational cooperation and partnerships. By engaging in conversations about criteria for evaluating the success of various initiatives and then assessing various recovery actions on these criteria, you can prioritize your action planning to both effectively and efficiently get essential initiatives up and running. The tool allows managers to list and weight various initiatives on key evaluation criteria under different scenarios to help them think through the planning and implementatino process post-COVID-19. The results tab in the tool provides the priority ranking along with a color-coded evaluation of each initiative on the criteria for each scenario. While the priority tool is self-explanatory and designed to be easy to use, this report offers a brief description adn example of how to use the tool. Making judgment-based decisions on many different “must-do” recovery initiatives is not easy, particularly when different scenarios of economic recovery, virus spread, resurgence, and public health responses are possible. This tool is offered to help improve your ability to set priorities when doing senario planning.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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# The Disaster Recovery Priority Ranking Tool: A Thinking Tool for Prioritizing Post-COVID-19 Recovery Initiatives

*by Cathy Enz and Gary W. Thompson*

A strategic task for many hospitality managers in post-Covid-19 disaster recovery is to effectively plan and then adjust as circumstances change and evolve. The identification of what initiatives and new activities must be put in place, and which should get greater attention once businesses open again, involve thoughtful conversation and prioritizing of effort. Scenario planning helps explore priorities under different yet plausible situations. Given the uncertainty regarding the future, the tool allows for the creation and comparison of different scenario assumptions.

The impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry is unknown, but an opportunity exists to explore whether certain aspects of your operation should resemble their pre-disaster state, or merit transformation and reinvention to a new or more effective form. High on everyone's list are initiatives around guest and employee safety and well-being. With limited resources and substantial uncertainty, the opportunity exists to rethink priorities, and put extra attention on how to reinvent or innovate on the most important initiatives. What new measures will be needed to assure guest and staff health and well-being? Will you need the traditional check-in process moving forward? Can individuals who have lost their jobs return to different positions with altered work roles? Can employees work remotely? Will technology solutions redefine service? How will you manage the supply chain for critical or new supplies required to maintain the cleanliness and safety of the hotel? While much has changed, using helpful decision-making tools, such as the tool provided here, can help in your planning efforts.

While time and attention will be devoted to activation of pre-existing process, operational initiatives, and routine departmental protocols, the pandemic has also created the necessity to rethink prior practices and add new practices. Evaluating what to do first, and why, can be enhanced by using the tool we have created to help you guide a systematic assessment of possible initiatives. The tool is not about finding the “right” answer, but rather is a device that helps you to organize the thinking process in advance of jumping into action. Prioritizing issues helps you to concentrate your efforts on the most essential actions. In addition, this tool permits you to consider scenarios to explore the speed and strength of recovery. Scenarios allow you to view key priorities under different possible conditions. For example, Will strong public health response control the spread, or will the measures put in place for re-opening not be sufficient to prevent viral resurgence? Will policy interventions offset economic damage or will recession dynamics kick-in with slow recovery?

## **PRIORITIZING YOUR RECOVERY INITIATIVES – WHAT SHOULD YOU DO FIRST?**

To help hospitality managers structure decision choices when uncertainty is great and judgment-based prioritizing is needed, we have devised a simple multiple criteria evaluation process called the Disaster Recover Priority Ranking Tool. The ranking tool is a spreadsheet-based approach to evaluating possible initiatives. The tool permits managers or management teams to list and attach weights to evaluation criteria and then rate different initiatives on the defined criteria, under different scenarios. Weights are the magnitude or value given to each criterion, while ratings are the assessments of each initiative on a specified set of criteria. The tool highlights how each initiative ranks on the key evaluation criteria, using a color code; and provides a summary ranking that shows what should be your highest priorities. While you may have many initiatives that begin simultaneously, the ranking tool helps you focus on the most essential. The worksheets allow managers to establish up to six different evaluation criteria

and up to ten initiatives to compare and prioritize for up to three different scenarios. Information sharing and open discussion of priorities can also help to build trust, reduce anxiety, and convey team spirit.

### **Duty of Care Initiatives and Risk**

High on the post recovery priority list for hotels is ensuring the safety and well-being of guests and employees<sup>1</sup>. Government regulation and consumer confidence will require rethinking processes and procedures for cleanliness, social distancing, testing, and contact tracing, working remotely, isolating potentially infected guest or employees, and working with local and regional health officials.

When trying to prioritize different duty of care initiatives, decision-makers may want to create evaluation criteria that take into consideration risk level, proactively evaluating initiatives under different scenarios of levels of risk. Below are a few questions to consider when thinking about the risk of waiting or not prioritizing various coronavirus specific initiatives.

