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ADAPTING TO THE CHALLENGES OF COVID-19: A CASE STUDY OF PREMIER MENTAL THERAPY

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ABSTRACT

Business environment adaptation is crucial to market longevity and sustainability. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed a global paradigm shift in remote services which led to technology and service innovations that impacted organizations, leaders, and employees. The resulting impacts have required organizational leaders to consider new market entry strategies, employees to consider new processes and procedures, and both to learn new technologies and capabilities. This case study examines and provides recommendations to Premier Mental Therapy with a focus on leadership, organizational, change management, and strategy theories to mitigate risks to mental health services resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and increase sustainability and revenue. Marketing and networking strategies are introduced as tools to lower barriers to entry into technology driven healthcare markets. RACI charts are recommended for roles and responsibilities definition, and balanced scorecard is recommended for performance measurement and awareness. These recommendations combine to provide a future business model for sustainable operations.

KEYWORDS: change management, organizational culture, strategy, performance management, telemedicine

1. Introduction

Premier Mental Therapy is a United States regional provider of mental health services that is in a downward financial trend resulting from COVID-related operational impacts that prevented face-to-face clinical care. The decline in revenue is rooted in the inability to offer group and individual therapy appointments to clients in pre-COVID face-to-face operations. A forced transition to telemedicine is impacting revenue and the organizational culture. There is risk involved for Premier Mental Therapy because innovative services are not guaranteed to succeed when entering immature markets (Ahmad Husairi et al., 2021). Timing, marketing, and research and development (R&D) in a data-driven leveraged combination is required to guide Premier Mental Therapy's telemedicine market entry (Ahmad Husairi et al., 2021). Premier Mental Therapy leadership requires a strategy with alternatives to change the current business model and transition to the appropriate organizational culture that supports the vision for future operations.

2. Problem Statement

Telemedicine treatment for depression was found to be cost-ineffective during COVID and is a concern (Kolovos et al., 2018). Risk concerns are furthered when auxiliary costs force organizations to

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budget for items that are vital to organizational strategy and operations but do not bolster capabilities (Leinwand & Mainardi, 2010). The problem that Premier Mental Therapy must solve is how to increase and sustain revenue with a transition to telemedicine mental health services while transforming an organizational culture to fit the new operational model.

3. Significance Statement

This case study will analyze the transition of Premier Mental Therapy to telemedicine and adoption of organizational and cultural change to sustain long-term revenue stability and growth. Leadership, organizational culture, change management, and decision-making theories based on peer-reviewed sources are presented in support to the telemedicine transition and adoption.

4. Technology Considerations

Technology is crucial to successful telemedicine patient care. There have been successful patient care cases in which telemedicine operated with comparative success to in-person treatment. Telemedicine technology in elective laparoscopic cholecystectomy preoperative assessment proved effective with 7% same day cancellation, 11% readmission, and 6.8% complications rate (Urbonas et al., 2023). Approaches to platforms and technologies to facilitate mental health telemedicine benefit from an agnostic approach. An approach towards specific commercial brands can dilute the focus on true patient needs. Performance, usefulness, and privacy are technology requirements to meet the importance of medical staff and patients (Pellegrini et al., 2020; Sanchez Antelo et al., 2022). Telemedicine technologies facilitate patient and doctor joint health decision-making via synchronous video and asynchronous messaging and text (Hartasanchez et al., 2022). This requires telemedicine technology to be available on-demand to avoid increasing patient anxiety over technology malfunctions and complexities. Patient interactive technology in medical treatment should aim to increase patient knowledge and reduce psychosocial impact of conditions and ailments (Sanchez Antelo et al., 2022). Patients as primary users must drive the design of telemedicine technologies to achieve patient knowledge and residual psychosocial impact goals. User-centered design is important to developing an application or other capabilities intended to facilitate medical treatment (Sanchez Antelo et al., 2022). Costs related to technology adoption by medical staff must be considered due to the complexity and length of training (Pellegrini et al., 2020). Telemedicine technology decreases patient costs and wait times while improving access to healthcare (Urbonas et al., 2023). A cost-benefit analysis is recommended prior to technology selection and should include patient adoption based on usability. Premier Mental Therapy must understand that suboptimal telemedicine technology and capabilities can exacerbate patient mental health issues and must be avoided.

