**Media Interview Questions and Answers for:**

***Resilience: Adapt and Plan for the New Abnormal of the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic***

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**Book cover**



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***Questions Only***

1) Why were we so badly prepared for and underestimated the COVID-19 pandemic?

2) What explains the panicked behavior of many in response to the pandemic, such as panic shopping, while others ignored guidelines about social distancing and other behavior changes to fight the pandemic and save lives?

3) How should we shift our thinking to deal with the reality of the pandemic?

4) How can individuals and households most effectively adapt to the pandemic?

5) What steps can we take to protect our relationships in the context of social distancing?

6) How can businesses and other organizations most effectively adapt their internal business model to the pandemic?

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10) What can we do to foresee prepare better for future major disasters, whether pandemics or others?

***Questions and Answers***

**1) Why were we so badly prepared for and underestimated the COVID-19 pandemic?**

We suffer from many dangerous judgment errors that researchers in cognitive neuroscience and behavioral economics like myself call cognitive biases. These mental blindspots result from a combination of our evolutionary background and specific structural features in how our brains are wired.

The cognitive bias most at blame for our drastic underestimation of the huge disruption brought by the COVID-19 coronavirus is the normalcy bias. This dangerous judgment error causes our brains to assume things will keep going as they have been — normally — and evaluate the short and medium-term future of the next few years based on our past experience of the last few years. As a result, we underestimate drastically both the likelihood of a serious disruption occurring and the impact of one if it does occur.

The normalcy bias leads individuals, businesses, and governments to fail to prepare nearly as well as they should for the likelihood and effects of catastrophes, especially slow-moving train wrecks such as pandemics. Moreover, in the midst of the event itself, people react much slower than they ideally should, getting stuck in the mode of gathering information instead of deciding and acting.

When we make plans, we naturally believe that the future will go according to plan. That wrong-headed cognitive bias, the planning fallacy, results in us not preparing for contingencies and problems, both predictable ones and unknown unknowns. This cognitive bias helps explain our lack of preparation for the pandemic.

We also suffer from the tendency to prioritize the short term, and undercount the importance of medium and long-term outcomes. Known as hyperbolic discounting, this cognitive bias is especially bad for addressing the potential long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**2) What explains the panicked behavior of many in response to the pandemic, such as panic shopping, while others ignored guidelines about social distancing and other behavior changes to fight the pandemic and save lives?**

Our primary threat response, which stems from the ancient savanna environment, is the fight-or-flight response, also known as the saber-tooth tiger response. A great fit for the kind of short-term intense risks we faced as hunter-gatherers, the fight-or-flight response results in terrible decisions in the modern environment. It’s particularly bad for defending us from major disruptions caused by the slow-moving train wrecks we face in the modern environment, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, the fight response causes us to take immediate actions that we perceive as solving the problem, such as buying toilet paper and guns, as so many did in response to COVID-19. Others fell into the flight response, with many trying to go to a different area that they thought would be less impacted by the pandemic. In some people, the flight response manifested as the freeze response, where people flee into themselves, meaning fleeing from the information about the pandemic. They thus ignored official directives to behave differently.

Of course, neither of these is the right response for the situation at hand. Fleeing an area or stocking up is fine for the typical disasters that strike a region, such as a hurricane that might cause major flooding as happened in Houston in September 2019. It’s not a good fit for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another mental failure mode plaguing us during this pandemic is emotional contagion. People are infected by the emotions of those they perceive as their leaders. Many political leaders at first downplayed the pandemic, such as by equating it to the cold or flu. Some political leaders accused their opponents of exaggerating the impact of the pandemic for political gain. No wonder the followers of these political leaders ignored and, in some cases, continue to ignore social distancing guidelines. Tragically, we have many documented instances where their failures led to the death of their loved ones.

Businesses and nonprofits generally react better than individuals, due to their business continuity plans (full disclosure: preparing such plans is one of my frequent areas of consulting work as a disaster avoidance expert). These plans aim to overcome the typical tendency to underprepare for and react badly in disasters by having a default plan of action. That includes working offsite if there’s a fire in the headquarters or having employees cross-trained to cover each other’s responsibilities if several key employees get hit by the proverbial bus. Yet their typical continuity plans don’t fit the reality of the pandemic (and I had to act quickly to help my clients realize that and revise their plans).

