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## COVER STORY

# VOICES FROM THE LOCKDOWN

Part 7

AS THE SPREAD OF THE PANDEMIC LED TO THE SHUTDOWN OF THE ECONOMY IN POLAND IN MID-MARCH *AMCHAM QUARTERLY* CONTACTED TOP MANAGERS OF 12 MEMBER COMPANIES TO LEARN ABOUT HOW THEIR ORGANIZATIONS WERE FARING DURING THE LOCKDOWN.

IN THIS DISPATCH **PAWEŁ SUJECKI, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF PROSERVICE FINTECO**, A PROVIDER OF COMPREHENSIVE OPERATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, TALKS ABOUT HOW THE PANDEMIC IMPACTED THE DAILY OPERATIONS OF HIS COMPANY AND SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ON HOW THE CRISIS HAS REFINED THE USE OF IT TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP BUSINESS GOING.

# COVER STORY

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# VOICES FROM THE LOCKDOWN



AMERICAN COMPANIES MOVED SMOOTHLY INTO THE WORK-FROM-HOME MODE AND, EXCEPT FOR THOSE IN INDUSTRIES THAT WERE BADLY HURT BY THE ECONOMIC SHUTDOWN, HAVE CONTINUED TO ADAPT TO THE CHANGING SITUATION AND LEARN THEIR LESSONS. HOW STRONG THE ECONOMY WILL BE IN A FEW MONTHS TIME, HOWEVER, IS A SOURCE OF CONCERN.



**Paweł Sujecki, Chairman of the Board, ProService Finteco**, a provider of comprehensive operational support services for financial institutions, heard the news of Covid-19 in early January from the media. The news covered China and it was hard at that time to think that the epidemic would spread beyond that country. After all, it was not the first virus epidemic in China, and it seemed that this one would also be contained. "Nobody could imagine at that time that it would develop into such a global crisis," Sujecki said.

**GETTING READY**

As the company's managers joined the dots, the picture became clear. Two weeks before the lockdown was announced in Poland ProService Finteco set up a crisis management center which comprised board members and key company managers. They decided to reorganize the work of the entire company, including the everyday routines of the employees, but also contacts with clients and subcontractors. "Safety measures were introduced based on recommendations from our owner, Oaktree Capital Management," Sujecki said, "which has the best solutions to help maintain business continuity." Keeping people safe became a top priority but also keeping people informed about what was going on was important. "There was information chaos at the beginning of the pandemic, and people were confused. Some worried about the economic aspect of the pandemic and how it will impact their lives," Sujecki said.

**KEEPING GOING**

As work at distance was introduced

across the company, it transpired that for a number of people working from home did not feel like a good solution. They felt excluded from the rest of the team. The company of 750 employees contracted a psychotherapist to help them cope with the situation. The psychotherapist was available on the phone. But this problem was just one of many. "A company is people, revenue, costs, suppliers and so on," Sujecki said. So the financial aspect had to be taken care of along protecting jobs. "We saw the situation as temporary believing that an economic revival will have to take place sooner or later," Sujecki said, adding that his fear was that the negative consequences of the economic shutdown may be even worse for society than the pandemic itself. "It is pivotal to think of how we all can come back to work and keep the economy going in the new reality," Sujecki said.

**“ When you look at our company of 750 people, it is hard to believe that we went into the home office mode nearly overnight! The home office mode is an irreversible technological and organizational change and it will fuel the economy for years to come! ”**

Luckily enough, the company offers software solutions for the financial sector, and software and IT solutions, especially those in artificial intelligence and relation management, and this is what more and more companies are looking forward to implementing during the pandemic and beyond.

**A WIDER LOOK**

But Sujecki looks beyond the IT sector. In his view if the shutdown lasts longer, the impact on the economy will be harder with the most vulnerable sectors being hotels, tourism, restaurants and manufacturing. "Those are important parts of the country's economy and if they are hurt, everybody will feel the heat. The economy is a whole and it can not last for too long if, say, 40 percent of the economy is doing fine and the rest, for instance the small business, is frozen," Sujecki said.

**LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE**

There may be many lessons for companies during the pandemic. For Sujecki the most fundamental change that we

will see will be the development of working from home and distance work. "It is a major revolution that is taking place now, and actually, at present we can hardly estimate its impact on the company, not only in its economic sense but also in the socio-technical and psychological senses," Sujecki said. "The idea of the workplace will evolve as something less connected with the physical office and more with the positive impact on business and the organization. We will reconsider how we engage our employees: how we organize their time and monitor the progress of their work across teams and projects. The work has to be more effective than it is now because of the lack of team integration when working from home," Sujecki added. Technology will help achieve this and this is what is already happening, according to Sujecki. "Over the last few weeks companies made a giant leap for-

ward when it comes to the application of distance work solutions," Sujecki said. "When you look at our company of 750 people, it is hard to believe that we went into the home office mode nearly overnight! The home office mode is an irreversible technological and organizational change and it will fuel the economy for years to come!"