### **Questions to Consider**

- *What will be the economic and social impacts of this initiative?*
- *Does the hotel have the authority or flexibility to define how to implement the initiative?*
- *Will the initiative introduce new risks?*
- *Will the benefits of this initiative be realized quickly?*
- *Will the initiative be accepted by key stakeholders (e.g., owners, regulators, guests & employees)?*
- *How will the initiative be communicated to key stakeholders?*
- *How will updates and status reports on this initiative be communicated?*

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1 N. Huang “How hotels will need to adapt Duty of Care policies for the coronavirus pandemic” April 17, 2020. <https://www.pegs.com/blog/how-hotels-will-need-to-adapt-duty-of-care-policies-for-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

## A SIX-STEP APPROACH TO DETERMINING DISASTER RECOVERY PRIORITIES

Arriving at priority rankings for possible post-coronavirus initiatives involves six simple steps, noted below. An example will be used to illustrate how to conduct the analysis.

1. Identify initiatives you are considering;
2. Select criteria that are the most important for evaluating your initiatives;
3. Create up to three possible scenarios;
4. Assign point weights (worth or magnitude) to each criterion;
5. Rate or evaluate each initiative on the criteria using a scale from 1 to 10 (very weak to very strong);
6. Select minimum acceptable scores for each criterion.

### **Step One: Select Initiatives**

The planning process begins with a list of likely short and long-term initiatives important for your hotel to consider after reopening. Your list should have enough elaboration to make it clear what you plan to do. All your initiatives should be viable and include enough detail to avoid appearing generic or vague. The tool allows you to specify up to ten potential initiatives, and to then write a description of each. A tab (labelled Data Items) takes you to where you input your list of initiatives.

### **Step Two: Identify Criteria**

The second step in the process is to establish the key evaluation criteria by which you will assess each of the listed initiatives. These criteria are the standards used to judge the importance of each of your disaster recovery initiatives. The most critical or relevant evaluation criteria should be included but be careful not to create too few or too many. If you have too many criteria you may be introducing unnecessary complexity or less important issues. Choosing too few criteria may signal a simplistic assessment of evaluation criteria or a failure to consider important nuances. Typical criteria are those that address increasing revenues, lowering costs, creating value for customers, and build-

ing a positive work environment. In recovery, less traditional criteria such as health and safety, level of risk, and adherence to governmental guidelines are likely to be important criteria. The “# Criteria” pull down box on the Data Items tab allows you to create between two and six evaluation criteria. To facilitate engagement with your team, you can have them discuss how many criteria to use for evaluating all the initiatives.

### **Step Three: Create Possible Scenarios**

The tool allows you to create up to three scenarios using the “# Scenarios” pull down box on the Data Items tab, to explore alternative future states. Typically individuals explore best, most likely, and worst case scenarios. For example, you and your team might explore your recovery strategies under different situations using factors like GDP impact, public health response (e.g., virus spread / resurgence) and governmental interventions (local, regional, national, international). Figure 1 provides an example. We have created four initiatives, six evaluation criteria for each initiative, and three different scenarios.

### **Step Four: Assign Weights to the Criteria**

To prioritize possible initiatives, you must assign a weight representing the importance of each criterion. Be sure that you give weights to each criterion, with the most important criterion being given the greatest weight. Allocate weights so that they sum to 100 percent, and only give equal weights to criteria if they are truly equally important. The tool will let you know if you have not correctly assigned weights. Figure 2 shows the weights assigned to the evaluation criteria under the Best Case scenario (the tab labelled Scoring Scenario 1). The weights you arrive at are subjective and can be generated by you or in discussion with others. You can review and change the weight you attach to each of your evaluation criteria for each of the possible scenarios.

### **Step Five: Rate Each Initiative**

The tool applies a rating scale ranging from 1 (very weak) to 10 (very strong) so that each

initiative can be rated on the degree to which it satisfies each criterion. A rating of 5 is medium or neutral, meaning the initiative is okay or average on that criterion. Each initiative should be evaluated on all the criteria. Ratings should be done for each possible scenario using the Scoring Scenario tabs.

Figure 3 provides an example that includes the rankings provided for each initiative on each of the criteria for the Most Likely Case scenario. The ratings are also subjective. Different members of your team may rate initiatives differently, which is an excellent way to begin a group discussion by having everyone bring their individual evaluations to a team meeting. Even though the ratings are based on your own best judgment (or that of others), keep in mind that this systematic process is useful to order and organize your thinking.