5. Impact on Employees

Premier Mental Therapy's decrease in revenue and lack of telemedicine capabilities can lead to staff reductions that will impact the well-being of employees. Premier Mental Therapy must recognize the risk to quality mental health service that occurs when losing seasoned knowledge worker employees. Product and service quality issues have been found to be the result of high employee turnover (Moon et al., 2022). Strategy development requires data collection and analysis of current operations and markets serving customer mental health and telemedicine needs (Martín Martín et al., 2022). Anxiety impacts to stakeholders internal and

external to Premier Mental Therapy can increase during data collection activities focusing on operations and business relationships. Diminished quality mental health services through high knowledge worker anxiety negatively affect revenues. Premier Mental Therapy employees performing in knowledge worker roles are key determinants of mental health service offering quality and increase organizational performance when appropriately managed (Moon et al., 2022; Razzaq et al., 2019). Premier Mental Therapy employee buy-in can be achieved with effective communication of the mutual benefits of transitioning to telemedicine service offerings, transparency, clear objectives, and full awareness of actions. Strategic communications are vital to inform all stakeholders of operational and investment changes. Premier Mental Therapy leadership must strategically communicate the organizational vision and transformation activities to provide assurance of employment stability and increased revenues to employees and business partners.

6. Impact on the Organization

Premier Mental Therapy will undertake a major shift in service provision when transitioning to telemedicine service offerings. A crucial aspect of the transition is technology acceptance. Doctors have been increasingly accepting of telemedicine as a result in the improvement of technology and infrastructure that have facilitated robust online platforms (Chen et al., 2021). Telemedicine helps general population healthcare and health management through cost efficiencies, healthcare access, and patient communication and engagement (Kanavos et al., 2022). Additionally, intrinsic motivations like feelings of self-worth and extrinsic motivations like public image, rewards, and relationships have been found to influence physician telemedicine acceptance (Chen et al., 2021). The study conducted by Chen et al. (2021) found relationship correlated 0.69 and image correlated 0.61 with desire to help patients in a study of 311 targeted physicians with 58.5% male respondents and 41.2% respondents between the ages of 36 and 45 years. The physicians and counselors providing services are knowledge workers. Knowledge workers must be managed appropriately to match the increased performance and organizational commitment (Razzaq et al., 2019). People and technology are important factors to Premier Mental Therapy's operational success. Practical steps and initiatives to transition Premier Mental Therapy's organizational culture and mitigate organizational impacts should focus on technology acceptance and intrinsic motivation factors.

7. Leadership Model

7.1. Path-Goal Theory

The reformulated path-goal theory states effective leader behavior complements employee environment, abilities, and personalities to promote employee performance, satisfaction, and work goal achievement (House, 1996). Premier Mental Therapy's transition to telemedicine will change how employees execute tasks. Changes in leader behavior and style will be necessary to achieve desired effectiveness and results (Tsai, 2022). This is where to be successful Premier Mental Therapy must execute a path-goal theory variation that allows employee personal characteristics, organizational environment, and employee tasks to moderate leader behavior (Tsai, 2022). Interpersonal authenticity from Premier Mental Therapy leaders can increase virtual team performance (Zhang et al., 2022). This suggests Premier Mental Therapy leaders must be cognizant of employee personality and abilities, newly implemented telemedicine tasks, and

the organizational environment that is transitioning service delivery and offerings to increase revenue. Premier Mental Therapy leader cognizance is the input to leadership behavior and styles that will positively or negatively affect the goal of service transition and increased revenues.

