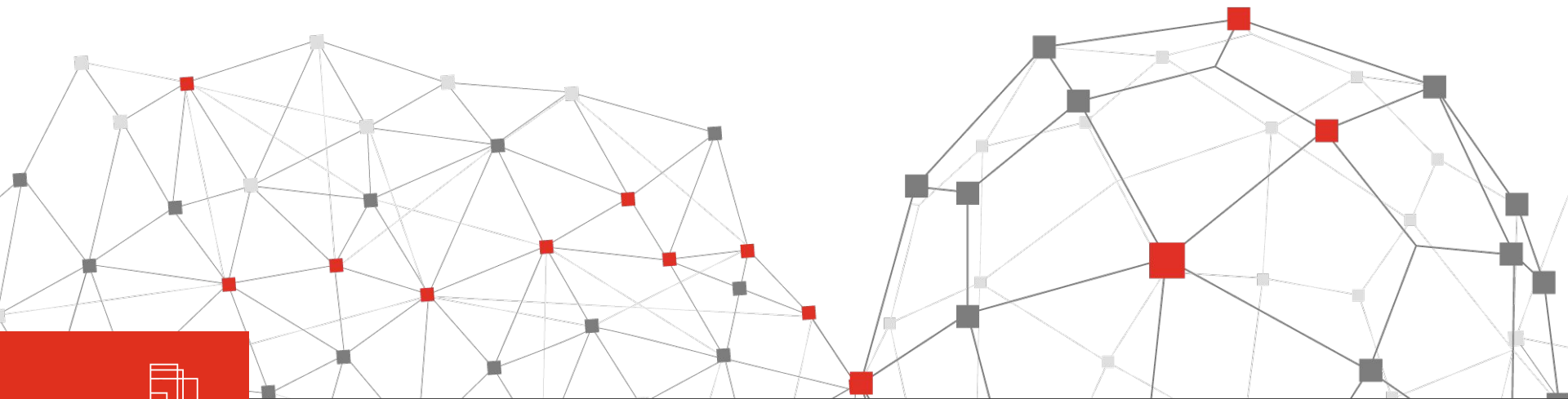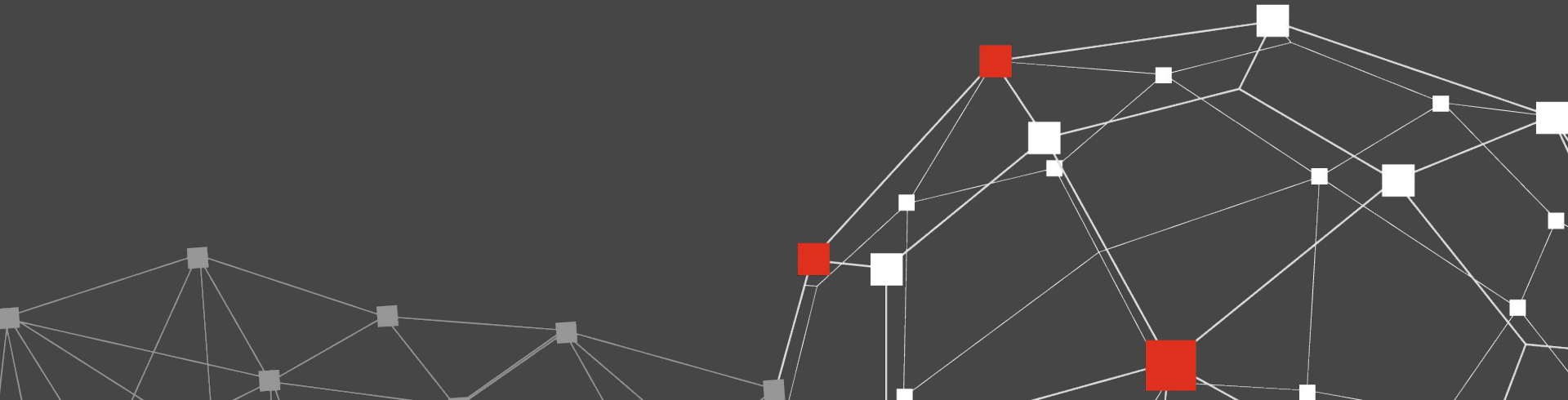# COVID-19

Return to Workplace Considerations

Return to Workplace

Business leaders are acutely aware of the impacts COVID-19 has had on their business

Leaders have responded by...

