

Asia-Pacific (APAC) has been on the frontlines of experimenting with control measures to halt the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As a result, certain tactics first implemented by the region's governments, such as the imposition of national lockdowns and the use of technologies to facilitate contact tracing, have been adopted across the globe.

However, the specific strategies implemented to battle the virus differ significantly across the region. In China, the rate of community transmission of COVID-19 has slowed down after months of stringent control measures and lockdowns, with the central government increasingly focused on resuming business operations and reviving the economy. On the other hand, Singapore's early focus on granular contact tracing has resulted in a shift to a more widespread "circuit breaker" lockdown to address a new surge in cases. Japan has been forced to adopt similar emergency measures, nearly two months after experiencing its first wave. The Indian government is exploring ways to ease the lockdown measures which have been in place since March 24.

Although regional governments are at different stages of the battle against COVID-19, four key trends offer considerable opportunities for organizations looking to come back stronger from the crisis.

The Redefinition of Telemedicine

Online medical consultation platforms have seen rapid growth due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chinese online consultation platforms have seen usership increase by 10%, with the number of consultations increasing by **900% compared** to pre-COVID-19 levels, while more than 10,000 Japanese hospitals have launched telemedicine services during the pandemic. Technology firms and platforms have also become increasingly central to the application of telemedicine, from LINE in Japan, JD.com and [AliHealth in China](#) to WhatsApp in India. Moving forward, telemedicine is likely to be feature in economic recovery plans and public health reforms to support the further digitization of national healthcare industries.

APCO Worldwide can support the identification and deployment of new telehealth solutions by:

- ✓ Conducting opinion research and stakeholder mapping to better understand patients' needs and wants when it comes to telehealth and identify new opportunities.
- ✓ Developing communications strategies to optimize the launch of new solutions on the market.
- ✓ Highlighting competitor communication strategies and consumer reactions to better understand the dynamic of the market.

Pioneering the Use of Frontier Technologies

APAC governments have taken the lead in leveraging frontier technologies, such as artificial intelligence to effectively track and trace contacts. In China, Tencent partnered with the government to launch the "health kit" function on the popular messaging app WeChat, while the Singapore government has launched [Trace Together](#), a Bluetooth application used to identify close contacts between potentially infected individuals based on the proximity and the duration of user encounters. Remote communication tools are also helping businesses in the healthcare sector to reconsider their stakeholder engagement approach in marketing, sales and advocacy.

APCO can prepare and implement innovative approaches which help healthcare companies to identify future partnerships and corporate social responsibility opportunities by:

- ✓ Collating and leveraging data-driven insights.
- ✓ Boosting client's digital presence.
- ✓ Planning and implementing virtual events and meetings.
- ✓ Formulating communications strategies to reassure existing patients not directly impacted by COVID-19
- ✓ Engaging with stakeholders/networking effectively.

Government Procurement

The demands of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced an immediate shift in government practices to ensure the supply of personal protective equipment and other essential healthcare supplies. For example, Japan's Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association established special operating rules on the supply adjustment system for prescription drugs, while China introduced green channels to facilitate the emergency import of critical supplies. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to pressure future policy actions, from safeguarding supply chains on key resources to prepare for future health crises, to accelerating existing programs aimed at reducing healthcare costs, such as volume-based procurement.

APCO can help provide support to government while lobbying for favorable stimulus policies by:

- ✓ Tracking and analyzing global stimulus packages and national recovery strategies.
- ✓ Providing tailored mapping of the key government, media and business stakeholders of relevance to the client.
- ✓ Developing issue-based advocacy and government engagement strategies.

Supply Chain Disruptions and De-Globalization

The suspension of manufacturing facilities across China has had a considerable impact on global supply chains, from shortages of the antiviral drug Avigan in Japan to a reduced supply of active pharmaceutical ingredients to India. This ripple effect has provoked debate around the world over the need to reduce supply chain dependence on any one country through domestic investment or diversification. As a result, one of the most serious long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may be the shifting of supply chains outside China back to domestic markets.

APCO can help provide support to government while lobbying for favorable stimulus policies by:

- ✓ Advising board members on how to communicate business decisions to key external stakeholders.
- ✓ Formulating a narrative for effective internal communications.
- ✓ Providing in depth insights and analysis of how competitors are responding to potential supply-chain disruptions.
- ✓ Offering up to date insights on the latest geo-political developments, including the U.S. China relationship and global trade agreements and how they impact our client's business.