**3) How should we shift our thinking to deal with the reality of the pandemic?**

First, we have to adopt a realistic and even a pessimistic perspective, not a super-optimistic perspective as so many are adopting, whether political or business leaders, or private citizens. It’s inherently uncomfortable to prepare for the realistic pessimistic scenario. That feeling of discomfort is you going against your gut reactions, which is what research shows is needed for you to defeat cognitive biases. We’re in a new normal, one that seriously disrupted our lives for the next several years.

What does realistic pessimism mean in the case of the pandemic? To understand that requires grasping the nature of COVID-19.

The novel coronavirus causing COVID-19 is highly infectious. Each infected person on average infects 2-3 others and the infection doubling every 3–6 days in any outbreak that’s not suppressed.

About 10% of those who get sick require intensive hospital care, and .5% die with good hospital care. The hospitalization and death rates are much higher for those older or younger people with health issues. The rapid growth of outbreaks, combined with the lack of hospital capacity, results in medical systems quickly becoming overwhelmed if governments don’t take measures to control an outbreak. In those cases, death rates balloon to 5%, and much higher for those more vulnerable.

We know that government measures to suppress COVID-19 by shutting down businesses, restricting travel, and directing citizens to stay at home are indeed effective at preventing transmission and reducing new cases. Yet when governments loosen such restrictions, outbreaks occur again and the disease spikes.

This simple reality means that until we find a vaccine, we will not defeat COVID-19. We’ll be facing waves of tighter and looser restrictions going forward.

The most incredibly optimistic timeline for finding a vaccine and testing whether it’s effective is by the summer of 2021. This presumes our first available vaccine passes all the trials on safety and effectiveness, which is highly unlikely, given the rushed nature of work on vaccines to address COVID-19. Still, let’s assume we hit the jackpot. Then, it will take 6-12 months to produce enough of it to vaccine at least the first responders and the more vulnerable people, those over 60 and those under 60 with underlying health conditions. So in the most optimistic timeline, we’re at early 2022 for mostly dealing with COVID-19.

Of course, you should never assume that you’ll hit the jackpot in dealing with reality. In a more realistic scenario, it might be as long as 2024-25 until we find the right vaccine and make enough of it. In a pessimistic timeline, it might be 2030 or longer.

And even if we’re wonderfully lucky and it’s by 2022 or 2023, do you think that our lives will ever be the same if we face waves of looser and tighter restrictions until then? Not even close. We’re never going back to January 2020, as our social norms, habits, and perspectives will change drastically. And that’s not even considering the coronavirus recession, which will be huge.

To shift your thinking, you need to accept this major disruption, and prepare to adapt to our new world, whether as individuals or organizations.

**4) How can individuals and households most effectively adapt to the pandemic?**

The most important thing is to ensure your physical safety. You should make sure you are able to stay safe in your home for up to 2 months in case of a major outbreak in your area, let’s say as bad as happened in New York City. While unlikely, it pays to prepare for a realistic pessimistic scenario. That means having 2 months of basic consumables – food, cleaning supplies, medications. Having these consumables will also provide protection in case a member of your household develop a serious case of COVID-19. It might take up to 2 months for the person who got sick to get better, and of course you would need to stay quarantined during that period. Given that online grocery delivery might not be available – I know I had trouble ordering basic groceries due to high demand for online delivery – having those basic necessities on hand is critically important.

You also want to ensure you protect your mental safety. That means replacing the kind of entertainment and exercise you used to do outside and/or with other people by indoor solitary activities, in case of extreme lockdowns or self-quarantine due to COVID-19 in your household. Figure out a way to keep yourself physically healthy through indoor exercises, ranging from yoga to weight lifting. Take up new hobbies, ranging from crafting to do-it-yourself home improvement. Develop new ways of entertaining yourself, from virtual reality to board games with members of your household. Take up gratitude journaling and other tools to improve your mood and advance personal growth. Limit your exposure to anxiety and sadness-inducing news stories and consider teletherapy as needed.

An important part of protecting your mental and physical safety alike involves getting the right information, in the context of widespread information about COVID-19, including unfortunately by some prominent political and civic leaders. Make sure you follow truth-oriented behaviors yourself by fact-checking information and relying on health experts in the CDC, WHO, and elsewhere, as opposed to political leaders who might spin information, for pandemic-related guidelines.