...recognising the need to manage costs and workforce	**53%** Are projecting a decline of up to 25% in company revenue and/or profit this year[1]	**63%** considering new products/services to enhance/rebuild revenue streams[1]	**32%** Looking at reductions in workforce investments to target and contain costs[1]
...settling in to new ways of working	**75%** Increased flexibility will make organisation stronger over the long term[1]	**52%** say remote work is here to stay for some roles and are investing in remote work in experience[1]	**50%** Planning to accelerate automation and new ways of working[1]
...preparing for the return to the workplace	**53%** Top concern is the impact of recurring new waves of infection on workplace safety[1]	**16%** concerned about their ability to effectively manage remote/hybrid way of working [2]	**79%** have mature capabilities in IT infrastructure, tools and controls to support interaction[2]

COVID-19:
How to prepare, respond and emerge stronger

Six areas of response:

Crisis Management	Workforce
Operations & Supply Chain	**Tax & Trade**
Finance & Liquidity	**Strategy & Brand**

While all *six areas of response* at the left need to be addressed to appropriately manage the COVID-19 crisis and recovery, evaluating **when and how to gradually bring employees back to the workplace** represents one of the most critical challenges your organisation will need to solve for.

It is a complex problem with many questions to consider:

"How can we ensure the health and safety of our people?"

"How should we sequence and pace the ramp up?"

"Are workers comfortable returning to the workplace? Do we even return?"

"How can we best generate revenue in the wake of COVID-19?"

"What are the unique considerations for each country, city, site?"

"What will it cost to appropriately bring people back to work?"

PwC weighs *return to workplace* decisions across *four decision criteria:*

Health & Safety
Type of Work (Sequencing)
Financial (Cost & Revenue)
Worker Needs / Preference

Decision criteria, applied as part recovery readiness, informs the return to workplace (RtW) transition plan

Managing through crisis

Most companies have already pivoted to a 'new normal', which includes the following workforce dimensions [1]

Responding to the Crisis: Protecting People
Lead with responsive, empathetic communications and policies

Ensuring Work Gets Done: Secure & Productive Work
New ways of working and new forms of connectivity

Managing Liquidity: Workforce Cost Management
Assess short and long-term workforce cost levers to plan for sustainability

Preparing for Recovery: Recovery Readiness
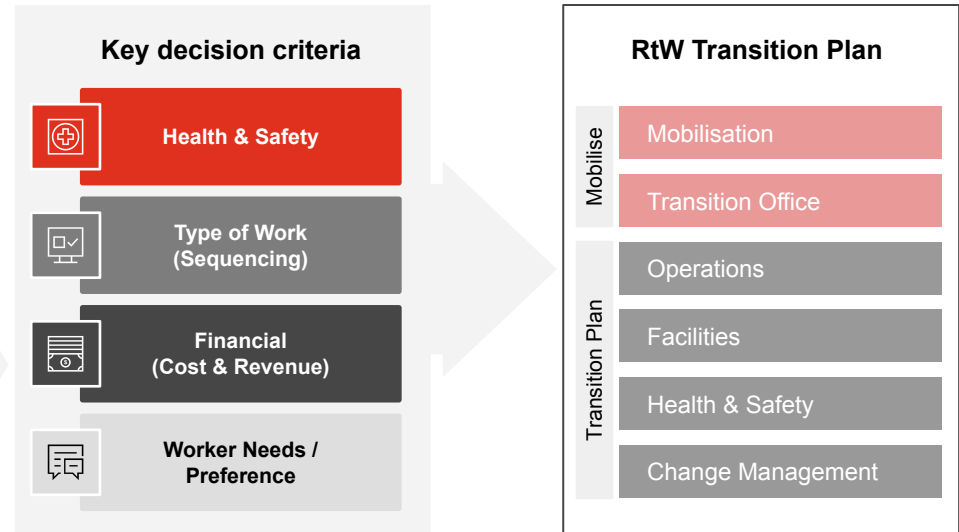*Prepare for increased demand via workforce planning and strategy*