#### **Step Six: Determine the Minimum Desired Score for Initiatives**

The final step in the analysis is optional, but if you have a minimum level of rating performance that you consider acceptable you can specify this value by completing the Minimum Desired Score row on the Scenario Scoring tabs. This option allows you to identify the minimum acceptable score for each criterion in each scenario, using the rating scale (1–10). If, for example, you selected a rating of 3 as the minimum desired rating on a given evaluation criterion, then any initiative with a score lower than 3 will be flagged and noted on the “Results – Detailed” tab.

### **THE RESULTS**

Once all the data has been entered you can use the Scenario pull down box in the “Results – Detailed” tab to view the results for each scenario. The ranking tool converts your ratings into scores that are summarized and color-coded. The tool’s color-coding helps to set apart high and low scoring initiatives. Each initiative is given a score on each criterion, an overall score, and a priority ranking, and initiatives are ordered from best to worst. This results tab also provides notes to highlight potential

problems with each initiative if the rankings on an initiative fell below the minimum desired score. Figure 4 provides the results for the Best Case scenario.

#### **Interpreting Results**

The ranking results found on the “Results-Detailed” tab should be reviewed together with the overall and relative scores to get a full picture of the most important initiatives. As the example under the Best Case scenario reveals, developing new health and sanitation protocols has the highest overall score. In this situation, creating value-add offers has the lowest score. The relative scores under this scenario indicate that the initiatives are not substantially different. The relative score is based on assuming the highest ranked initiative is given a score of 100%, and subsequent initiatives are benchmarked against the highest priority issue. Overall score is an absolute score for each issue. As the example suggests, our highest priority initiative only scores 75.6% on our criteria, which should elicit a conversation about whether we are missing other important actions that might give us better results on our criteria. The Results-Summary tab (see Figure 5) provides a snapshot of the color-coded overall and relative scores for each scenario. The benefit of this tab is to contrast and compare your priorities under each of the scenarios you wish to explore.

### **SUMMARY REMARKS**

This tool is a simple way to explore priorities under multiple scenarios. It is a tool to facilitate thinking, which will help guide and enhance rich discussion and diverse perspective taking. While more complex decision models are available, this approach continues to be useful for helping managers order and evaluate initiatives under conditions of uncertainty. The benefit derived from this thinking process is the articulation of criteria for deciding what to focus on when faced with limited resources and high levels of uncertainty. Using a decision tool such as the one we have provided can help managers avoid thinking traps such as selective attention, cognitive dissonance, and information biases

that come from intuitive decision making. Priority initiatives are the items that will have the highest potential impact on your organization as you build a recovery strategy. Your scenarios are plausible future situations that allow you to anticipate actions under evolving conditions. Once priorities are established, your next step will be to expand your priority issues into action plans and delegate them to key managers in the organization who will be held accountable for addressing them successfully. Priority ranking is the beginning of your journey toward recovery. Scenario planning helps you to think through situations that may require prompt adjustments and reorientation of focus. By using the tool to facilitate discussion more team members can and should be drawn into the process of recovery and renewal as we face an uncertain world. ■

**FIGURE 1**

**Example of Input for Initiatives, Criteria, and Scenarios**

# Criteria:	6	[Select 2-6]	Clear All
# Initiatives:	4	[Select 2-10]	
# Scenarios:	3	[Select 1-3]	

  

Evaluation Criteria	Initiatives	Scenarios
Lowers Operating Costs and protects short-term liquidity	Develop new health, sanitation & cleaning protocols throughout hotel - including training and guest illness plans	Best Case
Assures Staff Health & Wellbeing	Examining new roles and responsibilities. Redesigning some jobs, and using technology to replace traditional jobs	Most Likely Case
Reduces Guest Fear in Travelling and lifts consumer demand (occupancy)	Creating value-add offers to domestic & regional travelers. Devising and updating all communication messages that support sales, marketing, social media, and PR elements	Worst Case
Supports community & governmental guidelines and parameters	Revise capital expenditures budget - initiate and complete projects best done during low occupancy periods	
Builds on our core competencies		
Differentiates the hotel compared to the competition		

  

Instructions	<b>Data Items</b>	Score Scenario 1	Score Scenario 2	Score Scenario 3	Results-Detailed	Results-Summary
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**FIGURE 2**