7.2. Institutional Theory

Premier Mental Therapy can analyze organizational structuration and formulate transitional actions from an approach of institutional theory that places behaviors and actions in an infusion with organizational culture, norms, values, and practices (Fuenfschilling & Truffer, 2014). Institutional theory becomes less effective as the organization becomes more complex which results in less participative leadership style and decreased employee performance (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022). Premier Mental Therapy is recommended to simplify telemedicine transition endeavors to mitigate employee performance and acceptance risks. Premier Mental Therapy leader behavior, actions, and employee interactions will directly affect organization complexity and performance.

Institutional theory has a special integration with marketing when customer interactions with institutions are observed and taken into consideration when forming organizational strategy (Slimane et al., 2019). There are other factors with customers being a major factor that influence success that are beyond factors internal to the institution (Slimane et al., 2019). Premier Mental Therapy must recognize the interdependencies between COVID (external factor) that has forced revenue (internal factor) decline that will be mitigated with actions that affect customers (additional external factors) that drive revenue if service offerings meet marketing price, product (service), place, and promotion mix. Premier Mental Therapy's organizational strategy must address customer factors to provide organizational stability and sustained revenue.

A major consideration in telemedicine is the adoption of electronic health records by patients and organizations. Institutional theory was used to explain the adoption of critical technologies in electronic health records in the United States (Sherer et al., 2016). Researchers found that organizations in the highly regulated healthcare field readily adopted electronic health records in mimicry fashion and through stimulation by the United States government (Sherer et al., 2016). United States government stimulation provides electronic health records credibility. Premier Mental Therapy can develop an institutional theory-based strategy that extrapolates this mimicry in adoption of mental health telemedicine that requires similar electronic privacy and protections of electronic health records.

8. Organizational Culture Theories

8.1. Competing Values Framework

Premier Mental Therapy is an intelligence system composition of knowledge workers and technology providing telemedicine capabilities (Harrison et al., 2021). Patients and clinical staff are vital to change and must share the vision of the future organization with commitment to continual quality improvement (Harrison et al., 2021). Empowerment, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement are positively correlated to cultural values in the organization (Goodman et al., 2001). The organizational culture is defined by the leadership balance of flexibility versus control and internal versus external views (Goodman et al., 2001). Revenue generation can be in a paradoxical relationship with employee needs and satisfaction. This paradoxical relationship will require increased complexity in leader cognition and behavior to mitigate tensions arising from revenue-generation strategy changes and employee task execution (Lavine, 2014). Competing values framework has been found to help

shape leader behavior in managing complexity through sensemaking, enabling, and facilitating shared leadership (Tong & Arvey, 2015). Competing values framework can support the position Premier Mental Therapy leaders have with organizational culture and increase revenue generation through improved leader-employee relationship.

The healthcare industry is reacting to safety, efficiency, patient-centeredness, timeliness, effectiveness, and accessibility in continual change to meet external requirements set by patients, government, partners, supply chains (Harrison et al., 2021). These factors are stimuli for change that cannot be resisted. Resistance and lack of adaptation will exacerbate decreasing revenues and can lead to staff cuts that may have devasting effects on morale and employee personal well-being. Premier Mental Therapy can use this scenario to create a sense of urgency according to Kotter's Model to execute the complex change to telemedicine service offerings (Harrison et al., 2021). Successful change will be dependent upon extending the preferred organizational culture to patients in a systems approach for feedback and timely correction action and responses.

8.2. Theory of Constraints

Theory of Constraints can be employed to increase organizational flexibility and decision-making in strategic objective conflict resolution (Pacheco et al., 2021). Conflicts can occur with weighing organizational needs of revenues and efficiency against patient needs. Premier Mental Therapy must provide telemedicine offerings that meet patient social and emotional needs that is beyond technical requirements and critical to marketing strategy (Boni & Abremski, 2022). The Premier Mental Therapy's marketing approach should coincide with government and retail health industry efforts to extend telemedicine as a viable option with tangible benefits to receive healthcare (Sabbir et al., 2021). Premier Mental Therapy's marketing strategy must develop a marketing mix that considers constraints with marketing actions. Table no. 1 shows the recommended Premier Mental Therapy marketing strategy.