**5) What steps can we take to protect our relationships in the context of social distancing?**

First, consider your immediate connections with members of the household. If you have a romantic partner in your household, you’ll have to figure out how to interact in a healthy manner given that you’re together 24/7. You’ll likely get into each other’s spaces and on each other’s nerves. It’s much wiser to anticipate and work out these problems in advance than have them blow up down the road.

The same principle applies to other members of your family. If you have older children who moved home after university closed, or younger children who aren’t going to school after it closed, you’ll need to figure out how to deal with them being cooped up inside.

You’ll have to put more thought into dealing with older adults over 60 or anyone with underlying health conditions in your household (including yourself if you fit either category). Given their much greater vulnerability to COVID-19, you and other members of your household need to take serious measures to prevent them from getting ill. That means being more careful yourself than you would otherwise be, since over half of all those with COVID-19 have no or light symptoms. Remember: don’t kill Grandma. And don’t let other members of your household kill Grandma.

Second, what about your connection to those who you care about who aren’t part of your household?

Your romantic partner might not be part of your household. Depending on how vulnerable to COVID-19 you and other members of your household might be, you might choose to take the risk of physical intimacy with your romantic partner, but you have to make this decision consciously rather than casually. Or you might choose to have a social-distance relationship, meeting at a distance of 10 feet or by videoconference.

The same goes for your friends. You can’t have a beer with them or meet for lunch in person, at least closer than 10 feet. You’ll need to figure out effective ways of interacting with them virtually during this difficult time of the next several years.

What about your family members who aren’t in your household? You’ll need to develop virtual interactions with them as well. Older family members or those with underlying health conditions are a particular concern. If you’re one of the many people in their 30s, 40s, or 50s supporting an older family member who is living independently but requires occasional help, you’re going to face particular challenges with protecting them from the possibility of you infecting them with COVID-19. Even if they don’t require in-person help from you, many will have difficulty adapting to virtual interaction and will struggle to cope.

It may prove especially difficult if they get sick. I personally really struggled when my dad, who is 79 and lives in the COVID-19 hotspot of New York City, got sick with what was very likely COVID-19 in early April. I live in Columbus, Ohio, and in a different situation, would have hopped on a plane to help my mom take care of him. But of course, doing so wasn’t feasible in the middle of the early stages of the pandemic. I was left to wonder and worry as he suffered with worsening flu-like symptoms, including the difficulty breathing that is particularly associated with COVID-19. He recovered eventually, very fortunately, but it’s something that you need to be prepared to deal with for older relatives in your life.

You’ll also want to think about how you’ll revise your community activities: faith-based groups, clubs, nonprofit activism, and so on. For instance, you should definitely avoid church services for now, but fortunately many churches offer video worship services, and that will have to do. You can take the lead in your club on moving to videoconference meetings. You will have to figure out how to replace your in-person volunteering, perhaps with virtual volunteering or with donations.

**6) How can businesses and other organizations most effectively adapt their internal business model to the pandemic?**

While the vast majority of companies and other organizations have already switched to virtual work to some extent, you have to make virtual work the default for the next several years for as many employees as physically possible. Even during looser periods, avoid in-person staff meetings: about half of all those infected with COVID-19 don’t have any significant symptoms and don’t know they’re sick, and many companies had COVID-19 sweep through employees ranks due to such meetings.

Having made the switch long-term, you have to address the specific challenges associated with shifting from in-office to virtual teams. Immediately after the rapid onset of the pandemic, everyone fell into emergency mode, which prevented a lot of problems typically associated with this change. However, your staff can only function in emergency mode for so long, before coming to realize they’re in a new normal, and adjusting to the long haul. You’ll have to deal with several important issues:

1. Motivation and engagement

2. Effective communication

3. Noticing and solving problems and conflicts

4. Cultivating trust

5. Security

6. Accountability

Already before the pandemic, US workplaces experienced serious challenges in employee engagement and motivation. Now, you need to figure out how to keep your staff motivated and engaged in the context of working from home, which used to happen naturally in the office environment. You also have to figure out how to help them set up a workspace at home free from distractions. Remember, they might very well have to deal with a house full of unruly children, or adults acting like children in the context of the disruption caused by the pandemic. They might also be figuring out how to be a caretaker for older adults while not killing Grandma. Of course, the other challenging conditions of the pandemic might be undercutting their motivations, ranging from the need to secure consumables to maintain their mental well-being to protecting their relationships, as the previous section described. While some will be able to figure all this out on their own, many will not, especially in the context of the overwhelm, anxiety, and depression induced by COVID-19. It’s the organization’s responsibility to support them and provide them with resources, guidance, and training that will help them do so and keep them productive, motivated, and engaged with their work.