Purpose-Led Communications
Increased frequency, new modalities of multi-stakeholder communication and leadership engagement

1. More detail on the dimensions of work by which companies are already managing through crisis is available in the appendix or on PwC's COVID-19: Workforce considerations page

Prepare for the return to workplace

Mobilise a RtW task force and set up Transition Office to review response effectiveness to date, scenario plan for key decisions, define and manage action plan.

Key decision criteria

- Health & Safety
- Type of Work (Sequencing)
- Financial (Cost & Revenue)
- Worker Needs / Preference

RtW Transition Plan

Mobilise
- Mobilisation
- Transition Office

Transition Plan
- Operations
- Facilities
- Health & Safety
- Change Management

There are four key decision criteria to evaluate prior to bringing back subsets of the workforce

Health & Safety

1	Ensure compliance with local, state and federal laws and guidelines, including privacy considerations
2	Establish a sanitary work environment
3	Establish medical protocols to manage a returning workforce (e.g., anonymised temperature checking)
4	Revisit and update proper environment, health and safety (EHS) and emergency protocols

Type of Work

1	Identify jobs that require in-person interaction with other people (on-site or field)
2	Identify jobs that require in-person interaction with technology or machinery
3	Understand where risk and compliance issues are magnified if jobs are not managed on-site
4	Assess where productivity decreases significantly if work is performed off-site

Financial (Cost & Revenue)

1	Understand costs incurred or saved by bringing people back to work (e.g., cleaning fees)
2	Identify and stand up new revenue streams or expand existing offerings (e.g., new products/services)
3	Plan for fluctuations in typical business demand during the COVID-19 recovery period

Worker Needs /Preference

1	Assess workers' attitudes towards health and hygiene in the current climate
2	Understand worker personal situations (e.g., childcare, financial)
3	Evaluate comfort with remote working and perceived effectiveness of collaboration tools/remote ways of working
4	Identify key skills needed for new ways of working and plan for Citizen-led innovation program

Mobilise a team to build and execute the transition plan

Mobilise

RtW Mobilisation	Transition Office
Establish baseline and set intention	**Coordinate return to workplace response to promote compliance and efficiency**

Establish baseline and set intention
- Evaluate effectiveness and identify areas for improvement across six areas of response (Crisis Mgmt., Workforce, Operations & Supply Chain, Tax & Trade, Finance & Liquidity, Strategy & Brand)
- Evaluate effectiveness of COVID-19 response across five workforce dimensions (Protecting People, Secure & Productive Work, Cost Mgmt. Recovery Readiness, Communication)
- Design and facilitate return-to-work strategy workshop with key stakeholders
- Monitor two-way feedback channels to check-in on the workforce
- Develop and align on return to workplace strategy
- Stand up transition office

Coordinate return to workplace response to promote compliance and efficiency
- Build return to workplace project plan
- Monitor local, state, and federal statutes and drive compliance
- Execute and manage the return-to-work strategy and plan
- Monitor and measure return to workplace progress

RtW Transition Plan

Operations	Facilities	Health & Safety	Change Management

Operations — Ramp up operations to meet demand
- Develop a site-level schedule week-by-week and day-by-day, based on volume forecasts, local regulations, and remodeled schedules
- Establish operating hours by site (e.g., for manufacturing plants, stores, contact centers)
- Identify roles to ramp back up and roles to stay furloughed or continue working remotely
- Establish return-to-work schedules at the employee level by site, including selection of employees if return is oversubscribed
- Establish incident management team, tools and processes

Facilities — Design a workplace that enables safe distancing
- Remodel the office infrastructure (e.g., retrofitting desks with plexiglass shields to limit close contact between workers)
- Redesign individual workspace configuration to create space between employees
- Redesign/close collaborative spaces to allow for distancing
- Invest in tools/infrastructure that continue to securely enable virtual collaboration (e.g., collaboration software, network bandwidth, laptops, wifi / vpn access, identity and access management, data trust, threat detection and response)