Table no. 1

Premier Mental Therapy Marketing Strategy

Marketing P	**Marketing Action**
Product/service	Identify and refine customer telemedicine needs, define service offering, develop the telemedicine service
Price	Conduct cost analysis, research competitive pricing, create value proposition, create flexible pricing model
Place	Conduct technology feasibility and accessibility, research appropriate government related licenses and regulations on telemedicine business, create telemedicine distribution channels, partner with organizations in current market
Promotion	Create brand awareness, promote in via multiple media and venues, create service offering consumer educational content

9. Change Management Theory Application

Premier Mental Therapy can plan, lead, and execute this change 100% internally or perform all actions in coordination with external consulting teams to increase expertise. Change leadership is solely the responsibility of Premier Mental Therapy's leadership and cannot be delegated to consultants. Consultants should serve in advisory roles during the change process. A high-level RACI chart

that depicts Premier Mental Therapy's leadership and Board of Directors being responsible and accountable for organizational change while the consultants will be consulted and informed is recommended. Table no. 2 shows an example of a Premier Mental Therapy high-level RACI chart.

Table no. 2

Premier Mental Therapy RACI Chart

Activity	R	A	C	I
Conduct industry and market analysis	R - Consultant market research team	A - Senior management	C - Department heads	I - All Employees
Identify internal strengths and weaknesses (SWOT analysis)	R - Cross-functional team	A - Executives	C - Department heads	I - All Employees
Set strategic goals and objectives	R - Strategy team (CEO/COO-led)	A - CEO	C - Senior management	I - Department heads
Develop strategic initiatives	R - Strategic initiative teams	A - Department heads	C - Relevant Department Teams	I - All Employees
Evaluate and prioritize strategic initiatives	R - Strategy team	A - CEO	C - Senior management	I - Department heads
Develop action plans for strategic initiatives	R - Department teams	A - Department heads	C - Project managers	I - Select stakeholders
Monitor and track progress of strategic initiatives	R - Project managers	A - Department heads	C - Strategy Team	I - All Employees
Communicate strategy and initiatives to employees	R - Communication team	A - CEO	C - Senior management	I - All Employees

Note. R- Responsible A - Accountable C - Consulted I - Informed

9.1. Kotter's Model

Kotter's 8-step model is recommended for change management based on data showing Kotter's 8-step model the preferred method of managing change within 38 studies on healthcare organization change management (Harrison et al., 2021). Healthcare organizational change occurs on a granular level and requires individuals to proceed through neutral zone, beginnings, and endings phases of change (Campbell, 2020). Premier Mental Therapy employees will experience multiple emotions during the transition to telemedicine that entails a transition of identities from face-to-face service provision (Campbell, 2020). Employees will experience anxiety, anger, pessimism, false pride, and cynicism emotions that must be transformed to urgency, optimism, trust, faith, and enthusiasm for successful change (Campbell, 2020). A sense of urgency is the first step in Kotter's process and provides an opportunity to mitigate risks from employee emotional states by deploying trusted change champions to articulate the urgent need to transition to the mutual benefits of telemedicine. Trusted change champions that are knowledgeable and influential are instrumental in managing expectations and actions during a successful change process (Campbell, 2020). Kotter's 8-step model is useful in enabling Premier Mental Therapy leadership to build momentum and buy-in through guiding coalitions (Harrison et al., 2021). Table no. 3 shows the recommended Premier Mental Therapy Kotter Change Model.

