

Returning to the workplace

As states, localities and health officials begin to set parameters around reopening businesses, bringing your people back onsite successfully won't be as simple as flipping a switch. Every company is unique: Some have knowledge workers who may be able to continue working remotely, while others have factories to restart or brick- and-mortar retail locations to bring back to life. But each company faces the same concerns: where to begin, how to keep people protected, when to communicate, and what's the right way to move forward.

The challenge is complex, but there is a framework for moving forward now. It starts with asking the right questions.

What do I need to do to be ready to bring people back to the workplace?

What you need to consider

Leading and communicating change

Lead with purpose to manage adoption and employee concerns. **Ask:**

- Is our leadership, from the top down, prepared and trained to lead with empathy and address concerns as they arise, cascading down a people-first way of working throughout the organisation?
- Can we repurpose our crisis management team to become our transition and return-to-work team?
- Are we building a plan that is coordinated in its response and promotes compliance, efficiency and empathy?
- Do we have the information necessary to facilitate rapid, data-driven decision-making?
- Have we built a change management approach to drive awareness, understanding, commitment and adoption among our people?
- Have we developed a communications and engagement plan that addresses both returning workers and workers who are remaining remote?
- Do we have a plan for training on new processes, policies and operational procedures and skills for during the transition and beyond?
- Have we fully examined our cultural strengths, so we can leverage them as a source of focus?
- Do we have a public relations and external communications plan that delivers the right messages through the right channels at the right time to customers, suppliers, investors and the community?
- How will we define and measure a successful transition, balancing elements of employee safety, well-being, engagement and productivity?
- Have we evaluated and planned for financial and corporate responsibility reporting and related disclosure requirements?

Managing health and safety

It's up to you to ensure a healthy, safe work environment. **Ask:**

- Have we planned sanitisation protocols and more stringent regular cleaning?
- Do we have guidelines for physical distancing and personal protective equipment use?
- Have we, or can we, secure safety equipment (like face masks) for use by employees?
- Have we identified tiers of necessity — who really needs to be onsite and when?
- What health verification methods will we use, keeping privacy and company policy in mind?
- Can we use contact tracing to help reduce risk to our people?
- Do we have a plan for managing and monitoring food safety (e.g., onsite cafeteria, food delivery)?
- Will we need in-house or advisory medical staff — and can we hire and mobilize them when needed?
- How will we define visitor and contingent workforce protocols and screening processes?
- Do we have a targeted notification plan for notifying individuals at risk of exposure?
- Do we have a policy on immunity or disease testing?
- Can we implement a system to track our workers' compliance with health regulations and directives during a quarantine?
- Have we developed a policy around business and personal travel?
- Do we have contingency plans in place should there be a significant spike in COVID-19 cases during the return transition period?
- Do we have a risk management process in place to cover worker re-entry and to account for new risks?

Operating under new demands

You need a plan to ramp up operations to meet evolving demands. **Ask:**

- Have we developed a site-level schedule week by week and day by day, based on volume forecasts, local regulations and remodeling schedules for output?
- Have we established operating hours by site (e.g., for manufacturing plants, stores, contact centers)?
- Can we identify which employees are essential by role, location and demand, as well as people or positions that can stay furloughed or continue working remotely?
- How will we separate teams through parallel scheduling and shift work to minimise risk of infection?
- Can we develop and maintain return-to-work schedules at the employee level by site?
- Do we have an incident management team, tools and processes established and ready to operate?
- Can we meet the changes in demand from our customers based on the operations and scheduling plan we've developed?
- Are we prepared to meet the needs of customers and communicate with them succinctly about what they can expect?
- Have we considered how new processes and risk controls will be monitored for operating effectiveness?

Changing facilities and technology

It's important to reconfigure your workplace for safe distancing. **Ask:**

- Do we have an executable plan to remodel our office or other workspaces to limit close contact between employees?
- Can we manage traffic flow into and out of the facility in a responsible way?
- What is our plan for redesigning close or collaborative spaces, and how quickly can we execute?

Encouraging empathy in policies and culture

You need to understand the new situations your people face. **Ask:**

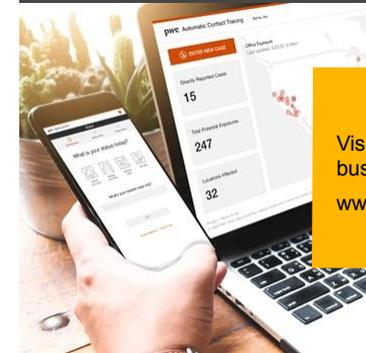
- How will we account for employees' individual constraints and comfort levels, including underlying health issues, child care, etc.?
- Have we formed a policy for employees who do not feel comfortable returning to the physical workplace?
- Will we need to offer alternate, safe transportation to and from our worksites for those who rely on public transit?
- Do we need to change policies and productivity expectations to allow more frequent cleaning of work equipment, breaks for hand-washing or other safety protocols?
- Do we have a plan to accelerate tools for virtual ways of working for employees who could continue to work remotely?
- Have we established plans and policies to adapt to new conditions, as well as new benefits around health and well-being?
- Will we have a plan and empathetic policies to address mental and emotional health and stress levels as our people begin to come back to the workplace?
- Have we identified and planned for changes required in the management and delivery of benefits for workers remaining remote for a longer period?

- Have we appropriately invested in the tools and infrastructure that will continue to securely enable virtual collaboration for those still working remotely (software, networks, access management, or threat detection and response)?
- Have we developed appropriate, enforceable mechanisms to control the flow of people, including different start times?
- Do we need to reopen all facilities at once, or can we develop a staggered plan?

Now what?

It's uncharted territory. Developing an initial plan also requires a level of flexibility and agility for what is likely to be a 12- to 18-month journey that could include changes in health outcomes, virus spread and business conditions.

Resources to help guide the way



Visit PwC's website for further information on the business impact of COVID-19
www.pwc.com.au/covid-19

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