Health & Safety — Implement policies and practices to ensure a sanitary work environment
- Design and implement sanitisation protocols and schedule for more stringent, regular cleaning of premises
- Design and implement physical distancing and personal protective equipment use guidelines
- Determine and enforce appropriate mechanisms to control human traffic flow, including staggering work times
- Establish health verification methods and channels (e.g. temperature checking, self-reporting in an app) against privacy and policy considerations
- Mobilise in-house medical staff
- Define visitor protocols / screening processes; review contingent workforce management practices to ensure understanding of who is in building / systems and where they have traveled

Change Management — Manage adoption of changes and employee sentiment
- Build change management strategy to drive awareness, understanding, commitment and adoption among your workers
- Develop communications and engagement plan that addresses both returning workers and workers remaining remote
- Design and execute training on new processes, policies, and operational procedures
- Understand your cultural strengths and leverage them as a source of energy and focus. Be prepared to lead with empathy and address arising concerns

The next step is to consider medium- and longer-term actions

Considerations

Real Estate & Tax

- Identify future real estate requirements based on utilisation and space configuration standards
- Consider consolidating real estate footprint and allowing more flexibility regarding the place of work
- Rethink the role of headquarters; consider whether functions need to be centralised (e.g., consider mitigating outbreak risk by establishing dual headquarters)
- Evaluate changing tax policies and regulations across your geographic footprint to influence changes in location and supply chain strategy
- Evaluate ability to report employee work location and impact on state and local taxes

Vendor & Contingent Workforce Management

- Review contingent workforce management practices
- Assess ability of vendors to continue delivering work in light of disruption
- Review flexibility/ability of staff to execute work during the crisis; evaluate mix of fixed vs. flex talent and alternative staffing model needs
- Consider offshore/outsourced providers and local lockdown implications on business continuity; evaluate opportunities to redistribute work on a temporary or permanent basis
- Consider establishing proper notices and transparent policies for consumers and workers if sharing their data with third parties

Virtual & Remote Workplace

- Consider developing training for leaders/managers on managing staff in a remote model (e.g., motivating, building team spirit, coaching, managing performance)
- Enable virtual delivery of all talent processes (e.g., interviews, onboarding, training, day-to-day work, offboarding)
- Reimagine big in-person meetings and sales interactions (sales kick-offs, conferences)
- Enable permanent remote work positions with secure enablement strategies.
- Ensure continuity with technology and operational resilience strategies

Supply Chain

- Consider moving some offshore production facilities onshore
- Align staff location plans with public policy and incentives for local employment as these evolve post-pandemic
- Adapt supply plans to account for risks in availability of key materials
- Assess and update inventory strategy to ensure readiness for future crises and readiness to rapidly scale up or down
- Enhance supplier diversity strategy to prioritise small, local suppliers to demonstrate investment in community rebuilding
- Enhance scale with rapid ability to assess third parties and supply chain partners

Where to begin

You can kick-start Return to Workplace (RtW) planning by beginning with the following items:

1 — **Establish Return to Workplace (RtW) Task Force**
Identify internal leaders / stakeholders who will lead the mobilisation of the return to workplace response, who may already be in place managing the crisis

2 — **Establish Guiding Principles for RtW Transition**
Align with RtW Task Force Leaders on the primary goals of the transition including the target experience for stakeholders

3 — **Assess Effectiveness of COVID-19 Response**
Identify areas for improvement across six areas of response (Crisis Management, Workforce, Operations & Supply Chain, Tax & Trade, Finance & Liquidity, Strategy & Brand)

4 — **Conduct Workshop to Launch RtW Planning**
Design and facilitate return-to-work strategy workshop with RtW Task Force to address considerations across the four RtW decision categories (Health & Safety, Type of Work, Financial, Worker Needs / Preference)