Table no. 3

Premier Mental Therapy Kotter's Change Model

Step	Description
1. Create a Sense of Urgency	Communicate and discuss COVID-19 negative impact on revenue that may result in divestiture, and/or downsizing if changes in strategy and execution do not occur imm
2. Form a Powerful Coalition	Build a team led by a C-suite executive that will manage expectations and positively influence internal and external confidence in telemedicine's positive potential to increase revenue.
3. Develop a Vision and Strategy	Transition to telemedicine service offerings with focus on patient satisfaction through strong organizational culture based in participative leadership, employee empowerment, and technological innovation.
4. Communicate the Vision	Dedicate resources to promote the organizational and customer benefits of telemedicine and act as a conduit to address questions and concerns.
5. Empower Broad-Based Action	Actively and continually identify constraints to telemedicine strategy execution and empower decision-making authority to an executive-led board with direct access to the CEO for decisions that require Board of Directors approval.
6. Generate Short-Term Wins	Create measurable milestones with 1 to 3-week durations to demonstrate progress and instill confidence and satisfaction of achievement within the team.
7. Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change	Develop and display internal and external websites to track telemedicine service offerings completion with specific incentives for each milestone. Examples are patient discounts for answering surveys at milestones and employee morale luncheons at milestones to discuss achievements and future goals.
8. Anchor New Approaches in the Culture	Develop performance appraisals that measure leader and employee adherence to Balanced Scorecard objectives that support organizational performance.

9.2. Networking

Premier Mental Therapy should engage in network building to provide organizational support to mitigate potential risks to organizational culture building, technology and telemedicine service provision, and revenue stability and eventual increase. New market entry requires data collection and analysis based in systematic approaches (Martín Martín et al., 2022). Networks can be organized in elitist theory networks that maintain political cohesion on big issues and pluralist theory networks that analyze individual issues for business cohesion (Scott & Davis, 2007). Premier Mental Therapy is recommended to take advantage of the positive effects of networks on supply chain to improve service delivery and technology innovations (Wang & Hu, 2020). Networks provide multiple benefits in risk mitigation and organizational support that are instrumental to service offering success. Examples of Premier Mental Therapy networking recommendations are listed in Table no. 4.

Table no. 4
Networking Recommendations

Theory	Organizational Culture	Technology	Telemedicine Service Provision
Elitist Theory	Mitigate potential labor issues	Build coalition for privacy and confidentiality best practices	Lobby for increased government regulation and mandates in telemedicine insurance coverage
Pluralist Theory	Conduct subject matter expert (SME) knowledge conferences and exchanges	Provide benefits linked to personal rewards, relationship, desire to help patients, and public image of expanding healthcare access via telemedicine	Provide full personalized and tailored technical support
Supply Chain	Conduct surveys on job satisfaction and goal accomplishment related to technical tools available	Create network and partnerships for unified technology platform	Create network of patient-side information technology suppliers to stabilize and continually improve telemedicine service provision

10. Strategy and Decision-Making Support Theories

10.1. Balanced Scorecard

Mathews et al. (2019) argued a scorecard method with challenges to constraints will stimulate innovation that eases telemedicine market entry. Premier Mental Therapy is recommended to use balanced scorecard (BSC) to evaluate performance of the transition to telemedicine and revenue increases. Healthcare entities have used BSC adapted to specific organizational purposes (Bohm et al., 2021). A review of 87 articles representing more than 26 countries showed 21% of healthcare entity BSCs aligning with original BSC structure and content (Bohm et al., 2021). BSC studies found improved communications, increased employee understanding of organizational strategy, increased customer satisfaction, and improved organizational growth and innovation through learning were positive outcomes post implementation (Marcu, 2020). BSC ties organizational performance to vision and strategic objectives in addition to providing a framework to measure customer, financial performance, internal processes, and organizational improvement perspectives in continuous improvement cycles (Marcu, 2020). BSC is a useful tool for Premier Mental Therapy to measure performance and innovation while executing telemedicine market entry activities.