Next, you’ll need to ensure effective communication in your virtual team. It’s notoriously hard to communicate effectively, and doing so becomes much more difficult when in-office teams become virtual teams, in my experience helping individuals and organizations make this transition. One of the biggest problems stems from much more communication shifting to text – email, text messages, or messages in collaboration apps such as Slack, Trello, or Asana. As a result, much of the non-verbal communication is lost, leading to a huge increase in miscommunication. Videoconferences can be especially problematic for older employees, often the ones in leadership positions, who feel uncomfortable with the newfangled technology. It’s vital to train and coach employees on how to communicate effectively in virtual team settings.

A related area, one that requires just as much investment in professional development, is the ability to notice and solve problems and conflicts. In the office, face-to-face interactions help employees notice problems and nip them in the bud. Well, it won’t happen in virtual settings. There’s no natural way to have these casual interactions that are surprisingly vital to effective collaboration and teamwork. Over the next few weeks and months, you’ll start to notice more and more problems coming up, the kinds of things that were easily noticed and addressed in the past, throwing multiple wrenches into the machinery of your organization. To address this challenge, you need to provide training to your staff in noticing and solving problems in virtual settings effectively.

Another area to address, vital for effective communication and addressing problems alike, is cultivating trust and building relationships within your team. In office settings, it’s easy to build relationships and trust. You meet by the watercooler or over lunch in the breakroom and chat about life. Such social grooming activities offer a critically important opportunity for people to get to know each other as human beings, developing relationships and learning to trust one another. By contrast, teams that shift from in-person settings to virtual ones gradually lose that sense of shared humanity, leading to more tensions and stress. To guard against that requires a proactive replacement of relationship cultivation and trust building.

Now that so many people are working at home, you have much more cybersecurity issues. Criminals know that huge numbers of employees are working from home, where their computer setup is, on average, much less secure than the office. Moreover, in their home employees aren’t used to following the kind of security protocols they follow at the office. Finally, the pandemic itself gives more opportunities to criminals, who are, for example, sending phishing emails designed to look like communications from the CDC. You need to help your employees improve their cybersecurity.

In-office environments allow for natural ways to hold employees accountable. Leaders can easily walk around the office, visually observing what’s going on and checking in with their direct reports on their projects. So do the daily interactions with their colleagues in the office, where team members passing each other in the hallway or popping into each other’s office can ask “John, when do you think you’ll get me that marketing brochure draft,” holding each other accountable. You’ll need to replace that accountability with a different structure. It should enable accountability up the chain of command and peer-to-peer accountability for people at the same level, within teams and across teams to those in different business units.

**7) How can businesses and other organizations most effectively adapt their external business model to the pandemic?**

While the way companies and other organizations fundamentally transform their internal business model to adapt to the pandemic is broadly similar, the external business model will be more varied. It depends on what kind of product or service you’re providing, and whether you’re a for-profit company or one of several types of nonprofit organizations: charities, associations, municipalities, etc.

What will be similar in all cases will be the need to figure out how to:

1. Deliver your offerings in virtual or socially distanced settings

2. Cultivate existing relationships and establish new ones in virtual settings

3. Manage disruptions among your external stakeholders

4. Anticipate and address shifting social and economic norms and habits

Your ability to provide your products or services in virtual or at least socially distanced contexts will depend, of course, on the nature of what you’re providing. For some, it will be easy: instead of going through retail channels, you’ll just shift to direct-to-consumer offerings and/or online marketplaces.

For others, it will prove more of a challenge. Depending on your industry, you’ll have to deal with problems ranging from regulations to client pushback.