Appendix A:
Detailed return to
workplace decisions
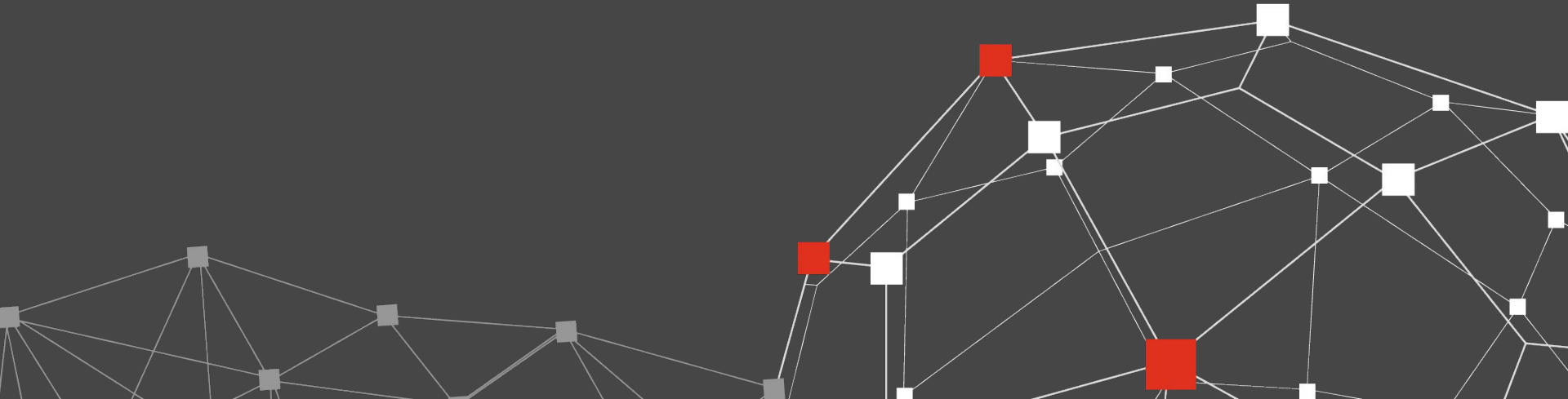
"Health & Safety" Considerations

Health & Safety	Type of Work	Financial (Cost & Revenue)	Worker Needs /Preference

1 Ensure compliance with local, state and federal laws and guidelines, including privacy considerations

- Monitor and ensure compliance with any federal, state and local regulations (e.g. social distancing recommendations)
- Scenario plan for various social distancing timelines and guidance that could be communicated by local, state, and federal govts.
- Consider offshore/outsourced providers and global service delivery as local lockdowns have implications on business continuity
- Understand and balance need to safeguard protected personal data while implementing due diligence measures to collect, use, and share applicable data to identify, mitigate, and/or protect against a direct threat to workplace health and safety..

2 Establish a sanitary work environment

- Update sanitisation protocols
- Consider a shift to a more stringent, regular cleaning of premises
- Consider remodeling the office space, e.g. retrofitting with plexiglass shields to limit close contact between workers
- Communicate physical distancing expectations and other guidelines on a regular basis
- Establish mechanisms to control human traffic flow
- Partner with union leadership with regard to any new manufacturing processes necessitated by physical distancing
- Consider staggering work times to de-synchronise commutes

3 Establish medical protocols to manage a returning workforce (i.e. anonymised temperature checking)

- Establish personal protective equipment use guidelines
- Consider health verification methods and channels (e.g. temperature checking, antibody/recovery verification, self-reporting in an app) balancing them with privacy and policy considerations
- Consider whether you should have medical staff on premises
- Define visitor protocols and screening processes; review contingent workforce management practices to ensure your organisation has an understanding of who is in your building / systems and where they have traveled

4 Revisit and update proper environment, health, and safety (EHS) and emergency protocols

- Develop processes to respond to new infections/outbreaks quickly, including communication channels, protocols to close down facilities/office space, etc.
- Establish protocols to identify and track workers and their contacts that have been diagnosed with the disease; consider leveraging mobile tracing technology (with consideration for data privacy concerns)

"Type of Work" Considerations

	Health & Safety		**Type of Work**		Financial (Cost & Revenue)		Worker Needs /Preference