Rural hospitals used BSC to assess ICU telemedicine performance and assist in decision-making (Nadig et al., 2021). Organizational, clinical, financial, and strategic were the perspectives measured to obtain a structured approach to telemedicine investment with equal 25% weighted scale (Nadig et al., 2021). Premier Mental Therapy can adopt this approach to BSC to measure mental health telemedicine performance. Objectives within each perspective can be determined based on current market conditions, operational objectives, and objective-dedicated resources. A viable telemedicine multi-stakeholder scorecard should take into account technical, usability, costs, and clinical aspects for customers and organizations (Mathews et al., 2019). An example of a Premier Mental Therapy BSC with technical, usability, costs, and clinical considerations is shown is Table no. 5.

Table no. 5

Premier Mental Therapy Balanced Scorecard (BSC)

Perspective	Objectives	Measure	Initiative
Organizational	Maintain a 75% minimum of staff telework and telemedicine service	% of staff teleworking	Campaign to transition mental health services to telemedicine platform
Clinical	Transition and maintain a minimum of 75% of patients to mental health services telemedicine offerings	% of mental health services offered via telemedicine	Patient awareness campaign
Financial	Improve revenue growth from telemedicine service offerings	% of total revenue via telemedicine offerings	Marketing campaign for mental health telemedicine services
Strategic	Develop telemedicine offering via multiple platforms with an emphasis on mobile devices	% of mental health services telemedicine offered securely via top 10 mobile devices	Mobile device offerings implementation and patient awareness campaign

10.2. Plan, Do, Check, Act

Increased data collection facilitates increased analytical capability that aids in decision-making to react to changing markets. Plan, do, check, act (PDCA) is a recommended strategy for root cause discovery to mitigate change management obstacles and optimize business processes (Malega et al., 2021). Premier Mental Therapy will utilize PDCA for identification and analysis of downward financial performance factors prior to solution development. The dependence on data is crucial to the PDCA strategy and supporting methods to transition to telemedicine service offerings and increase revenue. Singh (2022) developed a data model that improves risk resiliency using big data analytics integrated into a risk management infrastructure. Data used was based on surveys sent to self-identified individuals experienced in business and IT strategy, information technology, and big data analytics (BDA) adoption with a 16.05% response rate (Singh, 2022). Premier Mental Therapy can use BDA in a moderating effect to strengthen the relationship between risk management infrastructure and risk resiliency (Singh, 2022). Surveys in the data collection strategy should gather information from physicians on potential barriers and risks to telemedicine transition. Premier Mental Therapy's PDCA chart to address change management obstacles and optimize business process is shown in Table no. 6.

Table no. 6

Premier Mental Therapy Plan, Do, Check, Act

Step	Action
Plan	Plan data collection of change obstacles and business optimization variables to include but not limited to competitors, distribution channels, laws and regulations, financial resources, risks (categorized) and customer base.
Do	Develop and implement data model with variables for predictive and prescriptive analytics.
Check	Check data model output with resources, current environment, and strategy alignment.
Act	Take data-driven actions that can be measured for performance.

11. Conclusion

The timeline for action is 1-3 months for telemedicine services transition. The aggressive timeline is in response to the limitations on non-telemedicine service provision and decreased revenue impacts from COVID. Premier Mental Therapy can successfully transition to telemedicine with sustained revenue by taking appropriate leadership actions and instilling behaviors that transform organizational culture with minimal employee impact. Premier Mental Therapy leaders must actively lead the telemedicine transition and maintain a living document RACI chart for full awareness of roles aligned with time-based transition actions.

Telemedicine market entry strategy development must produce executable and measurable actions derived from change management, leadership, and performance management theories. Customer acceptance of telemedicine must be understood and considered in Premier Mental Therapy marketing strategy. Institutional theory and path-goal theory will provide the framework for leader-employee relationship in a trusting and empowering organizational culture with an understood vision for change. Competing values framework and theory of constraints will aid Premier Mental Therapy in decision-making that affects organizational culture and achieves strategic objectives. BSC will measure performance during the telemedicine transition and post-transition for revenue sustainability. PDCA is the recommended technique for operational execution to align organizational endeavors with leadership intent. These recommendations will successfully transition Premier Mental Therapy to telemedicine and return revenue to an acceptable level.

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