**Example of Six Evaluation Criteria and Weightings**

Scenario: Best Case									
	Evaluation Criteria:	Lowers Operating Costs and protects short-term liquidity	Assures Staff Health & Wellbeing	Reduces Guest Fear in Travelling and lifts consumer demand	Supports community & governmental guidelines and parameters	Builds on our core competencies	Differentiates the hotel compared to the competition	Total	
		Weight (out of 100 pts):	17	21	14	9	24	15	100
		Minimum Desired Score (/10):							
Initiatives	1	Develop new health, sanitation & cleaning protocols throughout hotel - including training and guest illness plans							
	2	Examining new roles and responsibilities. Redesigning some jobs, and using technology to replace traditional jobs							
	3	Creating value-add offers to domestic & regional travelers. Devising and updating all communication messages that support sales, marketing, social media, and PR elements							
	4	Revise capital expenditures budget - initiate and complete projects best done during low occupancy periods							

[Clear All Information](#)

Instructions | Data Items | **Score Scenario 1** | Score Scenario 2 | Score Scenario 3 | Results-Detailed | Results-Summary

**FIGURE 3**

**Example of Ratings Under the Most Likely Case Scenario**

Scenario: Most Likely Case								
	Evaluation Criteria:	Lowers Operating Costs and protects short-term liquidity	Assures Staff Health & Wellbeing	Reduces Guest Fear in Travelling and lifts consumer demand	Supports community & governmental guidelines and parameters	Builds on our core competencies	Differentiates the hotel compared to the competition	
		Weight (out of 100 pts):						
		Minimum Desired Score (/10):						
Initiatives	1	Develop new health, sanitation & cleaning protocols throughout hotel - including training and guest illness plans	2	9	9	8	4	6
	2	Examining new roles and responsibilities. Redesigning some jobs, and using technology to replace traditional jobs	7	6	7	5	1	7
	3	Creating value-add offers to domestic & regional travelers. Devising and updating all communication messages that support sales, marketing, social media, and PR elements	4	3	8	6	8	8
	4	Revise capital expenditures budget - initiate and complete projects best done during low occupancy periods	9	1	2	3	6	5

Provide values in the cells of this color  
Rate (score) the initiatives in the cells of this color, on a scale of 0

Instructions | Data Items | Score Scenario 1 | **Score Scenario 2** | Score Scenario 3 | Results-Detailed | Results-Summary

**FIGURE 4**

**Example of Results Under Best Case Scenario**

Scenario: <b>Best Case</b>											
<b>Evaluation Criteria &gt;</b>		Lowers Operating Costs and protects short-term liquidity	Assures Staff Health & Wellbeing	Reduces Guest Fear in Travelling and lifts consumer demand (occupancy)	Supports community & governmental guidelines and parameters	Builds on our core competencies	Differentiates the hotel compared to the competition	Overall Score (/100)	Relative Score	Potential Problems with this Initiative	
<b>Initiatives</b>	1	Develop new health, sanitation & cleaning protocols throughout hotel - including training and guest illness plans	8.5	21	14	8.1	12	12	75.6	100.0%	Below the minimum desired score for: Builds on our core competencies
	2	Examining new roles and responsibilities. Redesigning some jobs, and using technology to replace traditional jobs	6.8	18.9	9.8	8.1	19.2	12	74.8	98.9%	None!
	4	Revise capital expenditures budget - initiate and complete projects best done during low occupancy periods	17	12.6	8.4	5.4	19.2	10.5	73.1	96.7%	None!
	3	Creating value-add offers to domestic & regional travelers. Devising and updating all communication messages that support sales, marketing, social media, and PR elements	8.5	14.7	11.2	6.3	19.2	10.5	70.4	93.1%	None!

Instructions
Data Items
Score Scenario 1
Score Scenario 2
Score Scenario 3
**Results-Detailed**
Results-Summary

**FIGURE 5**

**Example of Results Summary**

Initiative	Scenarios (Overall Score)			Scenarios (Relative Score)		
	Best Case	Most Likely Case	Worst Case	Best Case	Most Likely Case	Worst Case
1 Develop new sanitation & cleaning protocols throughout hotel - including training and communicating with guests and staff	75.6	67.7	51.4	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2 Develop plan to bring workers back. Including training, redesign jobs and recruiting strategy - devise flexible work schedules	74.8	52.1	30.6	98.9%	77.0%	59.5%
3 Creating value-add offers to domestic & regional travelers. Supporting sales, marketing, social media, and PR elements	70.4	63.5	49.0	93.1%	93.8%	95.3%
4 Revise capital expenditures budget - initiate and complete projects best done during low occupancy periods	73.1	38.9	39.7	96.7%	57.5%	77.2%

  

Instructions	Data Items	Score Scenario 1	Score Scenario 2	Score Scenario 3	Results-Detailed	<b>Results-Summary</b>
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