1 Identify jobs that require in-person interaction with other people (on-site or field)	**2** Identify jobs that require in-person interaction with technology or machinery	**3** Understand where risk and compliance issues are magnified if jobs are not managed on-site	**4** Assess where productivity decreases significantly if work is performed off-site
• Consider how in-person interactions evolve given new ways of working; will as much face-to-face customer interaction be required? (e.g., Sales, Relationship Managers) • For roles where work can be performed remotely, consider a split of time in the office and working remotely, for example teams that rotate weeks or shifts in the office	• Evaluate which roles are doing work that cannot continue to be effectively performed without access to machinery or technology that is located on-site • For roles where work can only be performed on premise like manufacturing environments, consider developing consistent / fixed shift teams or pods to limit the number of people your employees interact with	• Understand the risk profile of jobs and whether risk or compliance monitoring is significantly improved when work is executed on site (e.g., trading) • Evaluate the data privacy / cyber security risks associated with various roles and functions working via VPN / remote • Evaluate job functions that were no impaired by remote work, for future alternative work arrangement planning, with adequate supporting technologies and resources	• Evaluate the success of remote work during the crisis, which may vary due to a variety of factors (functions/roles, personal situations, technology), in an effort to understand where productivity dropped significantly or remained stable during the COVID-19 crisis

"Financial" Considerations

Health & Safety	Type of Work	**Financial (Cost & Revenue)**	Worker Needs /Preference

1 Understand costs incurred or saved by bringing people back to work (e.g. cleaning fees)

- Consider the new costs associated with returning workers to the workplace in a post COVID-19 society. Examples include:
  – Routine deep cleanings
  – Frequent sanitisation
  – Non-medical masks (and their availability)
  – Medical staff
  – Remodeling of work locations (offices, factories, work sites)
  – Hazard pay / workers comp premium increase
  – Added benefits (i.e., mental health benefits)
- Identify areas where costs can be saved if work is continued remotely. Examples include:
  – Costs of in-person trainings, celebrations and events
  – Utilities, food consumption, security
  – Office services and supplies

2 Identify and stand up new revenue streams or expand existing offerings (i.e. new products/svcs.)

- Explore and identify opportunities for revenue generation in a post COVID-19 society, including retrofitting manufacturing plants to develop products in need, expanding services in need, create new offerings, etc.
- Consider customers changing preferences in the wake of COVID-19 (e.g., more basic models / services than pre-pandemic)

3 Plan for fluctuations in typical business demand during the COVID-19 recovery period

- Scenario plan for increased or decreased demand to your business as society gradually transitions back to normalcy. Understand the financial and operational implications this may have for your organisation. (i.e., restaurants may only operate at 50% capacity)

"Employee Preference" Considerations

⊕ Health & Safety	☑ Type of Work	🖽 Financial (Cost & Revenue)	💬 **Worker Needs /Preference**

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1 **Assess attitudes towards their health and hygiene in the current climate**

- Consider at-risk populations who may need to stay home for extensive or indefinite periods (and inclusion implications)
- Support employees' mental well-being (i.e. expanding mental health benefits) to address anxiety related to returning to the office
- Understand where your people are and what modes of transportation they use to gauge their level of exposure to other persons during their daily commute
- Assess the needs for business travel vs. virtual meetings
- Review and expand your employee listening channels
  - Gain insights into employee sentiment during the recovery period
  - Take appropriate action addressing any concerns expressed and celebrating successes in managing the crisis

2 **Understand worker personal situations (i.e. childcare, financial)**

- Understand how our employees' personal situation may impact their desire and willingness to return to the workplace (i.e. if schools are closed, less individuals may be able to return to workplace due to lack of childcare)
- Consider how an individuals' financial situation may impact their propensity to return to the workplace

3 **Evaluate comfort with remote working and perceived effectiveness of collaboration tools and remote ways of working**

- Consider the need to prioritise investment in tools/infrastructure that continue to enable remote/virtual collaboration (e.g., collaboration software, network bandwidth, laptops, wifi / vpn access, secure remote access, identity and access management, threat detection and response)
- Assess whether virtual collaboration is productive and maintains employee engagement

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Thank you

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