It’s just as important to cultivate existing relationships with your external stakeholders – clients, suppliers, service providers, investors, civic and political leaders, and others – as it is to maintain relationships among your staff. You’ll also need to build new relationships with external stakeholders, ranging from prospects for your offerings to new suppliers, service providers and so on that you need to survive and thrive in the context of the shifts associated with the pandemic. Doing both is much harder via virtual means. You’ll have to figure out how to cultivate trust, communicate effectively, and notice and resolve problems and conflicts, just as you do with team members. Such stakeholder engagement in virtual settings requires making a clear plan for this area and serious investment into professional development training, especially for salespeople and client management staff in companies and fundraisers in nonprofits. Keep in mind the silver lining that, by establishing new relationships via virtual means, you have a global market of potential clients, investors, and other external stakeholders.

Many of your stakeholders will face a range of disruptions in their activities. Plenty will not be savvy enough, failing to plan for the long-term disruption associated with the pandemic even in the most optimistic scenario. They’ll instead rely on their emergency plans and government stimulus to carry them through what they wrong perceive as a brief period of disruption until things go back to normal. While you can try to help them see the error of their ways, in many cases you will be unable to get them to take off their rose-colored glasses. In those cases, you’ll have to protect yourself against them falling into normalcy bias, hyperbolic discounting, and planning fallacy.

Guess what? After 2, 5, or even more years of constant restrictions and loosenings, of social distance and virtual interactions, people will have different wants, desires, expectations, norms, and habits, both in their personal and professional life. The better you can anticipate and get ahead of these shifts, the better off you will be positioned to not simply survive, but also thrive in the new abnormal.

**8) How can we turn the pandemic into an opportunity, not simply a threat?**

For individuals, if you’re not currently in a job that allows work from home, and aren’t working in a critically important area for addressing the pandemic such as healthcare, start investing in a career transition to one that permits virtual service delivery. The same applies if you’re working in a role or industry severely impacted by the pandemic, such as in-person entertainment, restaurants, airlines, and so on. For example, I make much of my money from public speaking and training. All my events were cancelled due to the pandemic. As a result, I quickly transitioned to virtual presentations. Some of my coaching clients had to make more major shifts, not simply changing their service delivery model but switching from one industry to another.

Also, consider taking up home-based productive activities that help make your life better during the pandemic, such as home improvements, indoor or outdoor gardening, cooking, and so on. You can also work on mastering new skills or further developing existing ones. Being at home offers a great opportunity to learn an instrument, pick up coding skills, or try to make a viral Youtube video.

For organizations, by taking all of the steps of adapting to the pandemic I described earlier, you will have a major competitive advantage. The large majority of your competitors will be falling for the planning fallacy, the normalcy bias, and other oh-so-tempting dangerous judgment errors. As a result, they’ll waste their time, money, and other resources on unrealistic plans, dreams, and hopes.

That’s the time to pounce. You’ll work right now to adapt your organization to the pandemic and make a clear long-term plan preparing for a realistic pessimistic scenario. Then, at the right time, be ready to use the consequences of your competitive advantage to seize market share from your competitors who are inadequately prepared for the reality of COVID-19. Research their clients, and decide who will be your first targets, based on which ones you think your competitors will start failing first. Approach them early offering to be a backup just in case things go south with your competitor. Some will want to start a conversation. Others will at least keep you in mind for the future.

Besides market share, prepare to seize the resources of your competitors. Some will be hobbled, while others go bankrupt. Be ready to hire highly-qualified employees who will be let go by those companies. Anticipate buying the material resources of organizations undergoing a fire sale. You’ll need a combination of cash and strategic planning to enable you to do so effectively.

**9) How should we plan for the long-term duration of the pandemic?**

Don’t simply make a static plan, assuming it will come true. Instead, plan for a variety of possible futures, and invest resources accordingly.

Your specific approach to planning should depending on whether you are doing so as an individual or an organization, and how many different people can help create plans. At the very simples and most basic level, for an individual or small business, you should plan for at least three possible futures.

First, plan for an optimistic future, such as the government in your region handling COVID-19 competently to balance effectively health and economic concerns, and an effective vaccine being found and widely used by the start of 2022.

Then, plan for a moderate scenario. For example, say the government in your area does only a moderately competent job, resulting in 10% less economic activity and 10% more deaths than would be the case with the most effective balance. Also, a vaccine is not found and made widely available until early 2024.

Then, prepare for a pessimistic scenario. Say the government in your area does a bad job, resulting in 25% less economic activity and 25% more deaths than would be the case with the most effective balance. Also, a vaccine is not found and made widely available until 2027.

Now imagine what your life or business would look like in the next 5 years in each of these scenarios.

Write out the kinds of problems you might face in each one. Then, reflect on how you can address these problems in advance of them happening, either preventing them or making a plan for addressing them if they do occur.

Next, write out the kinds of opportunities you might have in each scenario. Then, reflect on how you can take advantage of these opportunities in advance of them appearing, either bringing about these opportunities or making a plan for seizing the opportunities if they do occur.

Then, consider the kind of resources needed for each of these scenarios: money, time, information, social capital, strategic planning, and so on. Make a plan to reserve sufficient resources for the pessimistic scenario, or at least the moderate scenario if you can’t reserve enough for the pessimistic one. DO NOT simply hope for the optimistic scenario: hope is not a strategy, and you don’t want to rely on hope.

Finally, consider what kind of information would lead you to believe each of these scenarios is taking place, ranging from reports from experts on vaccines to local investigative journalists uncovering government incompetence. As you go forward, monitor these sources of information to see what future you’re actually going toward, and adjust your plans accordingly to address problems, seize opportunities, and reserve appropriate resources.

Of course, the likely reality would be some hodgepodge of these scenarios, and we’re only considering two factors, the ones of most relevance to the pandemic. You’ll probably want to explore other factors and other scenarios relevant to you.

**10) What can we do to foresee prepare better for future major disasters, whether pandemics or others?**

In a press briefing on February 12, 2002, Donald Rumsfeld, at the time US Secretary of Defense, said “there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones.” In his 2007 book The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable, Nassim Nicholas Taleb describes a specific type of unknown unknown as “black swans”: surprising, low-likelihood, and high-impact events. He convincingly argues that we don’t prepare nearly as much as we should for black swans; given what we know about normalcy bias, the reason for that stems from the deep workings of the human brain.

Fortunately, awareness of this vulnerability helps lead to its cure. Taleb highlights how we can scan the future and reflect on possible unknown unknowns, thus turning such events from “black swans” to “grey swans” by removing the “surprise” aspect of black swans. As an example, it’s certainly possible to envision a successful major cyberattack on the US that takes out the power grid for most of Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania during the November 3 election. Cyberattackers have been testing US defenses periodically, for example in a March 5, 2019 attack, and it’s quite possible that they know enough to launch a successful attack at the worst possible time. Imagine the kind of chaos it would cause politically to have the election disrupted in these three key swing states that will likely determined the Presidency, Senate, and House composition, added on top of the very likely growing second outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By envisioning this scenario, we’ve now turned it into a grey swan – a low-likelihood, high-impact event – instead of a black swan, by removing the “surprise.” So if you happen to be located in a swing state, you will hopefully be on the lookout for such disruptions around the election. In the context of the major disruption caused by the pandemic, you need to be especially prepared for other disruptors that can damage you.

In particular for organizations, you can envision and prepare for a whole range of scenarios relevant to you and your industry. Say you’re working a lot with Australian collaborators. Having seen the impact of wildfires there this year in December and January, and likely felt their impact on your business, you would not be wise if you don’t prepare for the possibility of the same next year.

Some things you can’t foresee: these represent true black swans. Some come from nature, such as a major asteroid strike that takes out your main factory. Some come from other people, such as a hostile activist investor taking a stake in your company and trying to take over the Board of Directors.

To deal with such true black swans, you need to invest strategically into reserving a sufficient cushion of cash, making effective backup plans, and building up social capital. It might feel uncomfortable and put you under pressure to hold excess cash, but don’t give into the temptation to “put it to use” by investing into projects or buying back stocks: a good rule of thumb is to hold back enough to weather a year-long loss of revenue. Cash combined with a backup plan for your production needs would help you address an asteroid strike, fire, or other disaster in your factory, especially if the insurance company drags its feet or tries to invoke the “act of God” clause on the meteor. Cash combined with social capital, namely very positive relations with your major investors, can help you beat back a hostile activist investor. And of course, cash and strategic planning can help you address all sorts of grey swans.